

CHAPTER THREE

MUSIC

THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF REDEMPTION

Please Read: Psalm 49:4; Gen. 4:21; Isaiah 35:10

The Book of Job is believed to be the oldest of sacred writings. Whether this be true or not, we regard it as among the choicest literature and prize it as a precious spiritual legacy.

In the thirty-eighth chapter, the voice of Jehovah breaks the long colloquy of Job's comforters to defend the integrity of His servant; and in so doing, there is flashed before us in Technicolor a panorama of pre-historic events that shine like a beacon light upon those dim, distant ages before the beginning of time as we think of it.

The passage of Scripture mentioned above seems to be referring to a joyous period of activity, not confined to the planet earth, but to the entire universe of all worlds, planets, suns, moons, and stars. God is talking of the intricacies of nature; He is reminding Job of the source and origin of all of its mysterious operations; of the seasons, the coming of the frost, the ice, the snow, the complexity of the human body, the movement of the clouds, the flashing of the lightning, the rumbling of the thunder, the falling of the silent dew. The questions of why the hawk flies south, and why the eagle builds her nest on the highest mountain peaks, are answered.

This voluntary outburst of divine secrets seems to reveal the underlying principle in all creation, regardless of the complexity of life, from the smallest creature to the highest celestial beings, that God intended that there should be perfect harmony and unity, and that each in his own tongue would add his individual note of praise to the universal anthem.

Jehovah propounds this question, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" This seems to indicate that back in those distant millenniums, before the activation of the Genesis story, and before the creation of man, the foundations of the universe were laid, and that in its original state the earth was full of light, life, laughter, and song.

It is difficult to conceive of a God whose presence is all glorious, whose essence is love, and whose nature is the combination of harmony, beauty, and symmetry, creating a condition of darkness, formlessness, and chaos. Yet that is the state of the earth when it first appears in holy history.

PREHISTORIC STATE OF THE UNIVERSE

The Genesis story of the formless condition of the earth is one of deep and somber gloom; it is a picture of chaos, darkness, and death. The first sign of life, light, and hope appears as the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters.

There is some Bible evidence to substantiate the belief that the earth, in its original state, was a place of matchless beauty, and was under the supervision of Lucifer; that at some time in those unmeasured ages, because of the exaltation of Lucifer, a war erupted in heaven which resulted in the cataclysmic upheaval of the earth, and the dethroning and casting down of Satan. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet, thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit." - Isaiah 14: 12-15. "And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." - Luke 10:18.

According to the Bible's description of the beginning of

things in Job 38 and 39, it was not a solemn and somber affair; it was a joyous occasion when He clothed the heavens with clouds, and made the thick darkness a swaddling band for the Universe. It was a time of music, singing, and shouting. In Job 33:6-7, "Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

Our entire statement of faith is based upon the belief that God, the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, form the adorable and eternal Trinity. We also have in the Scriptures the names of three archangels: Michael, Gabriel, and Lucifer. Lucifer is believed to have been the chief of the three. He was called the "Son of the morning," and was possibly assigned as ruler of the earth. This great honor might have proved his undoing, giving occasion for the idea of rebellion to enter his heart, causing his fall.

The holy record gives repeated accounts of Michael and Gabriel performing distinguished services. I like to think of Michael as performing a service with particular reference to the Holy Ghost, and as the angel of the resurrection.

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." –Daniel 12:1-2.

"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." -Jude 9.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." -I Thessalonians 4: 16.

Gabriel is called the angel of the Lord. He is described as standing in the presence of God. He is the trumpet player, the herald of good news, the choir leader of the heavenly hosts. It was he who brought the message to Zachariah; he told Mary of the coming of the Christ Child. It seems reasonable to say that it was he who made the announcement to the shepherds and led

the heavenly host in filling the star-studded Judean night with tidings of great joy.

Many eminent theologians suggest that the archangel, Lucifer, was the special angel of the Son of God, and that the war in Heaven, which resulted in his being cast out with a third part of the angels, was occasioned by pride entering his heart.

MUSIC ORIGINATED WITH DEITY

It goes without saying that the principles of music did not originate with man; but rather it was born in the heart of God countless ages before man was formed from the dust of the earth. It might have been that the echo of music first reached this earth as Gabriel's choir stood on the white clouds of glory and celebrated the events of creation. Might not this have been the time when "the morning stars sang together?"

