

“Meditate
upon these things;
give thyself
wholly to them;
that thy profiting
may appear unto all”

I Timothy 4:15

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The Doctrinal Basis

For The Use Of Music In The Church

A COMPARISON OF THE ROMAN POSITION
WITH THE LUTHERAN
AND THE ESTHETICS INVOLVED

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In endeavoring to determine the official position of the Roman Catholic Church in regard to the use of music in the worship of the church, the writer of this paper discovered that nearly all of the more recent writers on Gregorian Music in the Roman Church pay special attention to the important official document, Motu Proprio, issued by Pope Pius X on November 22, 1903. It is one of the more common bits of knowledge that certain limitations and restrictions had been placed on the use of music in the Roman Church by the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Pope Pius X takes accurate account of former acts of the church and of previous popes, when he reaffirms the church's ancient position on these various matters.

It must be borne in mind that from the 11th century on, the music of the Roman Church underwent a period of deterioration, according to her own writers. The climax of a renewed interest in the "most pure" form of liturgical music, begun in the 19th century, was brought about

by the official interest of Pope Pius X under whose regime the Paleographie Musicale edition of restored chant was officially adopted by the Roman Church in 1904 (Editio Vaticana).¹ A century of work by the Benedictine Monks of Solesmes in attempting to restore Gregorian chant as it was at the point of highest development (9th-10th century) was accordingly not wasted.

Since most Catholic writing, including the Catholic Encyclopedia, point to the Motu Proprio as the official position of the Roman Church, we shall examine what is said there.

First of all, Pope Pius X emphasizes former proclamations when he points to abuses in the use of music in the church: . . . Whether it is owing to the very nature of this art (sacred chant and music),² fluctuating and variable as it is in itself, or to the succeeding changes in tastes and habits with the course of time, or to the fatal influence exercised on sacred art by profane and theatrical art, or to the pleasure that music directly produces, and that is not always easily contained within the right limits, or finally to the many prejudices on the matter, so lightly introuced and so tenaciously maintained even among responsible and pious persons, the fact remains that there is a general tendency to deviate from the right rule, prescribed by the end for which art is admitted to the service of public worship and which is set forth very clearly in the ecclesiastical Canons, in the Ordinances of the General and Provincial Councils, in the prescriptions which have at various times emanated from the Sacred Roman Congregations, and from Our Predecessors the Sovereign Pontiffs.³

The most striking words in the previous quotation are the words "right rule," "prescribed," "set forth," "Canons" and "Ordinances," which indicate the strict and legalistic viewpoint which determines and limits musical usage in the Roman Church. Archbishop Blenk of New Orleans in his Pastoral Letter on Music (November 22, 1907) attempts to justify this strict control and legislations:

We know that in the old law God himself dictated of His solemn worship, and these ritual prescriptions were carried out with strict fidelity by the people. In like manner the Church of Christ—guided by the Holy Ghost — has taken upon herself from the beginning functions; the number of lights, the incense, the color of vestments, each detail is fixed in such a manner that no individual priest or bishop has power to make an alteration or sanction an omission. These rules of the Church apply still more forcibly to the text of her prayers and the order of ceremonies in which — as you are all aware — sacred music is included.⁴

The above explanation shows concretely how the Roman Church feels duty bound as Christ's representative to legislate through its pontiff, "Christ's vicar," even the minutest details of worship.

There is an additional reason for these "prescribed ordinances." This last point is very important, since it will serve as the center for much of the following discussion. Pope Pius X presents this reason in the following paragraph:

Sacred music, being a complementary part of the solemn liturgy, participates in the general scope of the liturgy, which is the glory of God and the sanc-

tification and edification of the faithful. It contributes to the decorum and the splendour of the ecclesiastical ceremonies, and since its principal office is to clothe with suitable melody the liturgical text proposed for the understanding of the faithful, its proper aim is to add greater efficacy to the text, in order that through it the faithful may be the more easily moved to devotion and better disposed for the reception of the fruits of grace belonging to the celebration of the most holy mysteries.⁵ (Underlining mine.)

He then goes on to show that sacred music should possess the "Qualities proper to the liturgy" and particularly sanctity and goodness of form which will "spontaneously produce the final quality of universality." It must be holy, not only in itself, but in the manner in which it is presented. He again emphasizes the efficacious quality which sacred music should have, when he goes on:

It must be true art, for otherwise it will be impossible for it to exercise on the minds of those who listen to it that efficacy which the Church aims at obtaining in admitting into her liturgy the art of musical sounds.⁶

Concerning "those qualities proper to the liturgy" which sacre music should possess Pope Pius X says further:

These qualities are to be found, in the highest degree, in Gregorian Chant . . . On these grounds Gregorian Chant has always been regarded as the supreme model for sacred music, so that it is fully legitimate to lay down the following rule: the more closely a composition for church approaches in its movement, inspiration and savour the Gregorian form, the more sacred and liturgical in be-

comes; and the more out of harmony it is with that supreme model, the less worthy it is of the temple.⁷

It is interesting to note the reasons the Roman Church gives for insisting on a grave, devout type of music. They point out that Solomon insisted that not even a hammer sound should disturb in the building of the Temple, that God would not allow the children of Israel to touch the mount at the law-giving, that Moses was commanded to remove his shoes when in the presence of the Lord (in the fiery bush), that the Old Testament abounds in examples of devout awe and holy fear in the presence of the Lord. They ignore the passages in the Old Testament which make of music a more joyful, exciting expression. This will be discussed in more detail in the third chapter.

But, we ask, when the "veil of the temple was rent," when the "shadow of things to come" was no longer necessary, when no man was to judge another in meat or drink or in respect to the holy day (cf. Col. 2:16), why must the atmosphere of the House of God remain essentially one of fear and awe, rather than joy, one of gravity rather than triumph and praise —granting, of course, that there must always be reverence?

We are given this answer:

When our Divine Redeemer replaced the law of fear by the law of love, He insisted more than ever on this spirit of reverence. The first act of His public ministry was to drive the profaning vendors from the Temple, and one of His last was again to vindicate the sanctity of His Father's House. Quoting the very words of the Prophet Isias, His parting lesson in the Temple was: 'My House is a House of prayer.'⁸

In the nineteenth century, Cardinal Patrizi, Vicar of Rome, issued general directions which called attention to

the way the joy and exultation of words should be expressed by the music. "...These sentiments must not be given a musical setting which suggests the gaiety of the dance, but one which brings out the calm joy of religion."⁹ He also forbids the use of noisy instruments and brilliant organ compositions and threatens to impose fines on the offenders.¹⁰

Again, Archbishop Blenk comments on the gravity with which worship must be approached, when he asserts:

Gregorian music is indeed prayer and nothing but prayer. It clothes the sacred text with melodies of a religious gravity so striking, of a pathos so tender, and at the same time of such supernatural peace and purity, as to raise our minds from all thoughts of earth—calming and collecting the soul—and inoculating us, almost unconsciously to ourselves, with the desire and love of heavenly things.¹¹

The Council of Trent emphasizes the same trend of thought when it decrees (Sessions XXII: September 22, 1562: Decree regarding the things to be done or to be avoided during the celebration of Holy Mass):

The Bishops and Ordinaries must prevent the use in Church of any music which has a sensuous or impure character, and this, whether such music be for the organ or for the voice, in order that the House of God may appear and may be in truth, the House of Prayer.¹²

The Church (Roman) decrees, in other words—as we can see from all this—that the spirit of prayer be the dominant thing. It seems to go even further than this. It rejects all that it feels could be mundane, it desires only the pure, only that which comes close to the pure ideal, the holy music. Besides the official pronouncements concerning this, the general or basic philosophy of other Catholic

writers stresses the pure, other-worldliness of which the Chant is asserted to be the very essence.

