

THE LITURGY

OF

JOHN KNOX



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*Received by the Church of Scotland in 1564*

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## EDITORIAL NOTE.

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THERE are few Scotchmen who, being impressed with a sense of regard for the religious history of their country, can fail to look with considerable interest on the series of Confessions, Orders, and Forms which commonly go under the designation of *John Knox's Liturgy*, but more officially termed the *Book of Common Order*, printed in part before 1564, and formally adopted by the Assembly of the Church of Scotland in that year. These formularies were in more or less general use down to the time of the Solemn League and Covenant, when they were superseded by the Confession, Catechism, and Directions, prepared by the Westminster Assembly. Numerous editions of *Knox's Liturgy* continued to be printed, chiefly at Edinburgh and Aberdeen, till 1643. All of which though, strange to say, are exceeding scarce, and a complete copy of any of the editions very rarely to be met with.

In more recent times, three editions have been

issued—one of these in 1831, edited by the Rev. Edward Irving; another in 1840, edited by the Rev. Dr. Cumming, of London; and a third in 1868, edited by the Rev. George W. Sprott and the Rev. Thomas Leishman. These issues, now all exceedingly scarce also, have (unfortunately, as some would think) been modernized in matters of spelling and other features, thus taking from the book much of that quaintness which in the estimation of many ought to be an inherent feature in the work. In the present issue the old spelling and phraseology, as in the 1565 edition, is strictly adhered to, and it likewise contains all that characterizes the best of the older editions.

When in use, the Liturgy was commonly issued along with the Psalms, but in other instances the Liturgy and Psalms were issued separately. This early translation of the Psalms is peculiarly quaint, interesting, and expressive, and differs widely from the more modern one. It was in use down to 1650, when the somewhat recent translation was adopted. This early version will, it is intended, be issued shortly, as a companion volume to, and uniform with, the present one.

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### The Confession of Faith

*Used in the Englishe Congregation at Geneva.*

*Received and Approved by the Church of Scotland.*

I BELEVE and confesse my Lorde God eternal, infinite, unmeasurable, incomprehensible, and invisible, one in substance, and three in persone, Father, Sonne, and Holy Ghoste, who, by his almightie power and wisdom, hathe not onely of nothinge created heaven, earthe, and all thinges therein conteyned, and man after his owne image, that he might in hym be glorified; but also by his fatherlye providence, governeth, maynteyneth, and preserveth the same, accordinge to the purpose of his will.

I beleve also and confesse Jesus Christe the onely Saviour and Messias, who beinge equall with God, made him self of no reputation, but

tooke on him the shape of a servant, and became man in all thinges like unto us (synne except) to assure us of mercie and forgivenes. For when through our father Adam's transgression we were become childrene of perdition, there was no meanes to bring us from that yoke of synne and damnation, but onely Jesus Christe our Lord: who givinge us that by grace, which was his by nature, made us (through faith) the childrene of God: who when the fulnes of tyme was come, was conceyved by the power of the Holy Ghoste, borne of the Virgine Marie (accordinge to the fleshe), and at lenght, by tyrannye of the priestes, he was gilteles condemned under Pontius Pilate, then president of Jurie, and most slaunderously hanged on the crosse betwixte two theves as a notorious trespasser, where takinge upon hym the punishment of our synnes, he delyvered us frome the curse of the Lawe.

And forasmuche as he, beinge onely God, could not feele deathe, nether, beinge onely man, could overcome deathe, he joined bothe together, and suffred his humanitie to be punished with moste cruell death: felinge in him selfe the anger and severe judgement of God, even as if he had bene in the extreme tormentes of hell, and therfore cryed with a lowde voice, "My God, my God, why haste thou forsaken me?" Thus of his fre mercie, without compulsion, he offred up him selfe as the onely sacrifice to purge the synnes of all the world, so that all other sacrifices for synne are blasphemous and derogate from the sufficiencie

herof. The which death, albeit it did sufficiently reconcile us to God ; yet the Scriptures commonly do attribute our regeneration to hys resurrection ; for as by rysinge agayn from the grave the third day, he conquered death ; evenso the victorie of our faith standeth in his resurrection, and therfore without the one, we can not fele the benefite of the other : For as by deathe, synne was taken awaye, so our rightuousnes was restored by his resurrection.