The symmetry, balance, and beauty of the universe; the-perfect timing, rhythm, and precision of the operation of the solar system, suggest that the principles of music are woven into the very fiber of all creation.

"Inanimate nature is full of God's stringed and wind instruments. Silence itself, perfect silence, is only a musical rest in God's great anthem of worship." The wind sighing among the leaves, the insects humming in the summer evening air, the rushing billows dashing upon a sandy beach, the distant roar of the ocean sounding out its everlasting psalm, the skylark whistling from the top of the tall pine, the quail rustling through the grass, all are notes of music, taking their place in the symphony of time.

There is a certain terminology peculiar to the science or art of music. Most music in our experience is in two modes: major and minor. "Major is the mode of victorious, triumphant, scintillating music. Minor is the mode of tragedy, sadness, and loneliness." The victory song is always in the major. The funeral march is always in the minor. Happy, joyful songs always employ the major. Despondent, wistful themes are always written in the minor.

We may say minor music made its appearance into this world simultaneous with the fall of man. It would be in harmony with established thought to say that before the fall, minors and discords were unknown. Everything was in complete harmony with

Divinity. The heavenly music created by the celestial choirs in that bright day before sin, must have been sung and played and shouted in a triumphant major mode.

We have on the music scale at least five major chords. All that is necessary to transform a basic, major chord into a minor is to change only one note. In the "C" chord, change E to E-flat; the result is a minor chord. Thus, we have in this simple illustration a comparative example of what happened when that single note of sin entered the world.

DISCORD, A RESULT OF SIN

The entrance of sin into the picture transformed the glorious major symphonies of the divinely harmonized universe into the minor fugues of sorrow, distress, and hopelessness. Every minor which exists today, every tear, every sorrow, every wail of woe, every war, every crime, every fading flower on a new-made grave, every wrong, every injustice, every discord, can be traced to the single note of sin. Even the joys of life, the overtones of happiness, are tintured by wistfulness that never lets us forget that there is something wrong in this world.

Nature itself seems to be thrown off-key. The scientists tell us that every sound in nature is in the minor mode. The roar of the falling cataract, the sighing of the wind through the trees, the pounding of the surf on the rocky beach, even the warbling of the birds contain the presence of the plaintive element.

It is easy to believe that God loves music when we realize that He constructed the human voice, and that in the throat and lungs there are fourteen direct muscles that can make over sixteen thousand different sounds. There is no employable means that can tell more convincingly and fittingly the havoc that sin has wrought in human history than music. It speaks the sentiment of the soul and can bridge the gulf between God and man in messages too sacred to convey on the framework of words.

Man is an emotional being, and one of the basic laws of nature is that the emotions seek expression. Music is fundamentally an expression of human emotions. The two normal channels for such expression are rhythmic physical movement and vocal sound.

The universality of sin has had the effect of universal discord in all creation. Not only is disharmony rife among mankind,

but all of the lower creatures and even inanimate objects bear the imprint of irregularity.

Romans 8:22 shows the far-flung influence of the sour note of sin. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." We have here the doleful sigh of an oppressed earth; singing their songs of bondage in the minor key. Lower nature may groan without having any expectation of a better day, but the Apostle tells us that we are saved by hope as we wait for the "adoption, to wit the redemption of our body."

The consummation of the plan of Redemption will not only lift the curse that created the discord, but will tune this mournful world into the perfect harmony of the heavens, and in the new heaven and the new earth the welkin will ring in a glorious majestic major.

THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF MUSIC

Mankind's earliest development of song was based on the combination of *sound*, *rhythm*, and *pitch*. With this combination, they produced the earliest crude songs. Strange as it may seem, these same constituent elements are used to create the most complicated musical compositions of the twentieth century.

I suppose that no one has ever been able to fully evaluate the power of music and song. A song can stir emotion to its very depths. It can elevate, inspire, encourage, enrapture; or it can debase and degrade. Every known emotion that may smolder in the human breast can be musically expressed, such as love, desire, anger, courage, hope, trust, or fear. God implanted in the heart of man the capacity for worship, and the desire for fellowship and communion with Him. He did not leave man without the necessary means of expressing that desire and establishing that fellowship.

I further believe that the divine gift of music was primarily intended to be the celestial ladder by which mankind could walk into the presence of God; and as the great orator, DeWitt Talmadge, put it, "Those grand old hymns of the past are our glorious inheritance; they come down to us fragrant with the devotion of other generations. They are just as fresh and new and inspiring as they were when our sainted forebears climbed upon them from the church pews into glory."