Dom Mocquereau, in his analysis of the Chant, points to this same type of atmosphere which the worship of the Roman Church apparently demands.

'It (plainsong) remains always wholesome and serene, it does not act on the nervous system nor seek to waken a response in that fallen world of which it refuses to make the least use.... The ear which has once become attuned to its wonderful freshness can no longer bear to listen to those soft airs which infect with a sort of sensualism even the very music which is meant to be expression of heavenly love. There is something angelic in the rigidity of the plainsong chant, impervious to the least shadow of alteration.'¹³

This is an unusual state of affairs. Besides realizing that in the Roman Church the music is calculated to have efficacy as the basic reason or purpose for its art being used in the church, we find that there is a type of music which has qualities far beyond the world of material or even musical things. Marie Pierik quotes Dom Pothier, one of the leading scholars of the chant, as saying:

"There is in the Church, in the Catholic liturgy, a music which is at the same time a word and a chant, a music rich and powerful although simple and natural, a music which does not seek itself, which does not harken to itself, but which bursts forth like the spontaneous cry of the thought and of the religious sentiment, a music, lastly, which is the language of the soul touched by God, and which, coming from the bottom of the heart, goes straight to the heart, takes possession of it and raises it gently to heaven ..."¹⁴

Although the following chapter of this paper will treat

the esthetic side of the Chant, there seems to be such a close tie-up between what we normally call esthetic and the doctrinal basis for its use, that a few more gleanings from Catholic writers will help supply a strong enough background for a closer analysis of the relation between esthetic and religious in the Chant.

C. M. Durnford in a book which carries the Imprimatur of the Church speaks of the spirit which must underlie the singing of the Chant. He speaks of a "fear and contrition" which should be basic religiously for a proper use of the Chant.

When plainsong is condemned as melancholy, is it not generally by those who are themselves out of tune with the old spirit of holy fear and contrition? ... It is with a shock that is not altogether agreeable that we realize that our poor little emotions, our hectic joy or fretful woe, must be transcended and sacrificed in accomplishing the work of liturgical praise. It has often been said that the difficulty of singing Gregorian music well is a spiritual rather than a material one .. it is with this renunciation of personal taste and temperament that we buy the freedom of real escape from ourselves. Alongside the slow laborious work of mastering the Gradual and the Antiphonary there goes the slow laborious work of grace, till we learn at last to merge our individualities in the mystical body of the Church.¹⁵

Again, in an officially approved book, Marie Pierik asserts that "Gregorian Chant has been termed a 'doctrinal music in that it is by destination a radiation of truth, of which the Church is depositor.'"¹⁶ And Richard J. Cushing, Archbishop of Boston, in talking about the "Holy Mass," says,

Greatest of all elements in the apostolic task of bringing God to the people and the people to God is the Holy Mass, a rendezvous designed by God Himself. Piety and zeal have surrounded this Action with all manner of adornments. Closest to the heart of things is the actual participation of the people in the Divine Liturgy, and, in the course of this, 'he who sings prays twice.'¹⁷

From all the above it becomes very clear that music for the Roman Church takes on a religious function of grace. "Its proper aim is to add greater efficacy to the text, in order that through it the faithful may be the more easily moved to devotion and better disposed for the reception of the fruits of grace."¹⁸ Art assumes a moral function, becomes a way of softening and preparing the heart for the reception of the "fruits of grace." Art must actually be "holy." Restrictions and rules must safeguard the Church against the intrusion of the mundane, although modern music which closely "approaches in its movement, inspiration and savour the Gregorian form" may be admitted upon approval.¹⁹ The design of art as an aid in spiritual matters is strongly in evidence.

Edward Dickinson, writing shortly before the publication of the Motu Proprio, expresses virtually the same thoughts uttered by Pius X, except for his use of the word "sensuous," which would be denied by the defenders of the Chant. On the whole, however, he points to the efficacy which the Church expects of its music, the big difference being the distinction between the appeal to the senses and the appeal to the religious feelings, the latter being the viewpoint of the Catholic Church.

She (the Catholic Church) knows that the externals of religious observance must be endowed with a large measure of sensuous charm if they would seize hold upon the affections of the bulk of mankind. She knows

that spiritual aspiration and the excitement of the senses can never be entirely separated in actual public worship, and she would run the risk of subordinating the first to the second rather than offer a service of bare intellectuality empty of those persuasions which artistic genius offers, and which are so potent to bend the heart in reverence and submission.²⁰

All of this leads most naturally to the discussion in the next chapter of this paper on the relation of the esthetic to the spiritual in the music of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Esthetic Relation

What is claimed for the Chant spiritually or esthetically and what the Chant can actually do esthetically or spiritually may be two different things. Since the amount of verbal and musical material in the field of Gregorian Chant is so vast, a paper such as this cannot pretend to a completely thorough study of the problem. Nevertheless, the writer of this paper hopes to discuss many of the assertions made.

In a study of Gregorian Chant it is asserted that "we must free ourselves from the tyranny of fashion, acquire the Gregorian temperament and recapture the antique soul . . . If the modern world is ill-equipped for appreciating Gregorian music on the esthetic side, it is at least equally so on the religious."¹ That places the writer of this paper in a very difficult position, both esthetically and religiously. Perhaps, on the other hand, a more objective examination can be made by the outsider.

G. M. Durnford admits freely that the first impression which the Chant makes upon people is not the same as the impression it apparently makes upon those better acquainted with it. He states that

... it would be idle to deny the fact that nearly everyone's first impression of the chant comes as a disappointment. After being led to expect a music which shall be both socially and personally adequate, glorious and satisfying, we hear something which seems at once too thin for the enthusiasm of great crowds and too calm to carry the anguish or the rapture of the individual soul to God.²

In another place he describes the effect which this chant had upon Augustine, who wept upon hearing it, and then adds:

The latest convert of today might well receive the same impression as did Augustine, could he but lay aside the prejudices of education and habit and come unspoilt to recapture the charm which is latent in that thin line of melody. It needs but a few notes and makes so little noise; an intonation, an inflexion is enough; it has been said that this most of all makes one believe in the inspiration of the chant, since 'no man, even a saint, could have thought of anything so prodigiously simple.' Its simplicity issues in strength; here is no enervating chromaticism to weaken the effect; by rigorous forms and very restricted means the desired object is attained, and this equally in the elaborate cantilena wherein the melody has to thread its way through constellations of neums, as well as in pieces of 'pure unemotional recitative.'³

"It needs but a few notes and makes so little noise ... " Perhaps this is approaching the heart of the esthetics involved. The lack of a jarring element is an important factor. The use of loud instruments or many instruments or loud singing is prohibited by the various decrees of the Roman Church. Many organ builders weep when they describe how they virtually had to kill the big tone of a diaphan in voicing an organ for a Catholic edifice.