And because he wolde accomlishe all thinges, and take possession for us in his kingdome, he ascended into heaven, to enlarge that same kingdome by the abundant power of his Spirite, by whome we are moste assured of his contynuall intercession towardes God the Father for us. And althoghe he be in heaven, as towching his corporall presence, where the Father hathe nowe set him on his right hand, committinge unto him the administration of all things, aswel in heaven above as in the earthe benethe ; yet is he present with us his membres, even to the ende of the world, in preseruinge and goverynge us with his effectuall power and grace, who (when all thinges are fulfilled which God hath spoken by the mowth of all hys prophets since the world began) wyll come in the same visible forme in the which he ascended, with an unspekable majestie, power, and companie, to separate the lambes from the goates, th'electe from the reprobate, so that none, whether he be alyve then or deade before, shall escape his judgement.

MOREOVER, I beleve and confesse the Holy Ghoste, God equall with the Father and the Sonne, whoe regenerateth and sanctifieth us, ruleth and guideth us into all trueth, persuadinge moste assuredly in our consciences that we be the childrene of God, bretherne to Jesus Christe, and fellowe heires with him of lyfe everlastinge. Yet notwithstandinge it is not sufficient to beleve that God is omnipotent and mercifull; that Christ hath made satisfaction; or, that the Holye Ghoste hath this power and effect, except we do applie the same benefites to our selves which are God's elect.

I BELIEVE therfore and confesse one holye Church, which (as members of Jesus Christe, th'onely heade therof) consent in faithe, hope, and charitie, usinge the giftes of God, whether they be temporall or spirituall, to the profite and furtherance of the same. Whiche Church is not sene to man's eye, but onely knowen to God, who of the loste sonnes of Adam, hath ordeyned some, as vessels of wrathe, to damnation; and hathe chosen others, as vessels of his mercie, to be saved; the whiche also, in due tyme, he callethe to integritie of lyfe and godly conversation, to make them a glorious church to him selfe.

But that Church which is visible, and sene to the eye, hathe three tokens, or markes, wherby it may be discerned. First, the Worde of God conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament, which as it is above the autoritie of the same church, and onely sufficient to instruct us in all

thinges concernynge salvation, so is it left for all degrees of men to reade and understand. For without this Worde, neither church, concile, or decree can establishe any point touching salvation.

The second is the holy Sacraments, to witt, of Baptisme and the Lordes Supper; which Sacramentes Christ hathe left unto us as holie signes and seales of God's promesses. For as by Baptisme once receyved, is signified that we (aswel infants as others of age and discretion) being straungers from God by originall synne, are receyved into his familie and congregation, with full assurance, that althoghe this roote of synne lye hyd in us, yet to the electe it shal not be imputed. So the Supper declareth, that God, as a most provident Father, doth not onely fede our bodies, but also spiritually nourisheth our soules with the graces and benefites of Jesus Christ (which the Scripture calleth eatinge of his flesh and drinkinge of his bloode); nether must we, in the administration of these sacraments, followe man's phantasie, but as Christ him self hath ordeyned so must they be ministred, and by suche as by ordinarie vocation are therunto called. Therfor, whosoever reserveth and worshippeth these sacraments, or contrariwyse contemneth them in tyme and place, procureth to him self damnation.

The third marke of this Church is Ecclesiasticall discipline, which standeth in admonition and correction of fautes. The finall ende wherof

is excommunication, by the consent of the Church determined, if the offender be obstinate. And besides this Ecclesiasticall censure, I acknowledge to belonge to this church a politicall Magistrate, who ministreth to every man justice, defending the good and punishinge the evell; to whom we must rendre honor and obedience in all things, which are not contrarie to the Word of God.

