



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

I Timothy 4:15

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MEDITATIONS

IN THE

BOOK OF DANIEL

E. Schaller

CHAPTER V

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN

When the end came at last, it came as it usually does—swiftly, as a hawk strikes out of the sun upon its prey, as the lightning flashes from its cover in the low-hanging cloud. We have watched the growing storm. We have seen the kingdom of Babylon teetering on the very edge of destruction time and again; we have waited and wondered how long the patience and mercy of God would endure. God waited until it was night. In spirit let us live through that night again before it descends upon our generation. For it was not only an earthly night when Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain and Darius the Mede took the kingdom, but a spiritual night as well, the end of grace, the beginning of eternal judgment. Such a night comes daily upon thousands of human beings. It is the night when the words of a final verdict are spoken upon them personally in the hour of death: "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting."

1

It had been dark enough in the kingdom of Babylon while Nebuchadnezzar sat upon the throne. The shadows of idolatry, ignorance and unbelief lay upon the land like a velvet blanket and enveloped the heart of the king. Yet in this darkness a light shines! God is striking sparks, trying to kindle a fire in the heart of the ruler. The Word of the Lord comes to him by Daniel the prophet, and Nebuchadnezzar strains to listen. He learns, in a hard way, of the majesty of the true God and bows before it (chapter 4:34-37). Yes, the Word of the Lord was abroad in the land, and the Name of the Almighty was proclaimed even by the king himself. It was a time of darkness, but of hope as well. For while men listen to the voice of God and heed the works of His hands, there is hope.

But the judgment of God is fair and just. The hand that wrote the fateful words of doom upon the wall in the brightly lighted palace of Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's son and successor, wrote nothing new. For must this not also have been the divine verdict upon Nebuchadnezzar: Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting? " Was he a better king? Was he less vile and ugly?

It used to be that one could walk into an apothecary's shop, now known but unrecognizable as a drug store, and watch the skilled pharmacist weigh out the grains of medicine carefully upon his delicate scales. O how fine were those balances. How they trembled and tilted when the smallest grain of powder fell upon one side against the other. Such scales are fabulously accurate—yet not nearly so exact as the scales of God's judgment. It takes very little sin, not more than a tiny lawless thought in our innermost heart, to put us out of balance with the Lord's holiness. And how shall we, of ourselves, acquire so much as a mote of the massive righteousness required by God's Law? In this respect there is no difference whatever between any one of

us, or between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. All are in equal condemnation.

But let not that judgment, true as it is, commit any heart to despair. For even in the time of Nebuchadnezzar the star of hope shone. God was revealing Himself to Nebuchadnezzar. God had a word to speak, an offer to make, to the king and to his people, all condemned under God's Law yet greatly loved in God's heart. Nebuchadnezzar heard that call. It told him to humble himself, to repent; and behind this call was God's salvation by that promised Savior who was to supply the want of all men. No matter that we were weighed in the balances and found wanting; God in His great mercy was willing to supply the lack. The sins He will abolish through the suffering of His Son; the needed righteousness He will provide by the obedience of the Christ who lived to keep the Law for men. This offer was ready for Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon just as it is ready for us today. Let the sinner turn from his way and live, says the Lord with whom is forgiveness. Where this word resounds and men listen, God waits. For the Beloved of God was thrown into the scales on the side of humanity. God threw Him in with Nebuchadnezzar, that bloodthirsty tyrant. He threw Him into the balance with the inhabitants of wicked Babylon, and waited.

And Belshazzar threw Christ out of the scales again! Then it was night, and there was no star anywhere. Belshazzar, who inherited not only a kingdom, but a divine promise of Grace; Belshazzar, who himself was called after the Babylonian name of his pastor, Daniel the prophet, lost all the ground God had gained for him. We find him at a feast for a thousand of his lords, with his wife and concubines, drinking. The offer of peace from the Lord God is gone as though it had never been. The Grace that hung over the empire is brushed away. What the father had learned, the son has forgotten and the sins of the father have come back to possess king and country. Belshazzar is drinking the wine of defiance from the vessels of the house of the Lord. The mercy of God has been despised and there is nothing left to

throw into the scales. The time has come as it had in the days of the flood, as it did again in the day when Christ wept over Jerusalem and as it will again when the final shadows close down upon the earth.

Outside, while Belshazzar sat at the banquet, the army of the Medes and Persians lay about the city walls. It was this army which broke in that very night, and the end came. But the king could feast as though there were no danger. Just so there are people today who, surrounded by the troops of the last enemy, are so far gone that they cannot even be afraid. They eat, drink and are merry, but tomorrow they die out of balance, hopelessly and forever. The last thing they will ever see on this side of the the unconsciousness of death will be the white hand of God writing: TEKEL! And they will understand.

"Late, late, so late; and dark the night and chill.
Late, late, so late. But we can enter still?
Too late. Too late. Ye cannot enter now.

"No light, so late; and dark and chill the night.
O let us in, that we may find the light!
Too late. Too late. Ye cannot enter now."

O, "if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!"

2

How is it with us? In our age the day is far spent. How dark will the night be? No darker, surely, than the night in which Belshazzar weighed in before God and could not tip the scales in his favor. But it is noteworthy that even in the Stygian blackness of the brightly lit banquet hall in Babylon a voice was heard, resounding for anyone who might yet listen.

We are told that as the letters of divine judgment stood there, glittering on the wall, the king and his thousand nobles heard a voice from the past, out of another and a better age. The queen came into the house of feasting. What a remarkable and meaningful moment! Outside, in the quiet chambers of the palace, a regal old lady heard, from the servants, of the shattering fear that had suddenly silenced the drunken shouts. This woman was the queen-mother, the mother or grandmother of Belshazzar. Of the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar's house she was left—she and her memories. She lived in the "good" days, though they were bad enough. She recalled how, when sin and shame were at their worst, the voice of God would ring out, how it was heard and understood.

The queen-mother came, in this last hour, to try to save her offspring and her nation. Powerfully, sternly, she addressed the drunken young fool with the words: "Thy father, the king Nebuchadnezzar—I say, thy father...." With great force she persuaded the young ruler, then, to turn to a forgotten man, to the man of God. Belshazzar did not even know Daniel anymore; but the royal mother brought him back to the attention of the court. It was a last-ditch fight to revive the truth and the hope of God.

We know that it failed. Belshazzar was so hardened that he believed not a word. In the most affable manner he decorated Daniel with the title of third ruler of the kingdom; and this after God had written UPHARSIN: "Thy kingdom is divided."

It is always the younger generation, the last one, which will lift up its proud and lustful heart against the message of God and bring upon itself the final judgment. Thus our young people have need to consider this story, especially those young people of our day who have behind them the record of a glorious past when the Word of God was richly made known. Mark the words of Daniel to Belshazzar: "And thou his son, Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart,

though thou knewest all this." Here is the trademark of tragedy to which our Lord also referred in speaking to Jerusalem. To her also it could be said: Thou knewest all this.

When Belshazzar stared at the four words written on the plaster, why did he not understand them? For the same reason that some of the younger generation of today no longer understand their catechism—because they have put its doctrines out of their minds. The words on the wall were not mysterious. They were not mystic symbols unintelligible to the king and his wise men. Students of Aramaic, Babylonian and Hebrew understand them today. But for Belshazzar their message was so oldfashioned, so lacking in "relevance" that he cannot guess the significance. All that God said here was far from his way of thinking. He had put God out of his mind, his balances. He was having a good time. The old mother could have told him, and did try to tell him, what implications lay in that writing. His old pastor told him explicitly. Their speaking was the last echo of hope departed.

It seems that this experience is beginning to repeat itself in our day. God has been very good to us. In the days of our fathers and in our tender youth He made known to us in fullest measure the mercy of His dealings with us in Christ Jesus. We were shown the way to salvation, the way of Truth, of Righteousness. It is not the way of the world, but the way of being separate from this world and holding to Christ who tips the balances in our favor and makes us acceptable to His Heavenly Father.