The "simplicity" of the chant is often difficult for a novice to detect, except, perhaps, for the single voice line and the use of a chanting tone. Although it is a single line of music, the idiomatic combinations of tones require thorough indoctrination on the part of a listener before the simplicity shines through. The Catholic Encyclopedia admits this when it says,

It must be kept in mind, of course, that since the language of plain chant is somewhat remote from the musical language of today, some little familiarity with its idiom is required to appreciate its beauty. Its tonality, its rhythm, as it is generally understood, the artistic reserve of its utterance, all cause some difficulty and demand a willing ear.⁴

Perhaps the enthusiasm of its devotees starts a ball of superlatives rolling which knows no bounds. At the mention of the word "Gregorian" many students and lovers of this music become starry-eyed and ecstatic in expressing approval. The rhapsodic utterances concerning this beautiful music have a way of ignoring fact. In many cases there seems to be a strong resemblance to the "devout" about to bathe in the Ganges when certain writers begin to describe the cantus planus of the Roman Church.

For example, the statement is made by one writer: "... Here is no enervating chromaticism to weaken the effect..."⁵ The Catholic Encyclopedia, however, in discussing the findings of Dr. Peter Wagner, mentions the probability that the placing of a neume directly after another at the same pitch level may actually have indicated some chromatic inflection.⁶ There may have been more chromaticism in the "pure form" than people imagine. Certainly there was freedom in improvising in the earlier days.

Besides, and this is an esthetic problem in music, what is "enervating" about the chromatic progression of the base

line in Bach's Crucifixus? In fairly modern orchestral works, the use of the semitone to build intensity is unmis-takeable. The use of the appoggiatura is a good example of the use of the semitone (whole tones were also used) to emphasize and strengthen, rather than weaken. Perhaps chromatic progressions are sometimes enervating, used in certain ways. That "chromaticism" must be described per se as "enervating" is letting imagination run wild. Nevertheless, a similar criticism is voiced by Dom Mocquereau. He writes: "With its frank tonality and entire absence of chromatic progressions, expressing incomplete notions by semitones, it (the sacred chant) seems incapable of representing anything short of perfect beauty, pure truth."⁷ An "incomplete notion" is hardly expressed by the "leading tone" to tonic in the major and minor tonalities.

The rhapsodic utterances which have been used to characterize the chant seem to stem from the personal emotion-reactions of the describers, rather than from the chant itself. One writer is quoted by Durnford as describing the chant in the following way:

... After comparing the lightness of the rhythmic cadence to a bird's flight, to the wavering fall of the snowflake, to all that is most ethereal and unearthly in this fallen world, the author, having as it were exhausted all imagery in vain, simply says at last that it is 'virginal,' and surely no finer epithet could fall from the lips of a monk.⁸

Perhaps someone less sympathetic would describe this "bird's flight," this "wavering fall of a snowflake" as an intolerable weakness in music which is supposed to represent some religious conviction. Another critic might say that this "wavering fall of a snowflake" expresses perfectly the religion of fear and uncertainty, the religion which leaves its adherents in doubt as to just when the ordeal of purgatory will be finished for the individual.

There can be a difference of opinion concerning the mood of a piece of music. Schumann was of the opinion that the great subject of the first movement of Schubert's B-flat trio is "tender, girlish, and confiding," whereas Gurney thought of the same subject that it represents the "ne plus ultra of energy and passion"⁹

To a person who believes strongly in the Catholic religion, its music may express quiet strength; to someone of a different faith, the chant may express uncertainty with its lack of wide interval spacing and its negation of tonality. Accordingly, it may well be that the religious element colors the reaction to the music. Usually in these vivid descriptions of the music, there is very little of the concrete which enters. It is a feeling, rather, an emotional response or religious, if you prefer.

To point this out, let us take another dip in the Ganges with a writer who declares,

The true reason for the perfect artistic equipoise of Gregorian music is to be sought for in the spiritual order. As regards 'expression' the melodies move in a world of supernatural enchantment where earthly values are ignored or forgotten; God's fairyland where all things are contained within the hortus conclusus of His will. Here one may smile indeed, but to laugh would be almost an outrage, since we are always in a sense before the crucifix; here the tears may come, but they must never fall so thick as to blind us to the glory of the Resurrection vision...¹⁰

This being carried away in describing the chant can often lead to inaccuracies not supported by scholarly evidence. Gustave Reese points out:

That the influence of Greco-Roman and Hebrew music came to bear directly on Gregorian chant is attested

by some actual musical evidence. This is to be found in melodies, of the old, pre-Christian order and of the new, which show striking similarities.¹¹

Notwithstanding, we have this enthusiastic assertion:

The Church evolved a chant in evolving a liturgy; everything goes to prove that the oldest melodies were the creation of early Christianity. With their undying freshness, their spontaneous and abnegation of the first monks and sung by the children of the martyrs.¹²

Again, this enthusiasm leads to the following exaggeration and inaccuracy:

And our Gregorian chant is preeminently verbal music; it has no existence apart from words; it is so supply and sensitive to the dignity of the text that the melodic phrase only follows and weds the literary period. One could never say that the words had been 'set to music'; the music springs up out of the words themselves in which it lay latent and contained in embryo.¹³

But Gustave Reese asserts: "The early Gregorian composers, like their fellows in the Near East, were interested not so much in composing new melodies as in adapting old and traditional phrases to new liturgical purposes."¹⁴ While he maintains that "there is very little word painting in the melodies of Gregorian Chant,"¹⁵ he admits that

Gregorian melody is built on the grammatical accents of the liturgical text... The law of accent is one of the fundamental laws of Gregorian Chant. Yet there are occasions when it must yield to superior esthetic laws based on the exigencies of musical phrasing, style, tonality, rhythm, and the particular form to which the melody belongs.¹⁶

The music does not always "spring up out of the words themselves in which it lay latent and contained in embryo," for "in some unskillful adaptations of old melodies to new texts the resulting accentuations are incorrect." Also, "since the melody of the first stanza of a hymn was applied to all the other stanzas, verse by verse, foot by foot, syllable by syllable, tonic accents could not be observed (except in the first stanza), unless by accident."¹⁷

While the "melodic phrase only follows and weds the literary period," nevertheless, there are many instances where a resetting of words to the same melody—a very practical matter—causes a difficulty of incorrect accent. The enthusiast cannot separate words and music. They are wedded. Scholarship makes of this wedding a musical polygamy. This is not said to discount the close relationship between words and music, but merely to call attention to the exaggerated claims made for the chant.

Professor Hoelty-Nickel, in lecturing on the history of church music, ventured to say:

Those who composed the chant indicated their meaning thus:

I and II —grave, contemplative, discreet, restrained.

III and IV—ecstatic, gives the impression of subjectivity.

V and VI—like modern major—bright, hopeful, joyous.

VII—solemn affirmative.

VIII—expressive of the serenity of an Elias.

