

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

IN

CHRISTIAN PRAISE.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF SOUND, VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL, AS A MEDIUM OF
EITHER MENTAL EXPRESSION OR STIMULATION IN PRAISE.

*This analysis is purely special, and limited, of course, to the points involved
in the subsequent discussion.*

THERE are just two distinct uses to which colours may be put with which we are all familiar. (1) We may devise colours of a certain shape, and combining them into words, make use of them to represent and express the various ideas of our minds; or, (2) having a totally different object in view, we may make such a combination or disposition of these colours as to excite in us merely a sense of the beautiful. Here are two powers or uses totally distinct. Sounds are like colours in these respects. They have two distinct powers or uses. You can make use of them in speech or song to express the various ideas and emotions of the mind, or you can make use of them in such a way (melodiously) as merely to stimulate the purely æsthetic sense pertaining to melody in the mind. The disposition, etc., of the sounds, as well as the end in view, in each case is quite different. When multifarious mental expression is the object in view, the articulation, pitch, length, loudness, etc., of the sounds must be so disposed as to adequately convey the mental idea or emotion intended. When melody is the object in view, everything in the pitch, duration, strength, etc., of the sounds must be so disposed as to excite purely the one æsthetic sense appropriate to melody.

We make a distinction here between song and mere melody; because song, while it may or may not be melody, has powers of expressing or of addressing the multifarious ideas and emotions of the mind. Melody, considered merely as melody, has power to express or address only one purely æsthetic feeling of the mind analyzable into nothing else.

Let us, therefore, fix firmly in our minds distinct ideas of these two powers of sound, whether of speech, song, or instrumental music: (1) its power, composed as mere melody, to express or stimulate the one æsthetic sense of melody appropriate to it; (2) its power (differently composed) of expressing or addressing representatively the whole circle of ideas, sentiments or emotions of the mind, as fear, love, sorrow, etc., which have nothing purely æsthetic in their nature.

Analyzing song and instrumental music in conjunction, we find in them the following powers:—