But there are signs that this knowledge is becoming old-fashioned. Churches are revelling in theological celebrations at which the wine of fatuous ecumenicity and the rather aged brandy of Sadducean liberalism is being drunk out of the sacred vessel of Holy Scripture by the children and children's children of sainted theologians to whom the Word was sacred and inviolate. Where this develops, the armies of destruction already lie encamped outside the walls; there

the fingers of God move in to write. And then it is time to call in those who did not sit at the banquet table. It is time to call in the old folk and listen to them as they tell of the past and speak the Word of the Lord. Indeed, it is almost past time. But for those who will listen with penitent hearts there is yet an hour for turning back to the gracious face of God.

CHAPTER VI

INVISIBLE LIONS

This is the story of Daniel in the lions' den with which we are all very well acquainted. We have met Daniel and we have often looked with vicarious horror upon the hungry beasts in pictures drawn by artists in order to let us feel the terror of that long night which Daniel spent with them.

But there were other lions at large in that area. Nobody has to our knowledge ever painted a picture of them in this manifestation because they were invisible lions. Paradoxically, however, it is not difficult for Christian people to find them and recognize them as they roam through the chapter before us. They are very real, and extremely dangerous. It is written: "The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." He is the biggest lion in the text. Daniel faced him long before he was thrown to the beasts of flesh and blood. And this lion has his mates, his helpers, his pride. They join forces to tear the heart of faith out of children of God with their terrible jaws. These are the lions we must learn to know and fear. This meditation will pass over the lions in the den and point out at least two of the more ravenous beasts that slink and snap at Daniel's heels in the hope of destroying his soul.

1

The first we shall call the lion of importance. It is hard to find a better name for him; but that does not really matter. To discover him, look for his shadow in the first three verses of the chapter and catch a brief glimpse of him in flight in verse 10.

We are told that Darius the king set up an organization of princes to govern his vast empire and, after carefully selecting the men for each post, finally came to the conclusion that none was as well fitted to head this organization as the foreigner Daniel, once a captive from the tribe of Judah. Here is Daniel, then, still at the top. We have now seen this happen under three kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius. Kings come and go in Babylon, but Daniel abides. The government needs him, He is a protector of the realm, supremely important, although by now he must be near his ninetieth year. Yet he is in grave danger and has been ever since, as a tender youth, he came to Nebuchadnezzar's court and was clothed in the soft garments of those that dwell in king's houses. The roaring lion of importance was after him almost from the beginning. This beast can be dressed as a political lion, a social lion, a labor lion, a promotion lion. He is present and hungry whenever a child of God is honored with importance by the world.

Let us probe the danger of Daniel. Here was a stranger in a country not his own. He came from a little farming and ranching community in Judah, from a small kingdom which was now defunct and lay dead under the iron heel of the great world powers. He came from a people different from all others in that they were the Israel of the true God. His religion and beliefs were entirely different from those common in the heathen empire. He was indeed a stranger in a strange land. But that strange land had honored and promoted him. Men bent their knees before him by order of kings who themselves leaned on this man. When the world smiles like that, how easy it is for a man to forget his pro-

vincial origins. In this case, how easy for Daniel to forget that he was an Israelite, that he was different, that he did not belong to this world which pays homage to him. Judah could seem very far away, better forgotten. Here was new and glorious opportunity; here was a great future in Babylon. Why be an Israelite, and above all, why keep up the old religion? There was so little time for it, really; and in any case it no longer seemed very relevant.

So we hear the old, evil lion snarling behind Daniel. Look behind you, and you will see him there, too. We need not reach the heights to which Daniel attained in order to experience this danger. It is certainly not wrong to accept promotion and advancement among men. To be of service to the nation, the community, the company or firm for which we work with the gifts that God has bestowed upon us is a part of our divine calling here on earth. And if we are elected chairman of the board or township officer or congressman because there is found in us an excellent spirit; if we prosper and our society looks to us for leadership, well and good. But let us realize that in all this there lies the temptation of becoming citizens of the world while forgetting our true home. However much the world may need us, we are yet not of this world. We are children of spiritual Israel, of the people of God. Our King is the Prince of Judah, born in Bethlehem, who is our Lord and Savior, our Master. The world despises Him as it rejects His Kingdom. But Satan would have us lose sight of this. He will do everything in his power to let soft clothing, personal importance and the interests of the world become so vital to us that they make our faith and its concerns seem petty and unreal.

Shall we be faithful to the Lord when the world flatters us? Must we not become broadminded and learn to live in keeping with our earthly greatness even if it crowds out our Christian principles and our duty to Christ? In our position—some promoted Christians might say—we cannot afford to be different. If I am mayor of the town, I must do what the

town wants even in the face of my Lord's disapproval. If I am in congress, I must stand and pray with atheists and heretics, though my old religion forbids it.

The prime miracle in our chapter is recorded in verse 10. It is a marvel of God's deliverance that this man remained, through all the years, a true child of Jerusalem. There his heart was, and there it remained. Even his windows opened in the direction of God's city. No duty prevented him from being in his private chambers at the hour of worship and prayer. His principles and practices of faith came first, always. At heart he remained a stranger to the world. His enemies bore him witness. When they sought to ruin him before the king, they conceded that in his record as a public servant they could find no cause of unfaithfulness and thus sought to get at him through his religion. This was Daniel's weak spot, his Achilles' heel before the world. Higher praise than this it would be impossible for a Christian to receive. May God's blessing rest upon those who serve God in the beauty of holiness. They are true followers of Him in whom was found no fault at all and who could be crucified only because of His Gospel.

2

Before Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, he came face to face with yet another devilish beast which would have torn him apart where the lion of importance failed. It is very like the other, in truth, because it came from the same litter. We shall call it the lion of denial.

As has just been pointed out, the jealous enemies of Daniel depended upon his one "weakness" to undo him. They will prove him to be a stranger who is not qualified to hold his high position among the regents. And they are so certain of Daniel's faithfulness to his God that they lay all their plans accordingly. Taking advantage of an old Persian custom that every king among them must be honored as a son of the gods, they flatter Darius into passing a law which will put

Daniel into a corner from which he cannot escape. Darius signs a decree forbidding prayer addressed to anyone save himself for the period of a month.

If everything goes according to plan, this will be the end of Daniel. He will pray to his God, the enemies reason; and then the lions will get him. What they did not know or understand was that a lion would get Daniel either way, whether he prayed or not. And we should come to see once again that the beast waiting for him in his room was far more dangerous than the caged animals of flesh and blood. Let us suppose that Daniel simply confounds his enemies and upsets their scheme by denying his God. How easy that would have been ... and how tempting a way of escape. Would you not have thought of it? And do you suppose Daniel did not see the way out?

It was not only an easy way, but a painless one. To avoid the trap, Daniel would just have to do nothing. It was not necessary for him to go to Darius and say: I repudiate my God; or to deny as Peter denied, saying: I know him not. No, it was not that kind of lion which was waiting for Daniel. It was a nice, kind lion. He would purr and say: Why Daniel, how simple! Just keep your mouth and your window shut. Go underground with your religion for thirty days. Don't let them catch you praying. Make them think you have quit.

But what do we read of this man? When he knew the writing was signed, he went into his house and kneeled upon his knees three times a day as he did aforetime. Some folk would say that this was very foolish of him. They would assert that Daniel could have saved himself all that grief and remained true to his Lord by not parading his religion in this time of danger. Yet to say nothing is not only the easiest way of denying Christ; it is often also the most wicked. Daniel did not go out of his way to testify of his faith. He just went his usual way; but he did not turn from it.

It is sometimes said that so long as we do not expressly compromise our faith by acts of unionism, denial or compromise with evil, we are being faithful. But we remember our Lord's words: ".... what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house tops!" And the Apostle commands us "to be ready ALWAYS to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you"

The temptation to keep silence or to speak with a forked tongue when pressure is put upon us is a great temptation. But to deny our Savior by silence means that we have suffered a terrible blow from the paw of the lion of denial. The story of Daniel is the record of a man who by the grace of God turned all his defenses against the lions at large and trusted the Creator, his Savior-God, to deal in His own way with the cats in the den.