The modern ear has difficulty in hearing all this. Yet the ancient writers maintained that it was there. They chose their modes in accordance with these ideas.¹⁸

But the Catholic Encyclopedia has this to say:

The theoretical distinction between authentic and plagal modes is not borne out by an analysis of the

existing melodies and their traditional classification. Melodies of the fourth mode having a constant \bar{b} flat fall in badly with the theoretic conception of a \bar{f} fourth mode having \bar{b} natural as its normal note, and some antiphon melodies of that mode, although they use no \bar{b} flat but have \bar{a} as their highest note, e. g. Easter Sunday Introit, \bar{a} are out of joint with the psalmody of that mode. It would, therefore, seem certain that the eight mode theory was, as a ready-made system, imposed on the existing stock of plain chant melodies.¹⁹

Gustave Reese writes in a similar vein. Another scholar in the field of the chant, Egon Wellesz, in discussing the use of formulae as a principle of early chant composition, states: "From all these investigations it is clear that scale, echos, and mode did not exist from the beginning as the necessary basis for composition, but were abstractions made subsequently. The process of musical composition consisted in fitting together and slightly varying phrases, cadences, and formulae which were already in existence."²⁰

It is not an uncommon practice to equate a certain mood with the various modes. Dom Johner translates Guido of Arezzo's early characterization of the modes as follows:

For every mood the first will be good, the second so
tender to grief;
If anger the third one provoke, the fourth will bring
the relief;
The fifth be the mood for the joyous, the sixth one
the pious will prize;
The seventh is pleasing the youth, but the last is
the mood of the wise.

Dom Johner dismisses this as too sweeping a generalization:

As regards the characteristics of the Church Modes (the sentiment that each one expresses), Kienle remarks in his *Choralschule* p. 140: 'We ought not to assign to one Church mode a joyful characteristic, to another a sorrowful one; for in each there are bright and jubilant strains, and each can be grave and mournful, but each produces these results in its own ways.' With some justice, however, one may be allowed to say that the airs of Modes 5 and 6 are mostly spirited and joyful, those of Mode 4 sweet and attractive, almost dreamy in character, whilst the other modes may be described as solemn, majestic, and often sublime.²¹

The question of whether the modes actually have those characteristics or whether they merely evoke such a feeling in the listener will not be discussed here. We are interested, however,

in the many assertions made for this music. Pope Pius X claimed that if the music possessed "goodness and sanctity of form," then the "universality" of the music would follow. Still the Catholic Encyclopedia reminded us that "the language of plain chant is somewhat remote from the musical language of today."²² It has a peculiar idiom of its own. For that reason it takes study to appreciate it. It, furthermore, takes more than a study of music to accomplish this. We were cautioned to "... free ourselves from the tyranny of fashion, acquire the Gregorian temperament and recapture the antique soul... If the modern world is ill-equipped for appreciating Gregorian music on the aesthetic side, it is at least equally so on the religious."²³

Again, we must "lay aside the prejudices of education and habit and come unspoilt to recapture the charm which is latent in that thin line of melody."²⁴ The question of whether education in other types of music "shall" us will not be discussed either. The point is that before the music can actually do for us what it is reputed to do, we must lay

aside former ideas of esthetics and religion. We need a special training in music and religion to get anywhere with these moods of the mode. If this is so, then, perhaps, the music is not automatically equipped with all that is claimed for it.

What, for instance, is the usual first reaction to such music? One writer, already quoted, admitted that "it would be idle to deny the fact that nearly everyone's first impression of the chant comes as a disappointment." He describes this first impression in this way, that "we hear something... too calm to carry the anguish or the rapture of the individual soul to God."²⁵ We must, then, "recapture the antique soul" and we must be educated to the possibilities of Gregorian chant. And still, the music would not have been admitted into the church, if it were not efficacious, if it could not soften and prepare hearts to receive the "fruits of the mysteries." This is a clear case where the egg comes out of the chicken. A study of both the Roman religion and Romanesque art as exemplified in the chant is necessary, before adequate results can be obtained with the chant.

If the chant had been with the church throughout Old Testament days and all subsequent days, then the claim of being the perfect "holy" music might be taken more seriously. But the music of the chant, although composed for the church at a time when all art was serving only the church, is the expression of one epoch. Perhaps it best expresses in song what the Roman church teaches, but that its entire idiom must be taught and retaught makes one doubt the in-

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trinsic characteristics which are claimed for the chant. Its beauty, if well performed, may be unquestioned, but its spiritual or special esthetic effect is not felt by the casual listener or necessarily by people of a different faith. This becomes a question both of cultural preference and religious conviction.

The claim is made that cows give more milk when exposed to classical music than when exposed to the "jazz" idiom. However, what would happen to that claim if a group of cows were found who did just the reverse? The difference would be in the cows, not in the music. A similar thing holds for people who claim only one kind of music can express religious devotion adequately. That taste enters in, that individuals differ, is a normal thing, and de gustibus non est disputandum. Dr. Hospers tells of the natives who felt only one kind of music of the "civilized" world fitting for a funeral service, the Strauss Waltzes. Other natives prefer the "jazz" recordings for their church services to the music of Bach. There are many people who would prefer the Bach chorale to Gregorian chant as an expression of religious devotion. The tastes of men and the beliefs of men differ.

It would be difficult to continue further in trying to ascertain whether all Roman Catholics appreciate the plain chant as much as the scholars and specialists do. Even if a scholar disagreed, it would be very unlikely that he would publicly write against the official and mandatory position of his church in these matters. A non-scholar could scarcely write about it, but that is not the problem to be discussed here.

The final portion of this study is entitled,

"Lutheran Doctrine and Esthetics in Music"


This is scheduled for publication in a subsequent issue of the JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY.

FOOTNOTES TO PART I

- 1) Gleason, Music in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, 15
- 2) Note the distinction "sacred chant and music."
- 3) Pope Pius X, Motu Proprio, 4.
- 4) Ibid., 52
- 5) Ibid., 6.
- 6) Ibid., 6.
- 7) Ibid., 7.
- 8) Ibid., 51.
- 9) Ibid., 44.
- 10) Ibid., 45-46
- 11) Ibid., 55
- 12) Ibid., 37
- 13) Sunol, Textbook of Gregorian Chant, 39.
- 14) Pierik, The Spirit of Gregorian Chant, 8.
- 15) Sunol, op. cit., vii.
- 16) Pierik, When the People Sang, 3
- 17) Ibid., 2.
- 18) Cf. Note 5 above.
- 19) Cf. Note 7 above.
- 20) Dickinson, Music In The History Of The Western Church,

FOOTNOTES TO PART II

- 1) Sunol, op. cit., vij.
- 2) Ibid., vj.
- 3) Ibid., ix.
- 4) Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XII, 148.
- 5) Cf. Note 3 above.
- 6) Cf. Catholic Encyclopedia, loc. cit.
- 7) Sunol, op. cit., 39.
- 8) Sunol, op. cit., viii-ix,
- 9) Hoppers, Meaning and Truth in the Arts,

- 10) Sunol, op. cit., xiv.
 - 11) Reese, Music in the Middle Ages, 114.
 - 12) Sunol, op. cit., ix.
 - 13) Ibid., xij-xiiij.
 - 14) Reese, op. cit., 164
 - 15) Ibid., 168
 - 16) Reese, op. cit., 166-167.
 - 17) Ibid., 167-168.
 - 18) Lectures given at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Ill., Summer of 1944.
 - 19) Catholic Encyclopedia, 146-147.
 - 20) Wellesz, Eastern Elements in Western Chant, 89.
 - 21) Johner, A New School of Gregorian Chant, 56.
 - 22) Cf. Note 4 above.
 - 23) Cf. Note 1 above.
 - 24) Cf. Note 3 above.
 - 25) Cf. Note 2 above.
 - 26)
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PREACHING THE WORD

MEDITATIONS

IN THE

BOOK OF DANIEL

CHAPTER II.