The use of instruments to make music is almost as old as man. There was a man named Jubal, the seventh generation from Adam, who was called the "father of all such as handle the harp and organ." It is a matter of record that in earliest times, music was used exclusively in divine worship. Whether primitive man was worshipping Jehovah, or whether he was worshipping an idol, a tree, the sun, or a departed spirit, he employed music.

It is interesting to note that the music of all heathen religions is in the minor mode. Only Christianity has music which is predominantly major. Other religions of earth have no reason for joyous, victorious music. The music they employ is used as a kind of opiate to dull the sensibilities of fear and anxiety for the unknown. Their philosophies are all based upon fear; they worship and revere a dead leader. All of the founders of heathen religions from the day of their demise have remained locked in the icy embrace of death. The chief satisfaction that can come to the disciples of heathen religions is to take periodic pilgrimages to the elaborate tombs of their founders and chant in their mournful minors the dirge of the dead.

Christians alone, of all religionists, have a legitimate reason to employ the major in their singing. They do not have to make long, painful, pilgrimages to the tombs of the dead. They were informed on the third morning after the execution of their Leader that His tomb was empty-He was not there-He had risen from the dead.

Upon this irrefutable fact, Christianity rests its case for all eternity. Our Leader is alive; He was not spirited away beneath the curtain of the night; He is here, living within our hearts; and because He lives, we know we also shall live. There is no wonder, then, that Christians break forth with songs of triumph in the victorious, glorious major music.

The use of instruments and song for long ages past was a vital part of Jewish worship. The one hundred and fifty divisions of the Psalms run the entire gauntlet of the musical scale. David was known as the "sweet singer of Israel." In times of triumph over their enemies, they sang the Psalms of victory. In times of defeat and bondage, they chanted the mournful songs of the oppressed. The changing moods of a Jewish nation, as they passed from one stage of their history to another, are forcefully expressed in the Psalms.

In the heyday of Israel's most glorious national history, the

gilded halls of Solomon's Temple rang loud and clear with the songs of Zion. When their triumphant armies marched home with banners waving, the worshipping women lined the streets and sang in unmingled praise to their soldier husbands. "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David hath slain his tens of thousands."

Of course, one of the most moving moments of Israel's unique history was that musical concert conducted by Miriam on the banks of the Red Sea after they had been so marvelously delivered from Pharaoh.

The fame of Israel's musical talent, both instrumental and vocal, spread to all parts of the world in the day of their national fame. It is recorded in the one hundred and thirty-seventh division of the Psalms that during the Babylonian captivity, the influence of their musical ability had preceded them, and they were asked to sing and make music for their captors. I could only mar the beauty and pathos of that colorful language to paraphrase it, so let me quote it:

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

Thus, in this doleful dialogue, in after years, they chose to commemorate their sad plight by telling it in song.

The singing Israelites made a profound impression upon the heathen nations with their song in worship. When old silver-tongued Balaam stood among the lonely rugged peaks of Moab's mountains and beheld the black tents of Jacob in the valley, he was overwhelmed with the strains of singing and shouting coming from that camp below. Lifting his voice to the displeasure of Balak, he cried: "The Lord his God is with him and the shout of a king is among them."

As long as God was in the midst of Israel, they had a song. As long as they lifted their voices in song to the high praises of God, the peoples of earth knew that God was with them. When Israel backslid and turned from God, they lost their song;

but the record has it that simultaneous with their repenting and turning back to God, "the song of the Lord began."

At the close of the prophets' age, we have a period of some four hundred years of silence. There was no revelation from God, and there was no song of praise lifted to Him. The world into which Jesus came was a blighted world that had lost its song. The first announcement to men of the birth of the Saviour was accompanied by choiring angels that filled the star-lit Judean night with songs of peace on earth and good will to men. The angels sang at His birth. The voices of all of the sainted dead burst forth in the voice of Anna singing at His dedication. .

At Christ's last meeting with His disciples in the room of the Passover on Thursday night, His parting gesture of encouragement was to join them in a sacred song. It was on the Cross of Calvary that the long lost chord was found. It was there that human hearts were again tuned to the heart-throb of God. It was there that Christ struck up a song that will never die-a song that will continue to grow and grow in majesty and power until sin is completely abolished and glorious, divine music shall once again reverberate throughout all worlds.

THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF MUSIC

The courage and faith that inspired Jesus to sing with His Disciples in the very shadow of the Cross was transmitted to His faithful followers; for in the midst of persecution, and even martyrdom, they sang. In a loathsome Philippian jail, with their hands and feet held fast in the stocks and the blood dripping from their scourge-torn backs, Paul and Silas harmonized a duet of praise, the echoes of which transcended all worlds and rose in clearest tones to the very throne of God. That duet of praise, coming from that dark and dismal dungeon, so pleased the Heavenly Father that He joined their song with His thunderous bass that shook the locks from the prison doors and the chains from the hands and feet of the prisoners.

The circumstances that surrounded Paul and Silas might not have been conducive to songs of praise, but the character and religious experience of those men made them fit subjects for God to exercise one of His most unusual gifts of grace.

Not only from the Book of Job, but from several other scriptural

statements, we are told that "God giveth songs in the night. "

There are certain basic laws and principles in the fine art of music that are as fixed and true as the North Star, and I would like to play upon a segment of these basic principles for a moment to point up a spiritual truth.

We begin with "Middle C." It is, of course, the center of the keyboard. It is, in a sense, the dividing point between the Bass Clef and the Treble Clef. The "C Chord" is a combination of "Middle C" and two other related notes, which form complete harmony when sounded simultaneously. The "C Chord" can be thought of as a model for every other chord. The "C scale" has no sharps or flats, and that is the only scale that does not require the use of black notes for complete harmony.

To me, it is most interesting that primitive man, in his earliest attempts at music development used the same combinations of sound, rhythm, pitch, and harmony as is required in the production of the latest musical masterpieces of today. It is significant that the simplest chord requires three notes for complete harmony. This is a striking allusion to the Divine Trinity.

All notes in the Bass Clef are indicated on the Staff by their stems being turned down. Their tones are deep and somber. Those notes in the Treble Clef are indicated by their stems being turned up. All notes after "Middle C" are higher and produce a clarion ring.

It is no accident that this established principle forms the hub around which all variations of music have revolved throughout the history of man. I see in it a simple object lesson: Jesus Christ holds the same position in human history that "Middle C" holds to the music keyboard. Christ takes His position in the center of time. All who lived on the other side of the cross were in the twilight. Those who live on this side of Calvary, live in the blazing brightness of the Holy Ghost dispensation. Christ divides the ages. Time is identified as B. C. and A. D. All beauty, harmony, and melody flow from Christ, the basic truth of time and eternity.

Music has been employed for a thousand different reasons. It has been prostituted for evil designs, and it has been used to inspire, transform, comfort, and bless. It has been said that "Music hath power to soothe the savage beast." It has been used to cure disease, to calm the insane, to prevent attacks of

epilepsy. It is reported to have been used successfully to improve the eyesight, to relieve nervous tension, and assuage unbearable grief.

Down through history, music has been a powerful instrument for good and evil. When Moses returned from Mt. Sinai, the people in the camp had worked themselves up into a hysterical frenzy of idolatry. This had been promoted by rhythmic music.

Under the satanic influence of music and dancing, King Herod was duped into the murder of John the Baptist. (Mark 6:22)

While Satan and his cohorts have used music, and are still utilizing it to foster their diabolical designs, the people of God can also employ the dynamic power of music to promote the cause of Christ. Volumes could be written about the multitudes of persons throughout the centuries who have been led to Jesus Christ through spiritual and inspired music.

King David was a singer; he was also a musician. He could play the harp. He must have been a master, because when Saul was possessed with fits of melancholy caused by the evil spirits from the Lord, and his anger drove him to the brink of insanity, it was only by the music of David's harp that he was calmed and refreshed.

In Psalm forty-nine, verse four, we have a text that teaches that the message of music can transcend words and may bear a depth of revelation that supercedes all other language. "I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp."

The sermon is, of course, the principal method of preaching the Gospel of Christ to men, and I am sure that we have not placed too much emphasis upon it. But I believe that we have not fully explored and utilized the medium of music as a method of soul saving. I may preach to you of the depths of God's love, of its elastic bands that have circled the globe; I might tell of its outreach, its up reach, and its down reach to the very doors of hell; and when I have exhausted my limited verbal resources, you might be unmoved. But if I could then command some soulful singer to lift his voice and sing:

*"The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell,
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell.*

*"The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win.
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin,"*

. . . perhaps a depth in your soul would be probed that mere words could never reach.