CHAPTER VII

DREAMS AND REALITY

The Book of Daniel divides into two parts. The first half of its list of chapters was written to make known to us Daniel, the great and faithful man of God whose example of courage and faith through a long life of trial and temptation must strengthen and inspire all who would live godly in this present evil world. The second half of Daniel's book into which we now venture contains the visions and dreams of the prophet. These chapters are certainly no less a treasure than the better-known first portion of the book. Daniel's dreams were not, like ours, the empty shadows of a restless night. They were heaven-sent dreams or visions by which God in His mercy chose to show the saints of all time the kind of world in which they must be prepared to live as Daniel lived.

The dreams of Daniel take us through the ages of the earth from his time to the end of the world. In them God unrolled the future, even to the age in which we are living

and beyond, like an enormous tapestry; not to satisfy human curiosity about what was or is to come, but to help us, His redeemed people, to walk wisely, to discern the times because the days are evil. Our course to heaven is marked out for us. We are to know also the shape of things which make our going difficult and dangerous. What a blessing to possess a real understanding of the monster forces which have their day on the earth. For thus we walk not in darkness. God shines about us with a steady light. In the visions of Daniel, also, we have a lamp unto our feet.

1

After reading the prophecies of Daniel some would say: We are still in the dark, for these visions are strange and meaningless. But those are the people who never trouble to study the visions which, while wonderfully strange indeed, are also made wonderfully clear by God Himself, as we shall readily see. It is not for us to make something out of Daniel's dreams. It is for us to accept the meaning which the Lord gave them. If we do that, we shall have enjoyed the wisdom they impart.

In the first year of Belshazzar our prophet had a vision in which he saw the sea raging under the four winds of heaven; and as he looked, there arose out of the water, one after the other, four strange animals, each of which underwent certain changes as he watched. After the fourth animal he saw the Ancient of Days, clad in white raiment and seated upon a fiery throne; around Him were thousands and tens of thousands that served Him, and the judgment was set and the books opened. The last beast was slain, his body given to the fire, and one like unto the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven to receive dominion and glory and a kingdom which belongs unto the saints forever and ever.

Does not every Bible Christian feel at home in such a vision? Does he not hear familiar words? Here is the Son of man. Here are the legions of angels that serve God and

carry out His commands. Here are the clouds of heaven which shall bring the Son and all the holy angels with Him to the final judgment and the opening of the books. Daniel's vision, then, reaches to the very end of time, to the Day of days which our Lord and Savior also foretold so plainly in just that way.

The Day of the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will be a day of victory for Him and for us, His saints. A true Christian is he who has learned to set that Day before him as the crowning glory of his hope and striving. All the Christian's roads must lead there; all his pathways meet there; all his hopes, desires and prayers are beamed at that hour when the people of the Most High shall finally take the Kingdom and possess it forever. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Before we shall hear those words, however, we must live and fight through our share of the time that goes before, the age of the beasts.

Daniel sees them rising out of the great ocean of time, amid the sea of nations churning and rolling through the centuries. We need not search the files of our wisdom to discover what God wished to picture with those four beasts. For He himself tells Daniel that they represent four great kingdoms which will occupy the inhabited world. We shall not undertake to examine the beasts in each of their peculiar features for they are easy to recognize without detailed study. The lion-like beast with wings that were plucked and which was then made to stand like a man reminds us enough of Nebuchadnezzar to show us that here is the mighty empire of Babylon. This gave way to the rule of the Medes and Persians, represented by a bear with three ribs in its mouth because the Persians devoured the kingdoms of the Lydians, Babylonians and Egyptians before their voracious dominion yielded to that of the leopard, namely the Greek empire created by Alexander the Great and later ruled by his four generals. Last of all, however, there comes a monster without a natural name, a horrible beast with iron

teeth chewing at everything within reach of its jaws and crushing what they cannot reach. In this connection we recall the iron section of the statue which Nebuchadnezzar once saw in his dream, and recognize this new power, following the Greeks, as the Roman empire that ruled the earth in the days of the Star and the Herods. As the beast had ten horns, which represented ten kingdoms, so from the Roman empire have grown all the succeeding kingdoms of the earth, existing side by side or in series. Ten is the number of incompleteness in the prophecies. Little and big, the horns of the beast sum up all human dominion from the days of Rome to the Day of Judgment. We are living in the time of the ten horns.

It is noteworthy that Daniel asks no questions of his heavenly adviser about the first three beasts. His attention turns to the fourth; for there, it seems, lies the main thrust of the vision. How unspeakably ugly is the fourth beast. Although the first three were unnatural, each in its own way, this one does not even deserve an individual name. And worst of all, there is that eleventh horn—the one that is apart from the normal totality represented by the other ten—the one that has eyes and a mouth which speaks very great things, the horn that by itself makes war against the saints. God tells Daniel that this is a different kind of king, growing out of Rome, who shall speak against God, wear down the saints and endure unto the Coming of the Son of man.

2

What does the Christian learn from this vision about the world, past and present, in which he lives?

It is worth observing that the visions produced in Daniel a grieved and troubled heart and mind (vv.15.28). What he had seen boded nothing pleasant for him or for any child of God on earth. The entire history of the world to the Day of Christ is filled with the rule of beasts, one more cruel and brutal than the other. The powers that seek to control and

shape the course of human society are in the hands, not of an upward-looking, prayerful human group which walks hand in hand with God, but of a down-ward looking, earth-bound and corrupt spirit which can never know the true God. And there is no hope for a change. Only when the last beast is slain will there be a complete reorientation, and the perfect peace of the eternal Kingdom of Christ our Lord shall then prevail. But this will not occur before the Day of final Judgment, as Daniel's vision clearly shows and as the Scriptures teach again and again.

Until then Christians will be hemmed in and pressed on all sides by forces that are not for Christ but against Him and His gracious rule. The antichristian poison is manifested through human activities in many forms and shapes; for it runs in the blood of sin-depraved mankind. But as Daniel foretold, the very center of antichristian power finally formed itself like a horn on the head of the last great beast. Out of Rome has grown this kingdom and its king, different from all others, with wise eyes and a mouth that speaks big things. Here is the very Antichrist, the Roman Papacy so well characterized by Luther and the Confessions. Other antichristian forces as found in communism, lodgery and modernism will come and go, wax and wane; but the eleventh horn, even in its most recent and startling preachment of a bogus ecumenicity, will continue to prod at the saints of God and "wear them out" (v. 25).

How poor, then, are the prospects of Christ's disciples in this antichristian sea that will thunder on until Judgment Day. How can any Christian, looking into the clear mirror of Daniel's prophecy, which is also perfectly matched by the Revelation of St. John, see some hope and a good prospect for himself in the possession of a secure place on earth? Shall we be deceived by the smile of the beast or the leering mouth of the eleventh horn? Or shall we accept the truth that beast and horn know of nothing save making war against the saints? We have no substantive future here. By God's

grace we enjoy many blessings in our earthly life; but these are given us, as it were, directly from above by a violent, miraculous overruling of the Prince of this world and his henchmen, to provide us with sustaining strength and give us breathing space while we labor ere the night comes.

In view of this a question seems appropriate. Just what is all the rush about? What is our hurry? Why the leaping bounds with which we try to match the gait of the earth-bound masses? Where do we think we are going? It is remarkable to see children of God running themselves breathless in affairs of this life and finding so little time to devote to spiritual renewal and to preparations for another future. They think it important to sit in a dentist's office for an hour or two waiting to have a tooth repaired but cannot spend that much time in looking after the needs of their souls in prayer, worship, seeking their pastor's counsel and similar pursuits. They may spend hours in the garage while their tractor is being repaired but find it difficult to remain through an entire communion service. When a day is needed for rest and relaxation, Sunday is chosen at the expense of church attendance because all other days are taken and it would be unthinkable to relax while temporal affairs and rewards are waiting. We ask once again: What's the rush? Perhaps it is the "living" we must make. But we recall having heard somewhere that God, who clothes the grass of the field, will provide even for those of little faith when they seek first the kingdom. The trouble, evidently, is that we are not always fully convinced that there is really nothing else worth seeking so strenuously.

Be sure that everything toward which you may strain and strive and stretch out your hand here on earth is already being held by the forces of Antichrist. What the beast does not have between his teeth he stamps with his feet. The one thing we can gain on earth is a few souls, saved from the jaws of destruction, and our own life which is hid with Christ in God. If there is in us the spirit to rule, to profit, let us apply it to the ruling over our sinful hearts and to the profit

of being hidden in the wounds of the Crucified. Then we will be there when this nightmare ends. Then the kingdom and dominion shall be given to the saints of the Most High.



