

God puts him into the smelting-furnace, or adds finer cuttings to the diamond of the soul, though his eyes may glisten with tears, he will nobly bear up in the strength of faith; for he knows it is necessary for his good; that it can not be otherwise; and that if it were otherwise, his life would forever be a failure. It is hard to undergo a painful operation, but the patient willingly submits, and pays large sums of money to the operator, because he knows this drastic treatment alone could save him. This states the case of God's child before his Father who is in heaven. Not he, but God alone must know, what is indispensable and necessary for him this year, and what in view of his permanent formation it must bring him. And in case it appears that this year such a Divine operation is necessary for him, he will not murmur, neither will he complain, but he will submit himself willingly to God, yea, though the waves of sorrow should rise ever so high, he will rejoice in God, knowing that everything God doeth, must needs be done, for the sake of God's honor and his own highest good.

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"PRAISE HIM WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS AND ORGANS."

The Scripture is most urgent in pressing and driving the soul to God. It enjoins the supreme command of sobriety and purity. It urges us not to walk proudly but humbly. It is no less inexorable in its warnings that we guard ourselves in every way against the killing power of money, and that we sanctify our wealth

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by large charities. But nothing of all this can compare with the unsparing compulsion with which the Holy Ghost in God's word relentlessly drives us to worship, to seek Divine fellowship, to have the soul appear before God.

The Scripture places itself at a standpoint that is even more exalted than this. According to its claim it is not enough that believers make great the name of Him, whose property is majesty and power in the most absolute sense. All men must glorify God. Even this does not draw the circle by far of what must praise the name of the Lord. Together with man the Scripture includes in this circle all heavenly hosts. "Praise the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure" (Ps. 103:21). All Cherubs, archangels and Seraphim. And from the heavens the circle descends to include within its bounds inanimate creation. Not only must everything that hath breath praise the Lord. "All his works in all places of his dominion" must magnify his praise. "Praise ye him, sun and moon; praise him all ye stars of light. Praise the Lord, ye snow and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word." (Ps. 148). Mountains and hills, cedar trees on Lebanon, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and the hosts of birds that sing among the branches, must all make great the name of the Lord, must all pour forth abundant speech. There must be no people and no tongue where their voice of praise is not heard. "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth."

Thus, as man, we are called to praise the Lord, in the midst of a creation from which a voice goes forth, which invites us to praise God, and

returns an echo to our song of praise that re-sounds among the spheres. It is no dead, silent creation, stricken with dumbness, but a living creation, that utters speech. And he whose ear is attuned to understand this language of nature, hears the harmonious flow of praise and adoration, which it pours forth in perfect accord with the adoring language of his heart. And between these impulses of the heart, and undulations of sound in the creation, the Scripture has laid a tie in the emotional sphere of the world of sounds, in the wealth of music, in life's treasure of sanctified song. And psalm after psalm calls on us not only to hear the voice of the Lord in creation, and with our voice to glorify our God, but also to praise him with organs and stringed instruments (Ps. 150:4), with lute and harp, with high sounding cymbals and joyful noise.

Organs and stringed instruments therefore are not secondary, but indispensable factors in worship, a means ordered of God for fuller enjoyment in his praise and adoration; that through the world of music, too, the soul may come closer to God. Grant that ascription of praise in the house of prayer, consisting of unaccompanied voices, can be solemn and impressive, even then this human singing is music, and improves in merit and effect when it is developed and cultivated by art. Joyful noises from throat and harp both are part of the harmony which God has put into the wondrous world about us, and which now by the throat, and now by playing on organ or harp, is raised and set in harmonious action with the world of the heart. And whether we strike metal, or cause strings to vibrate, or by our breath drive

sound from flute or trumpet, it is always an impulse in the soul which interprets itself in a vocal utterance of the world of sound, which in all spheres surrounds us. Neither singer nor harpist creates the world of music. God created it. It was there before the first man heard the first joyful note of birds. It lies enfolded in the air which is susceptible to vibration and undulation everywhere. And it is given us by voice, by vibration of throat or by hand, to set this wondrous world in motion. And when this is done through the instrument, by throat or hand, it seems that the undulation, the motion, the inward song of the heart flows out in it, catches an echo from it, is carried along, is relaxed, and enriched, by it. Enriched in no small part by the fact that others beside ourselves at the same moment undergo the same emotions, experience like sensations in the soul, so that our praise and worship, through song and organ-play, flow together with theirs into one mighty stream of adoration.

And because these vibrations and undulations of music react upon us as a power from without, and lose themselves in the infinite, it seems that this splendor of harmony, when song is accompanied by stringed instruments, brings us into fellowship with God himself, as praise and worship from earth extends itself through the heavens, to the spheres where angels play the harps of gold, and where everything merges into one grand symphony of worship around God's throne.

God has wonderfully adapted the human throat and vocal chords to the world of harmonies, and no joyful noise on earth excels that of the human voice. It is a gift, unequally divided. In southern

lands people are endowed with finer voices than in colder regions. In the same country the difference is wide between the discordant sounds of the street and the rhythmic, cultivated voice of the artist singer. But with whatever difference, in disposition the human voice is a joyful noise of heavenly origin; and it shall only be heard in all its purity, and wealth of expression in the realm of glory before the throne of God.

By itself, however, the human voice leaves a gap for which God supplied an equally wonderful complement in the instrument. A piece of brass, a tightly-stretched hide, a horn from an animal's head, even a reed cut by the riverside are seemingly insignificant, and yet wonderful means in their effect ordained of God to support the human voice, to unite them in chorus and to bring the human heart to co-operate and to harmonize with the world of sounds that surrounds us.

But even this is not free from sin. The art of music is mainly employed for the sake of man and not for God. It seeks no higher calling than to please the ear, to move the heart with untrue emotions, and to feast upon a wealth of enjoyment that is devoid of higher tendencies. This sin was less evident with the Masters than with a godless public, that uses purely for its own pleasure the master creations which, composed for the glory of God, inspire holy motives. This accounts for the distaste among devout believers for secularized music. And this is fair. Even music is not innocent. Vitiating music is a power that degrades. It counts its victims by hecatombs. But it is not fair that on account of its abuse, vocal and instrumental music should be

eliminated from the services of the sanctuary. Far better offset abuse by the sanctified use of voice and stringed instrument. The revival of sacred music is always a sign of a higher activity of life. Christian people who do not sing and play for the glory of God wrong themselves.

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“IN SALEM IN HIS TABERNACLE.”

Salem is the abbreviated form for Jerusalem. “In Salem in his tabernacle” means in its first, literal sense, that the tabernacle which was made in the wilderness, and had been moved from place to place, had finally been brought to the top of Mount Zion, so that God’s dwelling place was within the walls of Jerusalem.

This sounds strangely to us. Involuntarily we ask: How can God be omnipresent and at the same time dwell in a given city, on a certain mountain top, in a tabernacle or temple? If in the old dispensation God had his tabernacle in Salem, and his dwelling-place in Zion, was not Israel more privileged than we? Have we then retrograded instead of advanced? Is the Gospel, which has no knowledge of Jerusalem on earth, poorer than the ritual of shadows that could point to the place of God’s presence? Especially when we read in the Psalms of “praise” that “waiteth in Zion,” and of a “doorkeeper” in the house of the Lord, clearness of insight is greatly to be desired. Though in early youth we may sing or recite these sentences thoughtlessly, with the growth of years we demand clearer understanding. This does not come by the study of history. It all depends upon personal, intentional