IRON TOES OF CLAY

"I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

Thus did our Lord Jesus glorify God for the wisdom of His disciples, those simple, humble people who were His Church. They lacked much that the world had; but they had what the world lacked. They had the Word of God, in heart and mouth, —the Word which saves men in their folly, the Word which shall stand when all else has passed away. These people who were Christ's Church were but babes in strength and earthly skills; but they had THE answer to THE question. That is what makes the Church such a power in the world today, and for that God's children must ever give thanks with their Savior, and with Daniel who knew that prayer too, who at the court of Nebuchadnezzar praised God. (v. 23).

1.

What stirring impressions the great events of the second chapter of the Book of Daniel leave with our hearts and minds! Here, in Babylon, the center of the mightiest world power, at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, we find God's Church of that day represented by a mere handful of men including Daniel and his friends. They look very small and unimportant. When things go wrong in the kingdom of the Chaldeans, when the king and his great ones are locked in bitter struggle, the little group of Israelites is almost forgotten. Orders go out for a dreadful purge: Destroy all the magicians, wise men, astrologers! Kill them off! Nobody seems to remember that Daniel and the other believers would be included in such an order. No one bothers about them. When the world gets to fighting, when the mighty gird themselves for bloody struggle over their unrighteous purposes, the Church of God is ignored. When the sharks are killing one another, who worries about the minnows? It is always so: the Church of God is accounted fair game. When all is slack and there is no excitement, many people are curious enough to listen to what God's people may have to say; but when a storm blows up among the monster powers and forces on earth, the Church is overrun and forgotten by most.

Yet it is certainly plain that the Church succeeds where Nebuchadnezzar fails and that it is time to turn to God's babes when Nebuchadnezzar reaches the end of his rope, as he did when his spirit was troubled. Ah yes, his spirit. Babylon is full of magicians and astrologers; Babylon has a doctor for every ache and pain, a professor for every subject — save one. When the King's soul is troubled, his trained circus of wise men is helpless. How pitifully they cry out in their impotence. (v. 10-11). Yes, of course it is a rare thing to be able to help a man's soul in trouble. The world has nothing like that in its books.

So the mighty Nebuchadnezzar finds himself doing what the mighty world always does when it fails. He tried to find relief in wild destruction, in killing, in brute force. Of course that is no solution. It does not bring the spirit rest. It is simply the horrible despair that so often overtakes the godless world. When it no longer knows what else to do, it destroys and kills.

For a time the trouble in Nebuchadnezzar's spirit was mysterious. He didn't tell the whole truth, even to himself. He just said that he had had a dream and forgot it when he woke up. Now he wanted it back in the temper of a spoiled child. But the king was covering up. That is so typically human. When people are troubled about spiritual things, human nature wants to hide the fact. Daniel finally confronted the king with the real truth, namely that the dream had come to him after he had lain awake on his bed thinking about what should come to pass hereafter. (v. 29). Now this does not mean that the king was desperately planning what he might do next, as one who has no plan or design to follow. Never underestimate Nebuchadnezzar! In his way he was a remarkable monarch. Babylon grew famous under his reign, and he knew well enough what course he had set for himself. That was not the point. But there is always a hereafter to which the thoughts of man cannot attain; and the king was looking into that far distance. Where will it all end, and how? Why am I here, where do I go from here? What is life all about? Man can plan and devise, they shine flashlights into the future; but there is always a terrible darkness out there somewhere. And Nebuchadnezzar fears it.

He is more terrified than ever when God, whom the king neither knows nor honors, lets him dream of the future in an image which he now cannot remember. He had a dreadful feeling that there was a message, an answer for the soul in that fleeting dream. And there was indeed. He

had seen what was to come, as Daniel later showed him. Like the huge figure of a man, he had seen the earthly kingdoms of men as they would follow one another through the centuries: his own kingdom at the head, then the silver kingdom of the Persians, then the brass kingdom of the Greeks, then the iron kingdom of the Romans — we know them now, for they are past. But the image ended in feet and toes of iron mixed with clay. There were to be kingdoms following, to the end of the world; each toe a kingdom. We are not able even now to name them all. But we observe the one important feature common to them all. They are iron mixed with clay; very stubborn, yet fragile, all shot through and through with sin and the curse of sin. As is written upon the frame of every kingdom and of every man: "And unto dust shalt thou return." Just wait until the Stone comes!

This was the secret conveyed by God to Daniel and to His Church — the secret of the mighty Stone, not cut by human hands, whirling through the vast reaches of time until it will at last crash against the feet of man's world and destroy it. We too know this Stone, rejected by human builders yet precious; the Cornerstone of the Church, the Rock of Ages. He whose Kingdom shall have no end — He is the fulness of the hereafter about which Nebuchadnezzar was troubled. He is the end of all things and the hope of every soul. He is Christ the eternal Savior and King who redeemed us to God by His blood and gave to us the words of eternal life.

2.

You may have all your wise men and your Babylons; but only the Church of Jesus with its precious knowledge of the Truth can bring peace of heart to Nebuchadnezzar. The day is surely coming when the Stone shall fall. When men learn to expect it, when they are taught to look for it, they can be saved from fear and folly.

Men may have dreams. They may speculate. And sometimes indeed they hit close to the truth of things, for there remains a voice of God within them. Even the wicked king of Babylon is visited by God in a dream. But so dark is the mind and understanding of the unbelievers, so corrupt their nature that they can neither understand nor remember spiritual truths. We Christians, on the other hand, may be of relatively little use to the world in building Babylon. We are small and despised. But we are stewards of the mysteries of God. When the world begins to despair, as it does and must, and begins to slaughter and kill and destroy in frenzy, its agony could be eased were it to listen to us as Nebuchadnezzar hearkened unto Daniel. We can save souls from despair. That is our strength and opportunity on earth; let us not forget it. The people of the world usually look so prosperous and satisfied that we feel shy about saying anything at all to them. We feel that they have everything and most of the answers. But let us remember that they have not the last answer, and that they lie upon their beds in the dark night trembling.

To all, even to one another, we must say, again and again: You may build gilded palaces for yourselves, you may map out your future. You may even, as some have, desert God's Church and confession for that future which you think you have arranged. But be assured that there is no future in that! Any one of us may set up his little kingdom for himself here on earth, and it may last a few years; yet it is nothing but iron mixed with clay. Sin and unbelief are stubborn things, and if you have set upon their paths with deliberate purpose, no power on earth will bend or break them; but the Stone will, when it strikes, as it certainly shall. Then you shall see the clay, for your kingdom will crumble.