If I could preach to you of the marvelous grace of God until I am weary of words; tell of its virtues and give you a picture of what it has done for others, you may yet remain untouched. But if I call from out of the past the slave trader from Africa, John Newton, and have him stand up and sing his immortal hymn:

*"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind, but now I see,"*

. . . I believe that it would find an echo of response in the depths of your soul.

I may preach to you of the power of the blood of Jesus Christ; I may tell of its efficacy to take away sin. If I had the ability of an orator to present the wonder and glory of the Atonement, you may still be unmoved. Then, if that once mentally deranged melancholy wanderer, William Cowper, were to step forward and sing his own poetic masterpiece:

*"There is a fountain filled with blood
. . . Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.*

*"The dying 'thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in His day,
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away."*

. . . it would get through to you with a message that would lift you far up on the road near to God.

Just as music and song have played an important role in the growth and development of Christianity in this earth, it will figure prominently in the program of the Kingdom Age. Isaiah the prophet, looking far out into the glorious realities of the City of Zion, writes in glowing language: "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

John, the Revelator, tells us that after the Lion of the tribe of Judah had qualified to open the seven-sealed book, that the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, each of whom had a harp, and they sang a new song of redemption to the honor and glory of the Lamb of God.

In the fifth chapter of Revelation, we are told that every creature in heaven and on earth, under the earth, and in the sea, bursts forth in one glorious universal anthem to the glory and praise of the everlasting triumph of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who alone was found worthy to open the book and look thereon.

Even the birds of the air, the beasts of burden, the insects on the earth, the worms in the ground, the fish in the sea, all add their multifarious sounds as notes of praise, making up one grand universal anthem. Without a discord, without a plaintive note, all living, creeping, crawling creatures in the universe shall respond to the freedom cry, that the curse has been lifted, death has been abolished and Jesus Christ omnipotent reigneth forever and ever, world without end.

As the unfolding of the end-time drama proceeds, we are called to witness the song of the one hundred and forty-four thousand. They too have harps, and they too sing a new song, a song belonging peculiarly to them; a song that none other can learn. It is a song of praise for their redemption.

MUSIC THROUGH THE EVERLASTING AGES

In Revelation, chapter fifteen, there is another company that comes up out of tribulations and torture to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. The song of victory over the Antichrist; the song of praise to the King of saints will be their glad refrain.

In spite of all the discord and disharmony caused by sin in

this earth, the world is filled with music; and when I try to visualize what it will be like in that Celestial City when sin and discord are forever abolished, it is a scene that beggars all description.

Think of the four and twenty elders with harps of gold. Think of the one hundred and forty-four throng with their accompanying harpers. Think of David with his harp of a thousand strings; think of those blood-bought martyrs from earth's gory battlefield. Think of all of the unnumbered throngs gathering for the crowning of King Jesus. Think of what it will be like to hear these myriad musicians strike up the anthem of all nations and hear the mingled voices of every kindred, tribe and nation sing the Hallelujah Chorus. In this, creation's finest hour, I want to be there. . . . I must be there. . . . *I will be there*, to join in the coronation of the *King*. I, too, will pluck a palm branch from the trees by the River of Life, and will lift my voice in the everlasting refrain:

*All hail the power of Jesus' Name,
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of all.*

A church organist in a large city was one day practicing on the beautiful new organ that had just been installed in the church. He tenderly caressed the keyboard, and vowed to let no one else play upon it. The door of the church being open, a stranger from the street walked in and listened intently as the organist played. The stranger tapped the organist on the shoulder and asked for permission to play just one song. The organist refused, but the stranger pleaded earnestly. "Oh, well," he said, "just one piece."

The stranger touched the keyboard, and the organist was enthralled with music such as he had never heard. When the stranger finished, he arose, and thanking the church organist for his kindness, he started to leave. Before he reached the door, the organist called and said, "Sir, what is your name?" The stranger paused and said one word: "Mendelssohn." The young man at the organ stood stunned for several minutes. Finally recovering from the shock, he said, "I almost refused to let Mendelssohn play on my organ."

Jesus Christ is passing here today; He is asking you to let Him touch and tune your soul with His skillful fingers for a noble purpose; He alone can turn the discords of life into music.

*Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him who saves you by His grace
And crown Him Lord of all.*

*Let every kindred, every tribe
On this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe
And crown Him Lord of all.*

*Oh that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall;
We'll join the everlasting song
And crown Him Lord of all.*