And as Moses, Ezechias, Josias, and other godly rulers purged the Church of God from superstition and idolatrie, so the defence of Christes Church apperteyneth to the Christian Magistrates, against all idolaters and heretikes, as Papistes, Anabaptistes, with such like limmes of Antechrist, to roote owte all doctrine of devells and men, as the Masse, Purgatorie, *Limbus Patrum*, prayer to Sanctes, and for the Deade; freewyll, distinction of meates, apparell, and days; vows of single life, presence at idoll service, man's merites, with suchlike, which drawe us frome the societie of Christes Church, wherein standeth onely remission of synnes, purchased by Christes blood to all them that beleve, whether they be Jewes or Gentiles, and leade us to vayne confidence in creatures, and trust in our owne imaginations. The punishment wherof, although God often tymes differreth in this lyfe, yet after the generall resurrection, when our sowles and bodies shall ryse agayne to immortalitie, they shalbe damned to inquencheable fyre; and then we which have forsaken all man's wisdom to cleave unto Christ, shall heare that joyfull voice, "Come,

ye blessed of my Father, inherite ye the kingdome prepared for you frome the beginnyng of the world," and so shall go triumphing with him in bodye and soule, to remayne everlasting in glorie, where we shall see God face to face, and shall no more nede one to instructe an other; for we shall all knowe him, from the hyghest to the loweste: To whome, withe the Sonne and the Holy Ghost, be all praise, honor, and glorie, nowe and ever. So be it.

### Of the Ministers and their Election.

*What thinges are chiefly required in the Ministers.*

FIRST, let the Church diligently consider that the Minister which is to be chosen be not founde culpable of any suche fautes which Saincte Paul reprehendeth in a man of that vocation, but contrarywise endewed with suche vertues, that he may be able to undertake his charge, and diligently execute the same. Secondly, that he distribute faithfully the Word of God, and minister the sacraments sincerely, ever carefull not onely to teache his flock publikly, but also privatly to admonisse them; remembring alwais, that if any thinge perysshe throughe his defeaute, the Lorde will require it at his handes.

#### *Of their Office and Deutie.*

BECAUSE the charge of the Word of God is of greater importaunce then that any man is able to dispence therewith; and Saincte Paule exhorteth to esteme them as ministers of Christe, and disposers of God's mysteries; not lordes or rulers, as S. Peter saith over the flocke. Therefore the pastor's or minister's chief office standeth in preaching the Worde of God, and ministring the sacraments. So that in consultations, judgements, elections, and other politicall affairs, his counsel, rather then autoritie, taketh place.



And if so be the Congregation, uppon juste cawse, agreeth to excommunicate, then it belongeth to the minister, according to their general determination, to pronounce the sentence, to the end that all thinges may be done orderly, and withoute confusion.

*The manner of Electinge the Ministers.*

THE Ministers and Elders at suche time as there wanteth a Minister, assemble the whole Congregation, exhortinge them to advise and consider who may best serve in that rowme and office. And if there be choyse, the Churche appoynte two or thre, upon sume certayne day, to be examined by the Ministers and Elders.

First, as towchyng their doctrine, whether he that should be minister have good and sownde knowlage in the Holy Scriptures, and fitte and apte giftes to communicate the same to the edification of the people. For the triall wherof, they propose hym a theme or text to be treated privatly, wherby his habilitie may the more manifestlie appeare unto them.

Secondly, they enquire of his life and conversation, if he have in times past lyved without slander, and governed hym selfe in suche sorte, as the Worde of God hath not hearde evel, or bene slandered through his occasion. Which being severallie done, they signifie unto the Congregation, whose giftes they fynde moste excellent and profitable for that ministerie. Appoynting

by a generall consent, eight daies at the leaste, that every man may diligently inquire of his life and manners.

At the which tyme also, the minister exhorteth them to humble them selves to God by fasting and prayer, that bothe their election may be agreable to his will, and also profitable to the Church. And if in the meane season any thyng be brought agaynst hym wherby he may be fownde unworthy by lawfull probations, then is he dismissed and some other presented. If nothing be alleaged uppon some certayne day, one of the ministers, at the mornyng sermon, presenteth hym agayne to the Church, framynge his sermon, or some parte therof, to the setting forthe of his dewtie.

Then at after none, the sermon ended, the minister exhortith them to the election, with the invocation of God's name, directing his prayer as God shal move his herte. In like manner, after the election, the Minister geveth thanks to God, with request of suche thinges as shalbe necessarie for his office.