You may run to the wise for counsel, and you will get it in abundance. You will be assured that you can commit spiritual adultery and escape; that you can safely disre-

gard your confirmation vow. There are all kinds of magicians that bear ecclesiastical rank and can make black look white. You may find authorities and churches who tell you that, if your narrow-minded brethren cast you out, they will take you in. All this you may hear, in accents persuasive, if you wish it. But when then you begin to think upon what shall come hereafter, your magician friends will wring their hands and cry: There is not a man upon earth who can help you there. Indeed; for when the time comes that you hear the Stone whistling in its approaching speed, what must happen to your little kingdom of sin and denial ?

O listen to the thunder of the Stone and its roaring. It speaks through the Word in the Church, and it speaks Truth. Fear not men; obey not your passions. There is nothing but violence and death in the despair of Nebuchadnezzar. But there is more than death in the voice of the Stone. Your Savior calls you and says: When I come, lift up your head: for your redemption draws near !

CHAPTER III.

START THE MUSIC--THE PEOPLE WILL BOW!

We travel now to the ancient plain of Dura, and there we witness a great spectacle. We watch the world bowing down to worship its horrible god. Not all mankind could come -- no, not all. But they were all represented -- all nations and people and languages. Their leaders were there; and when the signal was given, they fell down to worship the idol of Nebuchadnezzar.

What a sight that must have been: the monstrous statue of gold glittering in the sun and the world on its knees before it. We may never see the like of it again; yet we

know that if the world were shaped like the plain of Dura and if we could watch the people of the world assembled as they were then, they would still be doing the same thing. Their chief desire is to please the god of this world and they need only be shown how to do so. Let the devil start his music and the people will bow; for they are by nature children of the father of lies. If he sets up a doctrine, they pay homage to it. If he sets up a new standard of immorality, they obey it. When he builds a temple of vice, they come to the dedication.

Three loyal confessors of the God of Israel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, heard the music at Dura but stayed on their feet and turned their faces away. And they stood alone. In our day, among those who profess to be Christians, there seem to be more and more who are ready to listen to the directives of Nebuchadnezzar. They seem to fear his furnace, but they forget the other furnace. They go to Dura and they worship what Nebuchadnezzar has built. It is a sight that makes our hearts bleed. We are experiencing a season of strong denial and great disloyalty. What strength and comfort is there for us in the plain of Dura?

1.

If from the closing words of the preceding chapter someone deduced that Nebuchadnezzar had been converted to faith in the God of Daniel, he would now see how mistaken he was. Nebuchadnezzar had praised the God of Daniel for His strength and power. He said to Daniel: That is quite a god you've got there! But Nebuchadnezzar thought that he was quite a great one himself. He had no intention of humbling himself. Quite to the contrary: In order to prevent the people from acquiring too much respect for Daniel's God, the evil king hurried to cement his own power down tightly upon the subjects. When God builds a church,

the devil builds a chapel next to it; and when the true God showed His glory and majesty, Nebuchadnezzar hastily drew the attention of the people away from Him by preparing the largest image he knew how to make. It was of gold and it was ninety feet high, nine feet across. What did it resemble? We do not know. Was it a statue of King Nebuchadnezzar himself? Perhaps; but Scripture does not say so, and it really does not matter at all. What ever it looked like, that image was nothing but the sum total of the evil heart of Nebuchadnezzar, the evil heart of the world. It stood for everything that is far from the true God; for its purpose was to keep the people far from the God of heaven, from giving their hearts to Him, from accepting His wondrous love and from submitting to His holy Word. It did not matter how the image looked; the important thing was that it was sufficiently glittering and spectacular to furnish competition for God. And of course it was. It's glamor prevailed with the people.

Perhaps you will say: No wonder that they got down on their knees, for they feared the fiery furnace. It may seem so. Nebuchadnezzar is a cruel, hard master, and fear is his weapon. But close attention to the story before us will reveal that it was not fear alone which produced this abominable worship. The thousands came for the dedication of the statue before they had heard about any fiery furnace. They needed no threat; they were willing without it. Do you know why? Look at the image again and remember that not even Nebuchadnezzar can force so many people to adore his silly god unless there is a piece of that god in their hearts. Let no one think that the king is the only evil one, and that the people are all innocent sheep. The king succeeds, and the image finds its worshippers, because in reality it is a composition of all the idols which the people worshipped in their huts, their homes, their hearts. They loved the things Nebuchadnezzar loved, and they would play along with anything that kept them away from God and from the Truth, because that is what they

were used to doing and the only thing they were able to do. "For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

Heb. man's purposes + desires.

So then the events recorded in our story were to be expected. They are to be expected today. Satan has set up his images all over the world, each one in competition with the true God. Surely the most life-like of these is and will remain the Roman Antichrist who with his popery, his masses, his synergistic repudiation of the salvation that is by grace alone through faith alone is working feverishly, even in his modern garb of a counterfeit ecumenicity, to keep men blind to the Truth. For those who think themselves too smart for the wiles of the Antichrist, Satan has other statues and images — lodges, false churches with soul-destroying doctrines but bearing crosses on their steeples, Lutheran churches that have abandoned their true heritage — something to suit everyone's taste. And for all there are the sanctuaries of lust and vice, of drunkenness and carousing. Great is the image in the plain of Dura, and faithful are the people of this world. Satan calls, and they answer. He blows his music and they follow lies, sin and vice because they cherish them, because their hearts are full of them. We expect to find the people of this world in the plain of Dura until by the message of our Gospel the Holy Spirit creates in them a new heart and a new life.

2.

Those whom we do not expect to find in the crowd that bows to the evil image are the children of God, the baptised disciples of Christ our Savior. In this we are sometimes disappointed. For we are forced to watch helplessly while this or that dear soul in whom we believed to have found a brother walks out of our fellowship when Satan's music sounds, to bow at the shrine of lies, of wickedness and worldliness. Then our hearts ache. Some of them

thus prove that they are not Christ's people at all but hypocrites. They have put the Truth away from their hearts. They cherish Satan's vices and not the melodies of holiness and purity and rectitude which the Savior sends forth with His Gospel. As St. John in his tender way explains it: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. (1 John 2: 19).

But there are others also who are caught in the plain of Dura — caught there and overcome because they were unprepared. They were not watchful because they forgot that in their hearts, too, still lurks the old love for the things of the devil. Perhaps they agreed to worship the image without thinking, but afterward return to the arms of their Lord with tears of true repentance. We sorrow with them; we sorrow when they have been deceived by Antichrist or by the lusts of their flesh, and our pain is all the greater for knowing that in a very real sense we are all guilty of disloyalty. We have not and do not always confess our faith as we should, and above all we do not sufficiently resist Nebuchadnezzar. Our testimony against the worship of the image is not what it must rightfully be. In this respect we share the guilt of those of our brethren who are misled and should cry with them repentantly when they return to us. So often as a child of God worships the world's image there has been a tragic and needless failure. Such things need not happen. . . Nebuchadnezzar is powerful, but the believing, confessing Church is stronger in the strength of her Lord. Where better can we see this than in our chapter?