The Doctrinal Basis

For The Use Of Music In The Church

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

— Alfred Fremder —

Second Installment

LUTHERAN DOCTRINE AND ESTHETICS IN MUSIC

That the position of the Lutheran Church differs radically from the position of the Roman Catholic Church is best seen from this simple statement in the official book of confessions of the Lutheran Church. Even when quoting from the church fathers, the confessions append a remark such as this:

Christian reader, these testimonies of the ancient teachers of the Church have been here set forth, not with this meaning that our Christian faith is founded upon the authority of men. For the true saving faith is to be founded upon no church-teachers, old or new, but only and alone upon God's Word, which is comprised in the Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles, as unquestionable witnesses of divine truth.¹

The emphasis of the Lutheran Church has always been upon sola Scriptura. The Bible determines the position of the Church in any doctrine. The Confessions are adhered to only because they, in turn, adhere to the Bible.

Luther, in writing about the order of Divine Worship, follows Scripture alone, when he advocates:

The important thing is this, that everything be done so that the Word prevails... It is better to abandon everything else except the Word. And there is no better practice or exercise than the Word; and the whole Scriptures show that this should have free course among the Christians; and Christ Himself, also, says, Luke 10, ... One thing is needful, namely that Mary sit at the feet of Christ and hear His word daily. This is the best part, which she has chosen, and will never be taken away. It is an eternal Word; all the rest must pass away no matter how much work it gives Martha to do.²

For the Lutheran Church, as well as for Luther, only the Word reigns. Actually, then, to find a more detailed directive than the above in regard to the use of music in the church, we shall have to go to the Bible. What the Bible says is the Lutheran doctrine on the use of music in the worship of God.

In the Old Testament there are many places where the exhortation to worship is given. Are there restrictions? Is a certain type of music advocated? In Psalm 132:9 we are told: "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy." Note the word "shout." Again, "Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands, Sing forth the honour of his name; make his praise glorious." (Psalm 66:12) A description of the mode of worship is given in Psalm 68:25-26: "The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels. Bless ye God in the

congregations; even the Lord from the fountain of Israel." The nature of singing praise to God is here seemingly one of less calmness than the Catholic Church allows. Even the use of a percussion instrument is here mentioned.

Why this exuberant expression? "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." (Psalm 126:2-3) "I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me." (Psalm 13:6) The singing of praise to God in a joyful way is a confession to others of the great ways God has dealt with His people.

The redemption of the world is given as a reason for joyful, exuberant singing in Isaiah 44:23: "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel." The mystical approach is not given here. It is almost an uninhibited expression of happiness in the fact of redemption. It is always interesting and revealing to note what is not said by the prophet. He does not prohibit from certain ways of expressing in song; there are no "right rules," "prescriptions," "Canons" and "Ordinances."

In answer to a question put to Him by a Samaritan woman regarding the "correct" worship of God, Jesus answered: "... the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24) This frees, rather than binds, the New Testament church.

The entire spirit of New Testament worship can best be expressed in the words of Paul: "Let the word of Christ

dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." (Col. 3:16-17)

That Luther loved the Gregorian music is disputed by no one. He was a child of his time. He was fully aware of beauty in the Gregorian idiom and in the idiom of Josquin, who was his favorite composer. Luther encouraged the writing of music for the Lutheran Church by musicians of his day. As a balanced individual, he was willing to use the best of the past and the present. Realizing the liberty of the church in expressing its praise and prayer to God, he merely required a certain orderliness, so that confusion would not prevail. Even there he bowed to the tastes of individual groups. He did not wish to enjoin what the Bible did not command. That is the heart of the matter.

We cannot speculate about Luther's attitude to the music of Bach, since Bach came later. Some insist that he would have imposed as the most fitting expression of the Lutheran faith the music of the baroque era. The books of Terry and Schweitzer on the expression of the Lutheran faith in the music of Bach are well-known. This paper cannot possibly include a study of the chorale or the baroque idiom in relation to the Lutheran faith. That would have to be a separate study. The important thing is the recognition of the various ways of using music to praise God. There is a common conservatism and a forging ahead in every age. Within the culture of the day, the culture of the people, can music best serve as an individual expression of faith. That is, after all, what music is used for by the Lutheran Church, to express praise to God, not for special efficacious ways of changing hearts for a better reception of the Gospel. The Lutheran Church ascribes the latter power to God Himself.

Accordingly, the esthetics of the matter here is a simple one. By majority usage and opinion, that is best which provides the best possible way of expressing faith. If tastes differ, let them differ. Different tastes may prevail here or there. Freedom is the principle rule, if it can be called a rule.

This same viewpoint is mentioned by Lang in his discussion of Luther's use of music:

Luther's writings disclose a love of music and a remarkable understanding of its nature.

'Is it not singular and admirable that one can sing a simple tune or tenor (as the musici call it) while three, four, or five other voices, singing along, envelope this simple tune with exultation, playing and leaping around and embellishing it wonderfully through craftsmanship as if they were leading a celestial dance, meeting and embracing each other amiably and cordially. Those who have a little understanding of this art and are moved by it, must express great admiration and come to the conclusion that there is hardly a more unusual thing than such a song adorned with several voices.'

This statement is remarkable not only because of its profound understanding of the nature of polyphonic music but also for the absence of the typical classical comparisons and quotations usually displayed by Luther's contemporaries when praising music. He does not invoke Apollo and Orpheus; to him music is a living art, the art of the present. His favorite composer was Josquin Despres, whom he characterized as 'master of the notes; others are mastered by them.' This observation betrays again a keen musical sense a sure judgment of art; Luther recognized in Josquin the sovereign genius to whom the subtleties of counterpoint were only a means of expression, in contrast to the rank and file of Gesangmeister who were too pre-

occupied with the niceties of the mensural theory. It is commonly supposed that Luther's interest lay only in furthering active participation of the community as a whole in the divine service; hence his insistence upon the use of the German vernacular. But an examination of his writings will disclose that his was a much broader conception. Thus, although the fundamental idea in Luther's mind was to arrange his music for the sake of what he called the 'common ordinary man,' he endeavored to leave the door open for a possible artistic development. This remarkable man realized that a one-sided, popular, and earth-bound movement in art must inevitably decline. He avoided the straits of experimentation, but also the puritanic primitiveness of Calvin, who banished even the simple accompaniment of hymns.³

Thus the relation between doctrine and esthetics in music is for the Lutheran Church a comparatively simple one. Realizing that a cultus may change, that what best expresses for one era the gratitude and praise to God may be modified or replaced in other eras. No legislation is commanded in Scripture; no legislation is enacted by the church.

A Comparison

Since the doctrinal bases for the use of music in the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic churches have been presented in detail, there are only a few remarks that need to be made. First of all, the Roman Church, in making such strong claims—esthetic and religious—for its chant, has actually made of its music a second "Gospel." There is a mystic power claimed. It still has to be proved that the music itself, apart from the religious element, has the power claimed for it. If it does not, then the religion itself is the determining factor. In the chant, it would be interesting to conduct controlled experiments to see whether the music has all the qualities described in the first two chapters. The experiments would have to be conducted among people who do not identify the chant with the Roman Church.

In the Lutheran Church, on the other hand, no such religious or esthetic claims for the music need be made. Some have made them, to be sure. Music plays a strong part in influencing emotions or exciting them. But according to the Bible, the sole norm for the Lutheran Church, music is an outpouring of joyous expression. No other claim is made by the Bible. The one exception, a matter of historical record, is the account of the boy David playing for Saul and driving the evil spirit away. Whether it was sacred or secular music is not mentioned. If it had been sacred music, the question still is not answered fully, for the activity of making or listening to music may have been one of Saul's chief delights and the engaging in the hearing of it may have accomplished the purpose.

