

we can easily suppose that congregations so trained from their youth and provided with the Psalters already described "could well sing in the Kirk." The decline of sacred music in Scotland dates from the times of the Commonwealth. The version of the Psalms, made by Rous, and still used among us, was then introduced. It had not the variety of metres furnished in the old version, and was printed without music. The people accordingly were thrown on the judgment or caprice of individual precentors as regards the selection of tunes, and this dependance unhappily continues to the present day. As the old Psalter became obsolete, congregations began to sing by ear or by memory, without art. And to add to the mischief, the long Parliament passed an Act, obliging all precentors to read out the Psalm, line by line. This practice is not yet extinct. We need scarcely say, that it is ruinous to musical effect, except indeed among the Highlanders, who chant each line of the Gaelic Psalm before they sing it, in a manner not at all displeasing to the ear. The reformation of Psalmody in Scotland is quite of recent date, and partial extent. In the Colonies it has scarcely begun. The style of singing is inharmonious and untutored—and has not even the charm of being antique. It is far inferior to the 'old School'—a bad innovation on the original musical mode.

From the subject of Praise, let us turn to that of Prayer. Our Reformers had no thought of resigning to the Popish and Prelatic Churches the exclusive use of the invocations and litanies of Christian antiquity. John Knox indeed made good use of them in the 'Book of Common Order' which he introduced. It is true that an imposed form of prayer did not suit, and never can satisfy the free spirit of Presbyterianism; but the existence of the 'Book of Common Order' had its influence in moulding the devotional feelings, language, and habitudes of the Church. The order of Public Worship on the morning of the Lord's Day was as follows: A confession of sins—reading of Scripture—singing of a Psalm—extemporaneous prayer for the assistance of the Holy Spirit—the Sermon—a prayer for the whole estate of Christ's Church—the Lord's Prayer—the Creed—singing of a Psalm—and the Benediction. In the 17th century, the Directory of Worship framed by the Westminster Assembly was adopted by the Church of Scotland. It still holds a place nominally among the standards of Presbyterian usage; but practically has fallen into neglect. In modern times, we seem to have abandoned all rule. One minister forces a very inferior liturgy on his flock, compelling them to listen to his stereotyped monotonous prayers. Another omits intercession for the Queen and the Civil Authorities, with entire impunity. A third treats the prayer that Christ taught to his disciples, with habitual neglect. A fourth prays extemporaneously for half an hour without cessation; while a fifth occupies in the service no more than six or seven minutes. Every one does what is right in his own eyes. Surely the ancients were wiser than we.

The shutting up of Churches from Sabbath to Sabbath is a modern innovation. For fifty and perhaps a hundred years after the Reformation daily prayers were offered in the Churches of Scotland, and sermons were frequently preached,