We have been amazed by the example of the Church at Babylon. It seemed pitifully small, but it was bigger than the king and bigger than the image in the plain of Dura. The

three men who refused to worship the image had stayed away from the dedication although they knew of the fiery furnace and they did not know how God would handle the matter. He could deliver them, but He might let them suffer fire. In either case, said the believers, we will not serve the image. Indeed, they said more. They said: "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." In other words, these men of God do not intend to enter a legal defense with carefully prepared brief before Nebuchadnezzar and argue their case because there is nothing to argue about. They know what Satan wants and what Nebuchadnezzar stands for. Why make long talk about it? Sin is sin, and one does not trade words over the question of right and wrong. This issue was and is always clear-cut. Whether or not to bow to a false religion, to an idol, to the god of lust or the god of lies — that issue is closed for God's children. We cannot worship in a temple of false doctrine, nor must we lend our ears to the music of the world that seeks to seduce us to great shame and vice.

Nor is it a question of where the advantage lies for God's people. Some are tempted to think that it is safer and more comfortable to deny their Lord and God just a little. But there are, after all, two fiery furnaces: Nebuchadnezzar's and the one prepared by the holy God. There is no doubt about which is hotter. Jesus put it this way: "Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." Nebuchadnezzar's triumph is Satan's hell-fodder.

Yet the three men at Babylon did not make their decision because of or despite any furnace. They rested their case upon a divine promise which was wonderfully fulfilled for them. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt

not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." (Is. 43: 2-3). We have read how marvellously God observed this His promise to the letter. He will always keep it in the best possible manner for those who put their trust in Him. His people will not always escape pain, but they will win; for He is with them. The major miracle in the fiery furnace was the presence of the fourth man, the Son of God. He lives in the hearts and lives of those whom He has called to His eternal glory. He brings to those hearts courage and devotion. There was no argument when He came into the fiery furnace of this world and sacrificed His holy body as an offering for sin and because of sin. He knew and felt all that sin was. He paid the price for it. He said: "Be not afraid: I have overcome the world."

He walks with us today in the furnace of our earthly afflictions, and in the heat of temptation. When the multitudes are worshipping the image in the plain of Dura, He is at home with us in our houses. He is our Friend, our Preserver from all evil. Fear not; He will keep His Church secure. He will uphold the confessing Church to the end of the world. That is the true wonder of our story, and it continues day after day. The marvel is that He still finds faith in the earth. Give thanks to Him for that; and let us pray for one another that we shall all see the day when the furnace door opens and we step out unsinged, in white garments beautiful and eternal.

CHAPTER IV.

A CEILING ON TREES

There is an ancient proverb which says: "It is ordained that trees shall not reach heaven." No doubt this saying arose among people who were acquainted with the Book of Daniel; for the subject of this fourth chapter is a king who learned the relentless truth of this divine rule. Daniel gives us the written confession of Nebuchadnezzar, no doubt drawn up by Daniel himself, as part of the inspired Book. It thus becomes for us the Word of God, giving us instruction, pointing us to the significant truth that trees shall not reach heaven. No matter how tall they may grow, though the earth beneath them is rich and wide and the sky above them unlimited, the almighty God will never allow them to reach but so high, as high as a tree ought to reach.

We are not afraid of trees; but we are afraid of men growing too tall, or trying to. We are in danger today, not of succeeding where Nebuchadnezzar failed, but of trying to succeed and being cut down. This danger threatens our nation and us personally. Let us then seek to learn this lesson anew and teach it to others, that God has put a ceiling on trees.

1.

According to the plain text this applies, first of all, to human government. For that is the direct lesson of our story. It concerns Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, not so much as an individual but as a head of state. In the dream of which he tells us in his confession he sees a huge tree whose height reached toward heaven and which could be seen from all ends of the earth; and according to Daniel's interpretation this tree represented Nebuchadnezzar and his dominion. For the king was the government.

By the grace of God, because divine Providence had let the sun of good fortune shine and the rain of prosperity fall, Nebuchadnezzar's empire had indeed become a mighty one before that dreadful day when suddenly nothing but the useless stump of authority was left. We cannot rejoice when a great government is humbled in the dust. Human government, as Scripture teaches, is ordained by God Himself. It has a high and sacred purpose, a duty and a trust. We are taught by the Lord to pray for government and for all who are in authority. Under their governance we are to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. A shade-tree such as that is a high and precious gift. But still it is only a tree. It cannot grow until it reaches heaven. And there is a Watcher and a Holy One who sees that it does not, even if Nebuchadnezzar must be cut down to a stump to prevent it.

The king rated his empire and himself above the ceiling set. What he actually thought about it is revealed in the dream that served as God's warning. In vv. 11 and 12 we hear how Nebuchadnezzar pictured himself as monarch. You may say: That is a beautiful picture of a kingdom. Yes indeed; it is far too beautiful. It leaves room neither for God nor heaven. This dream kingdom supplies all the needs and hopes of men. It is a heaven on earth, a paradise. In such a kingdom sin is a forgotten issue and the curse of sin is hidden. There is no one left to pray: "Deliver us from evil." Nebuchadnezzar has done that; he has built a mighty kingdom, and all is peace, all is well. So said the dream.

Long before any civil government tree can become so tall, it is cut down to stump size. Within twenty-four hours Nebuchadnezzar who heeds not the warning but struts about as though he were God in his heaven, becomes like a beast in the field among the oxen and cattle where for a long time he could not understand the voice that spoke from heaven saying: "Be still and know that I am God!"

There is and shall ever be only one Kingdom on earth that reaches unto heaven. It is in this world but not of this world. Jesus told us a parable of it: of the seed of mustard that grew into a huge tree and allowed the birds of the air to find shelter in its branches. This is the Kingdom of God where our Lord and Savior reigns; where there is true peace because He shades us from the wrath of God, having borne our sins and carried our sorrows. This tree must fill all the sky for us. It bears us upward and onward. Under the protection of it are all who by faith cling to the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. He is the Watcher and the Holy One who sees to it that no earthly tree grows beyond the ceiling.

Government has its appointed place and is a source of great good to men. Let it serve men; but let it not seek to make a heaven on earth. Let it not try to take the place of God in the affairs of men. This lesson should have been learned by the people of earth quite thoroughly as recently as a generation ago. But alas, the stump that was Hitler has merely turned into the looming menace of godless Soviet power. One day the Watcher will have to cut down that one also. We need not fear that any such tree will grow beyond the appointed bounds. Rather, we should be on our guard against the dreams of empire which we ourselves are being taught to dream. Our own country has come to believe that we must now fill the sky and reach unto heaven, to be the saviors, rescuers and suppliers of all the earth, man and beast. This menace lies behind much of the political thought of our day. Men are being driven by the ambition to provide a heaven on earth. More and more, government boasts of its increasing ability to supply all the needs of men. The dream of a perfect world through the union of science and governmental authority is once again the danger of our civilization. Even the churches have been encouraged to pitch into the work of making this a better world; and some have thereby been diverted from the task of saving souls to the preaching of a social gospel. They

are more interested in the United Nations than in the Truth. Already the branches of Nebuchadnezzar's tree are hiding the sky. Beware!