Dr. Peter Wagner is quoted as remarking about the Bach B minor Mass and the Beethoven Mass in D:

'This (the Beethoven Mass in D) and the Bach B minor Mass, constitute the most colossal disregard of the text of the Ordinary that history has ever produced.'⁴

The devout Lutheran might toss his head and irreverently interject the undignified phrase, "So what!" The main thing is the praise of God; let form and tradition go by the board. The Bible mentions the "spirit and truth" of the worship, not the form. It is a remarkable thing that the Bible exhorts to the using of music always in the idiom of the day.

The two churches are radically opposed in the matter of form and the legislating of practice. In addition, the Roman Church, as we have seen, feels that a spirit of "fear and contrition" must be in the liturgical music, "calm joy" at the most. The Lutheran Church allows any expression of faith that does not offend, but rather edifies. "Let all things be done unto edifying." (I Corinthians 14:26b) There is also the opinion voiced by advocates of the chant against the use of polyphony and harmonic music, other, of course, than that of the school of Palestrina.

There is no room in the Roman Church for a more perfect liturgical expression, in contrast to the Lutheran view. A Catholic writer admits this freely:

Both the first written stories of Christ and the first Church melody were respectively perfected at a very early age... The Church has safeguarded these inspired writings of the Evangelists, down through many centuries, from any touch of alteration in their content matter, and this since the time of the earliest versions.

We believe, then, with unshakable faith, that the first melodies of the Church, which, we repeat, 'the ancients did not fear to call inspired by God,' these melodies which have been restored to us through the untiring efforts of so many illustrious men, will likewise be guarded over by the Church henceforth, and preserved from any future tragedy, until the time when 'the first heaven and the first earth' are gone, 'and the sea is now no more.'⁵

The spirit of Lutheranism in respect to new music is that, if used to the glory of God alone and the edifying of the people, it can be introduced, no matter what the idiom. The music of King David may well have shocked those who demand the quiet repose of the soul. Did David worship God less well? It was the spirit and truth of the worship that counted. The idiom, the types of instruments, etc.,⁶ have perhaps been made a fetish in the years that followed. The freedom of worship expressed by David, however, bears rich testimony to the glory of that procedure. Whereas the Roman Church has forbidden the use of various instruments, loud and percussive, the exhortation of the Psalmist produces one of the greatest crescendos ever conceived, as he says:

Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary:
praise him in the firmament of his power.

Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psalter and harp.

Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.
Praise ye the Lord.⁷

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FOOTNOTES

1. Concordia Triglotta, 1149
2. Luther, Works of Martin Luther, Vol. VI, 63-64
3. Lang, Music in Western Civilization, 208
4. Pierik, The Spirit of Gregorian Chant, 180
5. Pierik, op. cit., 67
6. Cf. Idelsohn, Jewish Music.
7. Psalm 150

PAIDEIA

Teaching the teachers

Our people are surely interested in the preparation of of those who teach their children, whether in the schools of the state or in those of the church. The increasing emphasis on education is something which they neither can avoid nor wish to ignore.

The minimal reader must have come across the argument between the academic professors and the professional educators, for it echoes from learned journals and best-selling books through the weekly small-town newspaper editorials.

There is a history to all of this. Learning was one time the privilege of the few, having been that way for the most of recorded time. Until the last hundred years or so learning was pretty much the property of the university, and that freehold held in fee simple much that is today the prerogative of the school, both secondary and elementary. For example, arithmetic did not go beyond the "rule of three" in common school, and the mysteries of long division were first revealed at some such place as Harvard.

Furthermore, the university was very much for the elite, the social or the moneyed kind, and was accessible almost exclusively to those who aimed at medicine, theology, or law. Another built-in monopoly existed: the "certification" of teachers who had first so "mastered" their subjects that they were finally graduated as doctors—

doctors being defined as those who could and were permitted to teach. They, and they alone, could be called professors.

It was a cozy domain. The curriculum was limited to the seven liberal arts, nothing else being considered worthy of the term "learning." The instruction was excellent for those who could abide it; the rest withdrew or didn't bother to come. Until relatively recent modern times both the public high schools and the private secondary schools worked hard to prepare everybody that entered for college and university, hence the term "prep schools." (The American academy was a living protest against this curriculum, and has its own story.) Only the bright youngsters went to high school and college, a common practice that some of us today remember well if we are beyond fifty.

Those were the "good old days" that some writers seek to restore to education, when high school and college were "tough" and vast numbers failed. They were the days of clearly-drawn lines of battle between teachers and students, when a student caught fraternizing with a professor, or even asking an intelligent question in class, was marked for ostracism from the student body. Students often broke down mentally and physically in their day-and-night fears of the examinations and preparation for the final ordeals.

The professors in those days were men who knew, and they rarely had anything but contempt for the bunglers who didn't. They seemed to have overmuch of the indifference that we still sometimes see in those who are well informed. Research scholars today are often known for their impatience with the classroom; they prefer to leave the teaching to assistants, graduate students on the way up.

A strange assumption was as tenaciously held: that he who knew could assuredly teach. The deception remained undisclosed as long as those who came to school were

sufficiently motivated and bright enough to learn despite the ignorance of good professional practice that prevailed in many colleges.

But a time of change brought on a crisis: thousands began coming to school who before had gone to work. Many professors were helpless before those who needed help, for they had grown accustomed to merely failing them. Behavior problems particularly left them enraged and helpless. It had not dawned on them that the fault might lie partly with the teachers. They had often given but fleeting thought to the fact that learning might be a process, not just a content and quantity to be instilled, memorized, and tested. They had stopped their ears to the voices calling to them from China, Judea, Greece, and Rome; from Luther, Comenius, Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel, Mann, and Parker; not until the crescendo roared to its climax in Dewey did something give.

Then some sad solutions were the last resort: lowered standards, meaningless courses, adjustment theories that were only partial truth, socialization ventures that did more to cover up the needs of children and students than to give basic help and solid solutions. Extremes begat extremes, and the flood of secondary students in the 1930's and 1940's led to such demoralization of traditionally trained teachers that in the 1950's books began to flood the country in the spirit of Canon Bell's writings on the crisis in education. The Lynds and the Bestors kept it up until the more recent criticisms of the Rickovers and the Raffertys. The Russian orbiting of Sputnik released a flood of denunciation.

A new type of teacher had rushed in to put out the fire, and many observers were sure they saw the lamp of learning flickering out. The unpardonable sin of the educators lay in their merciless rocking of the thrones of the professors in arts and sciences. The hardening of heart in academia had come from its long refusal to consider the

human side of the educational equation, or so it was said. The quarrel went on for years, and a good summary of how the battle stands now is given in the first chapter of The Education of American Teachers (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1963) by Dr. James B. Conant:

"Why are the academic professors angry? What are they angry about? Many academic professors believe that the courses given by professors of education are worthless, and that the degrees granted students who have devoted much of their time to these courses are of little value. It is generally the case that the academic professors who advance these arguments know far too little about education courses. And unfortunately, what some professors of education have written about education can be labeled anti-intellectual. But what particularly irritates the academic professors is what professors of education say about teaching. After all, those who are engaged in college teaching usually pride themselves on their skill as teachers. And here are those who call themselves 'professional educators' claiming that they and only they know what is good teaching! They imply, and sometimes openly state, that if all professors had taken their courses they would be better teachers! To make matters worse, in more than one state no one is permitted to teach in a junior college unless he has taken courses in education. If this is justified, the opponents ironically demand, why not require all teachers of freshmen and sophomores in four-year colleges to study under professors of education? To this question, professors of education often answer, 'Such a requirement ought to be on the books.'"

To complete the picture we must add that as of today there is little doubt that the professional educators, in league with the many state Departments of Education, teacher-training institutions, and teacher professional organizations of all kinds, pretty much hold, not as a sinecure but with some anxiety, the bastion of authority

that not so long ago was held by the university as a guild in charge of a major social service.

Although the struggle is thus going on, there are signs of peace.

We will not attempt in a few pages to summarize further the vicissitudes of the battle, about which there are many books, but we do deem it a service to descry some signs of saner days ahead.

The book quoted above has received this estimation from an observer of the educational scene who is as sober as any, Paul Woodring: "This is not just another of a long list of reports to be read and filed away. Compared to those that have preceded it, including both those of professional educators and their critics, this report is more statesmanlike and reflects a broader background of carefully considered evidence on both sides of each issue. It requires decision and action."

