

Foreword

IN 1969, Herbert Lockyer Sr. wrote:

If, to the true musician, all nature carries the sound and melody of music—the singing of the birds, the bubbling of a brook, the rustling of leaves, the rolling waves of the sea, and peals of thunder—where could such an appreciation of rhythmic expression come from save from Him who made humans? Here we have an aspect of the divine being that we are apt to neglect. All melody, harmony, and joyful praises spring from Him who, as the happy God, created humans to be like Himself. In the New Testament, the Greek word *makarios* is translated “blessed” or “happy.” Paul used the word in Acts 26:2 to describe himself as he stood before Agrippa. In 1 Tim. 1:11 and 6:15, he refers to God as the blessed or happy one.

Is this not why the Bible is such a happy book and has so much to say about vocal and instrumental music? It abounds in praise and reverberates with the music of heaven. Glance over its sacred pages, and you will find that its psalms outweigh its sighs. Passages speaking of war, suffering, sorrow, strife, fears, and of all that destroys are few compared with the multitude of references to praise, joy, singing, happiness, gladness, and peace. No matter where you turn in the Bible, melody predominates over misery and songs over sobs. Happy were the people who had a happy God as their Lord and praised Him by lips, lute, and lyre. Melody is a natural mode of uttering the grateful emotions of the mind, a faculty conferred on humans by their creator for that very purpose. This is why we are called upon by prophets and psalmists to “sing and give praise,” both with and without instruments of music.¹

As we will see, music, both vocal and instrumental, was well cultivated among the Hebrews, the New Testament Christians, and the Christian church through the centuries. A cursory glance at the Old Testament reveals how God's ancient people were devoted to the study and practice of music, which holds a unique place in the historical and prophetic books, as well as the Psalter. While it may be difficult to fully identify some items in the vocabulary of musical terms, the range of emotions expressed by Hebrew music was anything but limited. Such music was capable of expressing a great variety of moods and feelings or the broadly marked antitheses of joy and sorrow, hope and fear, faith and doubt. In fact, every shade and quality of sentiment are found in the wealth of songs and psalms and in the diverse melodies of a people who ranked their music highly in divine service.

As an introduction to the study before us, we have the magnificent concert held on the shores of the Red Sea after Israel had passed over in Exod. 15:1–20. “The words were adapted to the occasion,” says Dr. Herbert Lockyer Sr., “the music to the words; the performers to the music. There we behold Moses leading the bolder, rougher notes of manly voices. Here, Miriam, the prophetess, his sister, in sweet accord, blending the softer harmony of female strains of the timbrel, in praises of their great Deliverer.”² What a sight and sound that must have been, a fore-gleam of the host of redeemed choristers that John describes as singing and playing harps on the shores of the new Jerusalem. “They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb” (Rev. 15:2b–3 NIV).

I wish to see all arts, principally music, in the service of Him who gave and created them. Music is a fair and glorious gift of God. I would not for the world forego my humble share of music. Singers are never sorrowful, but are merry, and smile through their troubles in song. Music makes people kinder, gentler, more staid and reasonable. . . . I am strongly persuaded that after theology, there is no art that can be placed on a level with music; for besides theology, music is the only art capable of affording peace and joy of the heart. . . . the devil flees before the sound of music almost as much as before the Word of God.³

Preface

The Origin of Music

Music is well said to be the speech of angels; in fact, nothing among the utterance allowed to [humans] is felt to be so divine. It brings us near to the infinite.
—Thomas Carlyle

MUSIC. What is this mystery that gives flight to the imagination, touches the deepest emotions, and speaks to the soul? From poets and mystics to saints and sinners, from antiquity to the immediacy of each breath we take, music communicates when words cannot. Since the dawn of creation, artists have been exploring the many ways in which music communicates beyond words. Indeed, music is a language unto itself, a language born in the heart of God countless ages before creation.

But why study all the music of the Bible? Why do we create music? How does listening to music affect the soul? How do we, mere humans, collaborate with the Holy Spirit to combine notes and tones into melodies and songs that reflect what cannot be said by words alone? How can we put the utterances of our soul on paper and into a form?

These are the questions that a study of all the music of the Bible will consider. This book explores how people throughout time and across cultures have done just that. We will look at how ordinary people responded to God's call to extraordinary work, and in so doing, transcended the limitations of their own humanity to express themselves with the language of angels.

Part 1 will explore ancient songs of the Old Testament. In Part 2, we will consider the Hebrew poetry of David, Isaiah, and Solomon. New

Testament songs and modern hymnody are the concern of Part 3. Finally, we will spend a few moments with my father's notes on music in Part 4.

As Herbert Lockyer's son, I listened to my father preach and teach well beyond the four score years of an average lifetime. My father lived to the age of 98 and actively continued to study and teach the Word of God well into his eighties. I treasure the length of his years on earth and the wealth of wisdom I learned from this faithful man of God. His three essays are included in this book in honor of his remarkable ability to see beyond the text to the spiritual meaning deep within—and communicate that meaning to others. The first is a mediation, "Instrument of Ten Strings," I heard my father use many times in his teaching and preaching. The second is a brief study of "Nebuchadnezzar's Orchestra," a study which demonstrates how magnificent music must have been in Biblical times. And the third is a story I heard my father tell many times.

In the opening passage of his lilting motet "*Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf*," J.S. Bach immortalized the idea of transcendent expression by setting the German translation of Rom. 8:26 to music.

Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf,
The Spirit helps us in our weakness,
 denn wir wissen nicht,
since, when we do not know
 was wir beten sollen, wie sich gebühret;
what we should pray for,
 sondern der Geist selbst vertritt uns aufs
then the Spirit personally makes our petition for us
 beste mit unaussprechlichem Seufzen
in sighs that cannot be put into words.

From Moses and Miriam to Paul and Silas to Jan Hus and John Calvin, music is as integrated into the lives and faith of the people of God as prayer, praise, and worship. This study of *All the Music of the Bible* invites you to walk through the pages of Scripture and hymnody and draw near to the Infinite as you journey into the heart of the divine.