2.

God has put a ceiling on trees. Let us not fail to make a personal application of this important truth as well. For king Nebuchadnezzar was involved personally in the tragedy which befell his kingdom because he himself had grown too tall. While his empire was saved from destruction at this time, he went through a real valley of the shadow of death which was seven years long. During that time he was not fit to live among men. All his glory was dead, his mind was gone, and the only things that grew for him now were his hair and his nails.

Governments are not the only things that try to fill the earth and shut out God. Sometimes this happens in the private life of an individual. We remarked once before in our studies in this Book that individuals can and do set themselves up in a little kingdom of their own. They feather a life-nest; they land a good job or acquire a patch of soil. They are able to surround themselves with a fine family. They have a two-car garage and that which belongs in it. God, who lets His sun shine on the evil and on the good, who sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust, does not pass them by with His bounty. They prosper by His Grace; but suddenly we find them on the balcony of their little palaces saying proudly: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?"

A strange thing begins to happen. They no longer need God. Their tree has grown into heaven — they think. No longer do they say with Paul: "It is better for me to depart and to be with Christ." They do not want to depart; they want to stay, always, and not hear about death. They begin to speak about the "good luck" they have had rather

than of the goodness of the Lord. They talk about the hard work that has gotten them all this. Their muscles or their brain, or both, fill all the sky for them.

For him who finds that his little empire has grown so big in his eyes that heaven seems undesirable and the daily mercy of God upon the poor sinner unimportant ought to call a halt before it is too late, lest he be cut down to size. How often have we not seen their church's importance fade in the lives of people. Prayer, repentance and hunger for God's Word and a truly confessional fellowship were replaced by a home, a job and an insurance policy with a bank account on the side.

Let no one think that God is on his side simply because he has prospered. Let him look at Nebuchadnezzar and learn that, while his Babylon may be paved with gold, the axe is already laid at the root of the tree.

Our little kingdom must not get too big to serve its one primary purpose; and that purpose is a growing ability to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and use the earthly equipment as a profitable member of His eternal Kingdom. When your kingdom stops building the Church of God, when it gets in the way of your struggling feet trying to cover the rocky path to heaven, when it fails to provide your children with the best available system of training for citizenship in the Kingdom of Jesus, then may God show you the mercy He extended to Nebuchadnezzar. If we find ourselves one day, by our own folly, reduced in size and on hands and knees in the field of ruin and loss, then we will have learned the hard way that trees shall not reach heaven. Let us not wait for that experience. May the sky above us ever be open, that we may look upward, and know that our home is there, and the Throne of Grace.

PAIDEIA

Lack of space has forced us to defer the usual article by Martin Galstad until our next issue. Our readers may be assured, however, that both the department and further contributions by its former head will continue to appear.

E.R.

PANORAMA

DAKOTA—MONTANA An item of particular
A STATEMENT interest for our readers and
 all members of our Church of
the Lutheran Confession is a notice that appeared on page
339 of the October 18th issue of the Northwestern
Lutheran, over the signature of its Editor and under the
following heading:

CORRECTION

Dakota-Montana District Convention Report

The report on the Dakota-Montana District Convention in the August 9, 1964 issue (page 254, third column), contains the accusation that the Church of the Lutheran Confession has "blasphemed the Gospel." We are informed that the report of the Floor Committee on Doctrinal Matters did not make this statement. Rather, it stated that the actions of the Church of the Lutheran Confession have caused "outsiders to blaspheme the Gospel." —The Editor.

* * * * *

So far the notice in the Northwestern Lutheran.

The careful reader will note that while the form of the accusation is modified by this correction, the charge of "causing" the Gospel to be blasphemed still stands.

The grave implications of such an accusation, which we must reject as unfounded slander, have been brought to the attention of the President of the Wisconsin Synod. We withhold our comment until it becomes clear what the official reaction will be.

Paul G. Albrecht, President
Church of the Lutheran Confession

E. Schaller, Chairman
Board of Doctrine, C. L. C.

CRESCENDO
ACCELERANDO

For musicians this means louder, faster. It applies equally well to the ecumenicians of our

day. At its second session the Vatican Council, seeking to improve the image of Catholicism for a modern world, gave preliminary consideration to a schema, or brief, advocating that the Church absolve the Jewish nation of responsibility for the death of Christ—"deicide." Having thus tested the temperature of the water with a tentative toe Rome waited for the reactions, which were of such a nature that the revised schema now before the current council is much less liberal. Yet strong efforts are being made, particularly by the American bishops, to restore the broadmindedness of the earlier version. Now the Episcopalian Church has stolen a march in this race for popular approval by not only considering the question, but by declaring the Jews absolved

of the charge. Let the churches, all churches, repent of whatever part they may have had in the cultivating of "Judenhass," of the vicious and malevolent anti-Semitism that brought such an indelible blot on the history of our "civilized Twentieth Century. Let them repent of having forgotten the warning of Paul: "Be not highminded, but fear. . . . otherwise thou also shall be cut off." (Rom. 11:20, 22) But let men not seek to reverse the verdict that was rendered by God Himself when Peter, speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the Jews of Jerusalem declared of Jesus Christ: Him . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." (Acts 2:23) Or are such modern churchmen ready to trade away the truth of God's Word for the pleasant comfort and convenience of the modern ecumenical movement?

But music of that movement becomes louder and moves ever faster. According to David Runge of the Milwaukee Journal staff, a Roman Catholic priest has asked a group of Lutherans to come to his church Nov. 1 (All Saints Day) and coach members of the Catholic parish in singing hymns, including Martin Luther's battle hymn of the Reformation, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." The degree to which the Lutheran pastor (the Rev. Hoover Grimsby, Ascension Lutheran Church, TALC) was overwhelmed by the prospect of achieving a "first" in this movement appears from the following two statements as they are quoted by Mr. Runge:

"Pastor Grimsby said the experiment demonstrated 'what one man (the late Pope John) has done to change the whole atmosphere within Christianity."

And:

"Luther, even though he was excommunicated, claimed until the day he died that he was a Catholic," Pastor Grimsby said.

Shades of Luther! "A Catholic"? —or perhaps "a catholic"!

But as we said before concerning the enticing music of the ecumenical movement: "Crescendo" and "Accelerando." Louder and faster!

E. Reim

A NEW
HOPE

"HOPE" is the name of a new religious periodical that has come to our desk. We like its make-up. It is clean and dignified. We like its cover motto: "Always be ready to answer anyone who asks you to explain the HOPE you have." (I Peter 3:15, in the new Concordia translation) The way in which this motto ties in with the name of the periodical is a singularly happy touch. We like the statement of purpose: "Published . . . in the interest of true, Biblical Christianity." We like much of the material found in this first issue.

But—why must there always be a "but"? —we are concerned about the undue emphasis on matters political, particularly in opposition to Communism. We are well aware of the dangers of this atheistic philosophy. But there is also a danger in the things that divert one's attention from the Gospel. See I Timothy 1:3-7. We therefore venture to hope that it will be in this direction, namely of the Gospel, that this new publication will eventually come to find its sole HOPE.

E. Reim

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