There is a growing realization that good teachers do not necessarily result from a large number of required professional courses. Nor does Conant find sound evidence that a certain kind of college course makes the difference between effective and ineffective teachers. There is more hope for the future of education if there is a realization that a certain kind of person makes a better teacher than does a certain quantity of mastered knowledge. What counts is demonstrated teaching ability; and if a graduate is certified by his college as having shown this ability, he should be allowed and welcomed to teach, and in any of the fifty states.

This demonstration of teaching ability should be made in a qualified and well-equipped and well-supervised practice school. The professor who supervises and assesses practice teaching should be recognized as a superb teacher of children and as a skilled teacher of college students.

Such recommendations of Mr. Conant should be productive of peace.

Furthermore, practice teaching should be combined with work in special methods. General methods and some introductory courses to education are not highly esteemed by Conant, and his reasons are sound: the contents of these courses tend to duplicate the material already learned in the more basic courses. It seems wise not to multiply and refine the methods courses. That they are being reduced could well help reduce the hostilities.

And it would help the peace along if more of the arts and sciences and language teachers would accept the enlightening values of psychology and philosophy. In psychology, Conant finds, there is a coming together of metaphysics, anatomy and physiology, with the vast domain of commonsense generalizations about human nature. The academicians would help the peace along if they joined in boning up on individual differences, child growth and development, tests and measurements, adolescent psychology, mental health and abnormal psychology. They should have a nodding acquaintance with learning theory, too, as exemplified in Pavlov's dogs, Thorndike's cats, Kohler's apes, and Skinner's pigeons. It is surprising how great can be the residue and carry-over from such studies, even to him who follows the recent Woodworth's advice to forget psychology after he has studied it. What one remembers after he forgets what he learned in school does, finally, constitute his education.

These further recommendations should receive peaceful agreement: adequate educational exposure to these fields before the baccalaureate degree: mathematics, physical science, biological science, social science, English literature, English composition, history, philosophy; leave of absence for further education of teachers; financial assistance to teachers for study in summer schools; a probationary period in which the beginning teacher is not swamped

with responsibility and so discouraged; in-service education in short workshops to keep teachers up to date (as in mathematics and physics).

Those of our readers who are directly concerned with our own teachers college will be interested to know that the suggested curriculum could almost be copied from our catalog, both as to the junior college and as to the high school. Our size and equipment at times prevent the pursuit of courses in depth, but the exposure is admirable. A bit sobering, yet enunciating a challenge, is the former Harvard president's recommendation regarding small colleges: "Those responsible for financing and administering small colleges should consider whether they can afford to maintain an adequate staff for the preparation of elementary school teachers. Unless they are able to employ the equivalent of three or four professors devoting their time to elementary education, they should cease attempting to prepare teachers for the elementary schools." It should be remembered that a small college is generally one with an enrollment of 500-1500. A diminutive one is something else again, perhaps heaven's gift to the profession.

The case for sound preparation in scope and depth is well stated in Dr. Conant's words:

"There is, moreover, an important practical reason for certain studies: almost any teacher inevitably faces the necessity of dealing with subjects outside his area of specialization, not only in his classroom but also in conversations with students. If he is largely ignorant or uninformed, he can do much harm. Moreover, if the teachers in a school system are to be a group of learned persons cooperating together, they should have as much intellectual experience in common as possible, and any teacher who has not studied in a variety of fields in college will always feel far out of his depth when talking with a colleague who is the high school teacher in a field other than his own.

"And too, if teachers are to be considered as learned persons in their communities (as they are in certain European countries), and if they are to command the respect of the professional men and women they meet, they must be prepared to discuss difficult topics. This requires a certain level of sophistication. For example, to participate in any but the most superficial conversations about the impact of science on our culture, one must have at some time wrestled with the problems of the theory of knowledge. The same is true when it comes to the discussion of current issues."

On top of all this, and more important than all of it, is the need to know our Christian religion: "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." I Peter 3:15

Martin Galstad

--- --- **PANORAMA** --- ---

A MATTER OF BLASPHEMY

The October issue of our JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY, page 40, brought a statement the importance of which

was indicated by the attached signatures of the President of our CLC and the Chairman of its Board of Doctrine. Dealing with certain accusations made against our church in the pages of the NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN, it closed with the information that the matter had been brought to the attention of the President of the Wisconsin Synod, and that further comment was being withheld "until it becomes clear what the official reaction will be." Since this has now been made abundantly clear our Board of Doctrine has formulated its comment, publishing it in the December issue of the LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN, page 14. Since most of our readers are also receiving the SPOKESMAN, it should not be necessary to repeat that article here. We shall confine ourselves to a few special observations, intended to supplement the official statement in regard to the chief points at issue.

As indicated by our heading, the accusation against our CLC is one of blasphemy, either by direct act or by causing "outsiders" to commit this sin. That is about the heaviest type of ammunition that can be launched in a religious controversy, a veritable H-bomb! In charity one may assume that it was introduced without careful thought as to its full implications. If so, that is just so much the more reason for doing some careful thinking now. For at this stage a thoughtless word can do great harm.

As long as this world still stands, the Gospel will be blasphemed. Jesus experienced it as the result of His preaching the Gospel of forgiveness of sins to the paralytic of Matthew 9. It happened to Paul because of the Gospel

that he preached; of justification by grace, through faith, without the deeds of the Law. Luther published his Ninety-five Theses of pure Gospel and thereby "caused" a torrent of blasphemy to erupt, not merely against his own person but against the Gospel with its sola gratia, sola fide. It should be obvious that not every word or action which is followed by a burst of blasphemy (and thus may be said to have "caused" it) is therefore eo ipso a sinful cause. A careful distinction is necessary at this point.

But there is indeed another reason why there will always be blasphemy against the Gospel. For all Christians are still burdened with their flesh, and that will ever again cause them to fall into gross sin, thus furnishing only too positive an occasion for blasphemy against the Gospel, as did David with his adulterous conduct. It will occur likewise when church bodies that should stand together split apart and as a result the Gospel is again the victim, being mocked by the world and sometimes vehemently blasphemed by others.

To have such things happen because of one's course of action is indeed a grave responsibility. Though one may have uttered no word of blasphemy with his own lips, yet to have caused others to fall into this sin is in fact a sin in itself, the sin of offense, to cause another to stumble in his faith, perhaps even to perish in unbelief. And what our Lord says about that is recorded in Mt. 9:6 and 7. Please read. That should cause everyone of us to review his personal conduct and responsibilities, wherever he may stand or belong.

But now let the issue be narrowed down to the deplorable rift between our respective church bodies, CLC and Wisconsin, a rift which as in all such cases may indeed have resulted in widespread mockery and possibly a blaspheming of the Gospel. As we have pointed out above, to say that certain actions were followed by an outburst of blasphemy proves nothing. But when blasphemy has been

caused, when offense has been given, then the real question is, By whom? Perhaps by our CLC? Perhaps by Wisconsin? Perhaps by both? What is to be done in such a situation?

The answer is simple. Let there be full, free and honest discussion of the events that led to this unfortunate breach. Then let those who have sinned repent—for their own soul's sake. And let those who have been sinned against forgive, freely and gladly. And let the ruptured fellowship thus be restored, that the mouths of blasphemers may be stopped, that glory may be given to God.

A MATTER OF TIMING

To let in the light! That was the declared purpose of the first (Mankato, Nov. 1962) meeting of representatives

of Wisconsin and our CLC committee ("for a frank discussion of the issues that lie between us"). That was the aim achieved at least in part by the second meeting (South St. Paul, January 1964). That was the reason for our request that further discussions include a review of Wisconsin's procedures and official doctrinal pronouncements during the critical period from 1955 to 1961, plus examples of official practice in the matters of the divine Call. While Wisconsin's "Report to the Nine Districts" (May-June 1964) seemed to take a dim view of this procedure, saying "that a joint review of all that happened between 1955-1961 would not serve a wholesome purpose," it did set forth the idea of a new approach, which so far however has not been further defined. But it did seem to contemplate further meetings. Subsequently a sub-committee was appointed to work on this question.

