

in truth, it affords them, in the enjoyment of its ordinances, an opportunity of giving vent to the deep wrought feelings and the ardent aspirations of the soul, under the guidance of a heaven enlightened understanding. Nothing almost could be better fitted for this purpose than psalmody. The psalms, being a part of the divinely inspired word of God, will, under the unseen but powerful energy of the Holy Spirit, have the same awakening and refreshing effect upon the soul that is ascribed to the Scriptures at large—an effect that will be enhanced by the circumstance that the psalms are deeply experimental, and consequently powerfully calculated to beget sympathetic feeling: and being given by the inspiration of Him who knows what is in man, and is intimately acquainted with all the secret springs and operations of the feelings in the heart of man, they are more admirably adapted for giving expression to all the varied emotions of the soul, than any merely human composition could be, though framed with all the sensibility of the poet, and all the acuteness of the metaphysician. When psalmody was introduced into the worship of the Church at the opening of the reformation, the change felt by seriously disposed worshippers would be prodigious. Formerly they were denied the Word of God, and the worship to which they were admitted was cold, lifeless, uninteresting, and unintelligible. But now, in the exercise of psalmody, the words of the living God, equally fitted at once to excite and to express the deepest emotions of the soul, were put into their mouths in a language they understood, and in these words with all the freshness of recent enjoyment, they had the opportunity of joining personally in the worship, in a way that was at once rational, interesting, and intelligible, and of pouring out the pent-up feelings of their hearts under the animating, elevating, thrilling influence of music and poetry:—

“Of all the arts beneath the heaven,  
That man has found, or God has given,  
None steals the soul so sweet away,  
As music’s melting mystic lay;  
Slight emblem of the bliss above,  
It soothes the spirit all to love.”

We need not wonder that psalmody, as an ordinance of Christ, was a powerful agent in advancing the reformation when once it was introduced.

In Germany, Luther, some time previous to his administering the sacrament of the Lord’s supper in the German language, published a small book containing thirty-eight German hymns, with appropriate tunes. He was himself a musician, and a musical composer of a high order, and he applied his knowledge of music so skilfully that in

the singing of these hymns, “the harmony and modulation of the voice agreed with the words and sentiments, and tended to raise the correspondent affections in the minds of the singers.”\*

As an evidence that the psalms—the sweet songs of Zion—were preferred before any other by christians in all countries, we find that “in every Protestant country, a metrical version of the Psalms, in the vernacular language, appeared at a very early period.”

“The French version, begun by Clement Marot, and completed by Beza, contributed much to the spread of the reformation in France. Even Catholics flocked for a time to the assemblies of the Protestants to listen to their psalmody.”†

From some incidental notices in Knox’s History of the Reformation, it appears that there was a metrical version of at least a portion of the psalms used in Scotland at a very early stage of the reformation.

In 1546, on the night that George Wishart, the martyr, was taken prisoner at the house of Ormiston, after supper, (as Knox relates) “he said, ‘we’ll sing a psalm;’ and so he appointed the fifty-first psalm which was put in Scottish metre, and began thus:—

“Have mercy on me now, good Lord,  
After thy great mercy.”

Again, in 1555, Knox mentions the case of a godly woman, who, on her dying bed, “desired her sisters and some others that were beside her, to sing a psalm, and among others she appointed the ciii. psalm, beginning,

“My soul, praise thou the Lord always.”

In the course of a year or two after this time, the psalms appear to have been commonly and publicly sung in the Protestant congregations, for Knox, after describing the destruction of the Popish idol of St. Giles by the populace of Edinburgh, adds “the brethren assembled themselves in such sort, in companies, singing psalms, and praising God, that the proudest of the enemies were astonished.”

Dr. M’Cric mentions, on the authority of Calderwood, that two brothers of the name of John and Robert Weöderburn, natives of Dundee, appear to have been the principal translators of this version, which was never completed.

Previously to this time, however, a new version

\* *Milner*, V. 392

† *Dr. M’Cric’s Life of Knox*, I. 364.