That is why the publication of this accusation of blasphemy is so singularly ill-timed. One need not try to determine whether the district which originated the charge was thereby undertaking to torpedo a program of further meetings and discussions. It frankly said so, in so many words, declaring that "negotiations toward recognition should not be begun or continued under these conditions."

(The quotation is from the NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN, August 9, p. 254-c. The emphasis is ours.) This is the accusation to which the second announcement in the NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN (the "Correction" of October 18) not only gave further circulation but also a firmer official status, without any attempt to indicate that it was not, or at least not yet, to be considered the view of the entire Synod or its President. If the desired goal still is the healing of the breach, these incidents could hardly have come at a worse time.

A MATTER OF RESPONSIBILITY It is true, President Naumann still insists on treating the entire incident as a district matter, thereby declining any immediate personal or official responsibility for either the form or substance of the October 18th announcement. On this point the SPOKESMAN article referred to above simply states the self-evident principle that "A church body is responsible for what appears in its publications."

One must wonder, however, how the leader of an important church organization can so coolly shrug off his responsibility in this matter. He can hardly plead ignorance, either of the facts or of his official duties and responsibilities, since the care with which the NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN is edited and the responsibility that is involved were described in detail in the issue immediately preceding the one in which this particular announcement appeared. In the second Golden Anniversary Number, under the heading "Steps in Producing Your Northwestern Lutheran" there is first of all a statement concerning the official status of this periodical as an organ of the Synod, and the high degree to which its Editorial Staff is conscious of their resultant responsibility. Then their method of editing is described:

"All material intended for publication goes first to the MANAGING EDITOR. He edits all copy both for content and style. For a good reason we have chosen a picture showing Editor Franzmann conferring with Synod President Oscar Naumann. We wish to underscore once more that THE NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN is not to give voice to the personal opinion of a few men within the Synod; it is to be the official voice of the Wisconsin Synod. Therefore the editor must make sure that everything which appears is correct both as to facts about our Synod and as to its principles and practices. In order to do this, he must confer with the President or other officials of the Synod from time to time."

(NWL, October 4, 1964)

That is of course how things should be.

That there was such a conferring between Editor and President before the "Correction" was published is confirmed by President Naumann himself.

That this, however, points up the very lack of responsibility which is now being shown, that is our claim.

But responsibility reaches farther than certain officials only. Being the voice of the Wisconsin Synod, THE NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN with all its official announcements thereby becomes the responsibility of that entire body with all its members. Ordinarily one should not press the point. There will always be minor lapses, in spite of the most careful editing. But this is no minor matter. Shall we conclude that not only one district, not only some individuals, but the entire Synod with all its districts and all its members actually believe and will maintain that our CLC is guilty of blaspheming the Gospel or causing others so to blaspheme? Or will they face the situation and, in unmistakable terms, declare themselves?

The responsibility is actual, urgent, and inescapable.

E. Reim

PROFESSOR
JOHN P. MEYER

News of the death of Professor John P. Meyer, November 10, at an age of almost 92 years, marked the end of a most unusual career. To have served his church for over 68 years, both in the parish ministry and as instructor at three of its training schools for pastors and teachers (Northwestern College, Dr. Martin Luther College, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary)—that is a privilege accorded to only a very few. To have been able to do his work until a mere two weeks before his death may be considered an even greater blessing. Those who knew him will testify to the manner in which he filled each of those many years with the most intensive kind of work, granting himself but a minimum of rest and recreation. When such diligence is coupled with the maintaining of a consistently high level of scholarship, we find it but natural that he left his mark on the many who came under his influence as a teacher, whether they were training for work in the Christian Day Schools of the Synod or for service in the parish ministry.

While Meyer proved himself a thoroughly competent instructor in each of the many different subjects he was asked to teach over the many years, his greatest love was theology, with constant reference to the original Greek. There he was a master. Applying this proficiency with almost equal attention to the needs of doctrinal theology for a sound use of the Scriptural proof as well as on the other hand to the wide area of extensive reading and intensive interpretation of the various books of the New Testament, the final answer to each question that arose was consistently sought in the original texts.

It is not possible, however, to conclude this tribute without a note of sadness. Having studied under John Meyer (four years of Latin, two of Greek, in the first decade of this century), having known him as a friend in the many years which followed, having been closely associated with him in the faculty of what was then known as Thiensville Lutheran Sem-

inary, having followed him as a leader and leaned on him for counsel during the major part of the controversy on church fellowship, it was a profound shock for the undersigned to discover, in that fateful convention at New Ulm, 1957, that in spite of all that had gone before, our ways still would have to part. But just as it would not be right to judge, so it would be base ingratitude—for the writer as well as for all of us who had him as a teacher—if we would not joyfully acknowledge the greatness of our indebtedness to him. For to honor these specific gifts is simply to honor the God who gave them.

E. Reim

THE COUNCIL SO-CALLED

The closing of the third session of Vatican Council II furnishes the occasion for a number of observations which serve to emphasize the unchang-

eable truth of II Thessalonians 2. If one were to have made a judgment on the basis of certain reports appearing from time to time in the secular and religious press, the following conclusions might easily have been drawn: 1) That the Pope will shortly share his authority with the Cardinals, Archbishops, and Bishops; 2) That religious liberty in certain Catholic-dominated countries is just around the corner; 3) That the Roman doctrine regarding the mediation of the Virgin Mary will be de-emphasized; 4) That the Council of

two thousand or more prelates is free to resolve upon schemata without interference from the Pope and the so-called conservatives, the Roman Curia. That all of this was but wishful thinking on the part of many within and without the Roman church is now a matter of public knowledge.

Many are the attempts now to prove that after all something good came out of the Council but the fact still remains that the power of the Pope and of his Roman Curia remained untouched and unchanged. Prelates who had been led to believe that they had finally been given a voice in the government and administration of the church learned to their dismay that they had a voice only so far and only so long as it pleased the Pope and his "cabinet." The adoption of the decrees: "De Ecclesia," "De Oecumenismo," and "De Ecclesiis Orientalibus Catholicis" has been hailed as a real accomplishment. But here the Pope stepped in to make it clear that the final word rested with him. At a time when there was no chance for debate the Pope brought in nineteen "suggested emendations" to the crucial document on ecumenism. A Catholic commentator in The Christian Century calls this action "offensive to other Christians and scandalous to Catholics." The Catholic magazine, The Commonweal made this observation: "By waiting till the chapter was entirely approved by the Council Fathers and then, in virtue of his supreme authority, to insist that the modifications be introduced, he manifested a lack of confidence in the two thousand bishops who had approved the text and placed himself outside of the conciliar procedure.... This was a terrible day indeed. The observers suffered with us. One of them, a good and loyal friend of the Catholic church, said these awful words: 'Today we have seen the naked face of what we have always feared in the Roman Church.'" It would indeed be premature to attempt any evaluation of the three decrees before the official text is available, but this much can be said already now, the decrees will not contain anything to change the picture that Scripture has provided of the anti-Christ and his church.

There has been much talk about collegiality and many were the prelates who nourished the fond hope of having the privilege of speaking out on things other than on the advisability of allowing the working man to have his meat on Friday. But if they had such hopes they were left wondering about it on their way home. For what had happened during the waning hours of the third session? After a promise had been given that there would be a vote on religious liberty, an announcement was made that the President had decided there would be no vote at this session whatsoever. It was very evident that this was curia-inspired. Bishops were stunned and many were furious. As many as eight hundred (the number later increasing to twelve hundred according to reports) put their names on a petition to the Pope asking for a vote. They knew what the postponement of the vote would mean to the ecumenical movement. And in a way it was a test of collegiality. But the Pope moved not a finger to change the decision. All he did was to give the assurance that it would come up at the next session. The Commonweal says most pointedly: "What the bishops had just experienced was the suppression of the Council's freedom to express itself in a vote and this by devious methods of behind-the-scenes action. We were deeply moved. I saw bishops and priests with tears in their eyes. We were defeated by a tiny minority. How could they act in this way unless they believed that the Pope was behind them?" And so it is clear that of this moment the Roman Church is not willing "to acknowledge the right of the individual to freedom in religious matters." Bishop de Smedt put the bald question to the Council: "Are we in favor of religious liberty only when it suits us?" The temper of the Council was shown by the applause he received. But the Pope and his curia still rule and the bishops must bow. And submit they did, for no vote was taken. This all goes to show how powerful the Pope is. He could thwart the will of the majority even at a time when the majority of the hierarchy was assembled in Rome for a so-called Council. To thwart the will of the majority of his prelates after they have scattered and gone home will be a comparatively easy thing as compared with that day in Rome

when he showed the strength of his arm. And as far as the curia is concerned it is easy to see that the more powerful the Pope is, the more powerful they will be. They have a reason for elevating the Pope and keeping him on his pedestal.

And now as if to cap the climax the Pope on the last day of the Council declared the Virgin Mary to be "Mother of the Church." The Commonweal says "After the Council had decided not to give this new title to Mary after the chapter on Our Lady had been voted in with only about thirty votes against it, the Pope decided to introduce this new title into the Catholic vocabulary. The Pope had certainly taken the side of the minority." Enough said. The Pope is still Pope. And as if to emphasize this, he has now made an official visit to India and purposes to make a number of similar trips. He will maintain his image in spite of vain attempts to partially unseat him. He still remains the "man of sin" and will so remain until the brightness of the Lord's coming. So our Lord says in II Thessalonians 2:8 and we prefer to believe Him in spite of all the vain talk about the possibility of a union with a reformed Roman Church in years to come. The only possibility of union with Rome is by way of submission to the supremacy and primacy of the Pope.

By way of digression may it be said that those who found it impossible to agree on the scriptural doctrine of justification (as was the case at the meeting of the Lutheran World Federation at Helsinki) should not expect to find any strength to oppose the onward march of the Papacy. Only those who remain unswervingly steadfast to the doctrine that the sins of all men have been forgiven by virtue of the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus will retain a clear vision regarding the menace of Rome. May God preserve us in that precious doctrine in the face of all attempts of the devil to undermine it and wash it away.

That there is a ferment in the Roman Church is certainly no secret. That the much vaunted solidarity and unity of the Roman Church is maintained only by the sheer authority of the Pope is clear to the eyes that are still open to see. One can only hope that many eyes will be opened to see that the "son of perdition" is indeed not the vicar of Christ as he claims but is nothing else than the very anti-Christ as Scripture has revealed him to be.

C. M. G.

A REPORT OF THE BOARD OF DOCTRINE

(Reproduced for convenient reference from the December, 1964, issue of the LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN)

On page 11 of the November issue of the *Spokesman* a statement was published informing our readers that the *Northwestern Lutheran*, issue of October 18, 1964, contained a "Correction" which stated that in an earlier issue a report from the Dakota-Montana District of that Synod, accusing the Church of the Lutheran Confession of having "blasphemed the Gospel", had been incorrectly phrased. The accusation, we were told by the editor, was actually to the effect that "the actions of the Church of the Lutheran Confession have caused 'outsiders to blaspheme the Gospel.'"

Blasphemy is a grievous sin. It consists in speaking evil of God, cursing, mocking, or reviling Him and that which is holy to Him. Blaspheming God is a common practice among heathen who in many ways mock and trifle with the only true God and His Word, holding them up to ridicule and contempt. Asaph mourns their folly when he writes: "Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Lord, and that the foolish people have blasphemed Thy Name." (Ps. 74:18)

Horrible as the crime of blasphemy is, those who are rightly accused of causing men to blaspheme bear a burden of guilt as great or greater than that of their victims. (We say "rightly accused," since the Gospel itself may and does cause some to blaspheme through no fault of those who preach and obey it. Cf. Acts 18:5-6.) We

are mindful of what the Prophet Nathan was obliged to tell a penitent King David: "... The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." (2 Sam. 12:13-14)

We remember in like manner the words in which Paul, the apostle, heaped blame upon those Jews who self-righteously represented themselves to the Gentiles as teachers of the very Law of God which they themselves meanwhile were violating in the most flagrant manner. He said: "For the Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." (Rom. 2:24)

The name of God is that by which we know Him. All that He has revealed to us of Himself, both in the Law and especially in the Gospel of our redemption, is included in the name of God. To blaspheme that name is to curse and mock the very truth by which alone men may be saved.

The Church of the Lutheran Confession has been accused of causing "outsiders" so to blaspheme. The gravity of this charge must be evident to all who know what it suggests. As a public indictment of our church body it was framed by the Dakota-Montana District of the Wisconsin Synod at its 1964 convention, with the expressed purpose of putting an end to discussions between our Board

of Doctrine and the representatives of the Commission on Doctrinal Matters of the Wisconsin Synod — discussions of which the District disapproved because, it said, our church had accused the Wisconsin Synod of false doctrine and disobedience to God's Word and "has neither proved nor retracted these accusations," but has been "founding opposition altars."

It is not our purpose here to debate the validity of the several complaints here listed against us, especially since they were published without supporting evidence of any kind. Our concern lies with the fact that they were published at this time in an official synodical church paper and as a basis for what we must reject as an unsupported and wholly false allegation that by sinful conduct our church has caused blasphemy. Such an accusation, brandished thus before church and world, cannot be considered an admonition, characterized by Christian love and concern for the members of our church body and having the constructive purpose of removing the issues that lie between our respective synods.

By correspondence with President O. J. Naumann as well as with the editor of the *Northwestern Lutheran*, President Albrecht of the CLC has urged that proper steps be taken to remove this unfortunate wrong from the record in the interest of continuing sincere efforts toward re-establishment of a God-pleasing unity between the two churches. His efforts, however, have proved fruitless. Although he offered to make an appointment for a personal discussion of the matter in President Naumann's office, the offer was declined. He was advised, instead, to address himself to the president of the Dakota-Montana District which originated the accusation.

It must be said that this suggestion misses the point at issue completely. Whatever the source of the accusation, the *Northwestern Lutheran*, the voice of the Wisconsin Synod, printed it. A church body is responsible for what appears in its publications.

It was with the Wisconsin Synod, not with one of its districts, that our church had been engaging in discussions aimed at restoring a fellowship based upon the Word of God. Repre-

sentatives of that synod had been meeting with us in an effort to dispose, if possible and by God's grace, of the issues we felt still lay between us. In these discussions no judgment involving a causing of blasphemy was ever uttered on either side. On the contrary, it was understood that the very questions involved in the several complaints raised by the Dakota-Montana District, and now made the basis for a charge of causing blasphemy, were to be studied. The Doctrinal Commission of the Wisconsin Synod, not of any of its districts, had advised us that it was awaiting a report from a sub-committee studying the possibility of a new approach to those questions. Is the Wisconsin Synod, through the *Northwestern Lutheran*, informing us that in accepting the judgment of the Dakota-Montana District it is rendering its own verdict without further discussion?

Such is the state of this deplorable affair, set forth here for the information of our membership, published lest silence on our part give rise to false impression and rumor. Through the *Northwestern Lutheran* the Wisconsin Synod has erected a wall which blots out the vision of that for which, under God, one might have hoped. Will that wall be left standing?

We pray God for mercy upon us who daily sin much, seeking the assurance of pardon in our Savior and strength for the utmost devotion to His service, lest we grow weary in well-doing and unmindful of our great blessings. We pray also for those who despise us or seek our hurt. May He who came to us in lowliness and want enrich their hearts with the greatness of His love for them, that they may learn to seek both their good and ours.

The Board of Doctrine
E. Schaller, *Chairman*

C O N T E N T S

VOLUME 5

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NUMBER 5

MEDITATIONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Egbert Schaller

Part V, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. . .	1
Part VI, Invisible Lions.	7
Part VII, Dreams and Reality.	12

THE DOCTRINAL BASIS FOR THE USE OF MUSIC IN THE CHURCH (Part II).

Alfred Fremder

PAIDEIA

TEACHING THE TEACHERS.	29
--------------------------------	----

Martin Galstad

PANORAMA

A MATTER OF BLASPHEMY.	37
A MATTER OF TIMING.	39
A MATTER OF RESPONSIBILITY.	40

E. Reim

PROFESSOR JOHN P. MEYER.	42
----------------------------------	----

E. Reim

THE COUNCIL SO-CALLED.	43
--------------------------------	----

C. M. Gullerud

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF DOCTRINE. .47

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