*After that he is appointed Minister, the people syng a psalme and departe.*

### Of the Elders, and as touchyng their Office and Election.

THE Elders must be men of good lyfe and godly conversation, withoute blame and all suspition;

carefull for the flocke, wise, and, above all thynges, fearing God. Whose office standeth in gouerning with the rest of the ministers, in consulting, admonisshing, correcting, and ordering all thynges appertayning to the state of the congregation. And they differ from the ministers, in that they preache not the Worde, nor minister the Sacramentes. In assemblyng the people, nether they withoute the ministers, nor the ministers withoute them, may attempt any thing. And if any of the juste nombre want, the minister, by the consent of the rest, warneth the people thereof, and finalye admonissheth them to observe the same ordre which was used in chosing the Ministers.

### Of the Deacons, and their Office and Election.

THE Deacons must be men of good estimation and report, discret, of good conscience; charitable, wyse, and finallye adorned with suche vertues as S. Paul requireth in them. Their office is to gather the aulmes diligentlie, and faithfullie to distribute it, with the consent of the Ministers and Elders. Also to provyde for the sicke and impotent personnes. Having ever a diligent care, that the charitie of godlye men be not wasted upon loytrers and ydle vagabondes. Their election is, as hath bene afore rehearsed in the Ministers and Elders.

*We are not ignorant that the Scriptures make mention of a fourth kynde of Ministers left to the Church of Christe, which also are very profitable, where tyme and place dothe permit. But for lacke of opportunitie, in this our dispersion and exile, we can not well have the use therof; and wolde to God it were not neglected where better occasion serveth.*

*These Ministers are called Teachers or Doctors, whose office is to instructe and teache the faithfull in sounde doctrine, providing with all diligence that the puritie of the Gospell be not corrupt, either through ignorance, or evill opinions. Notwithstanding, considering the present state of thynges, we comprehend under this title suche meanes as God hathe in his Church, that it shuld not be left desolate, nor yet his doctrine decaye for default of ministers therof.*

*Therefore to terme it by a worde more usuall in these our days, we may call it th'Order of Schooles, wherein the highest degree, and moste annexed to the ministerie and government of the Church, is the exposition of Godes Worde, which is containd in the Olde and Newe Testamentes.*

*But because menne cannot so well proffet in that knowledge, except they be first instructed in the tonges and humaine sciences, (for now God worketh not commonlie by miracles,) it is necessarie that seed be sown for the tyme to come, to the intent that the Church be not left*

*barren and waste to our posteritie; and that Scholes also be erected, and Colledges mayntayned, with juste and sufficient stipendes, wherein youthe may be trayned in the knowledge and feare of God, that in their ripe age they may prove worthy members of our Lorde Jesus Christ, whether it be to rule in Civill policie, or to serve in the Spirituall ministerie, or els to lyve in godly reverence and subjection.*

### The Weekly Assemblie of the Ministers, Elders, and Deacons.

To the intent that the ministerie of Godes Woorde may be had in reverence, and not brought to contempt through the evill conversation of suche as are called therunto, and also that fautes and vices may not by long sufferance growe at length to extreme inconveniences; it is ordeyned that every Thursdaye the ministers and elders, in their assemblie or Consistorie, diligentlie examine all suche fautes and suspicions as may be espied, not onelie amongst others, but chieflie amongst theym selves, lest they seme to be culpable of that which our Saviour Christ reproved in the Pharisies, who coule espie a mote in an other man's eye, and could not see a beame in their owne.

And becawse the eye ought to be more cleare then the rest of the bodie, the minister may not be spotted with any vice, but to the great slaunder of Godes Woorde, whose message he

beareth: Therfore it is to be understand that there be certayne fautes, which if they be deprehended in a minister, he ought to be deposed; as heresie, papistrie, schisme, blasphemie, perjurie, fornication, thefte, dronkennes, usurie, fighting, unlawfull games, with suche like.

Others are more tollerable, if so be that after brotherlie admonition he amendith his faut: as strange and unprofitable fashon in preaching the Scriptures; curiositie in sekyng wayne questions; negligence, aswell in his sermons, and in studying the Scriptures, as in all other thynges concerning his vocation; scurrilitie, flattering, lying, back-byting, wanton woordes, deceipt, covetousnes, tauntyng, dissolution in apparell, gesture, and other his doynge; which vices, as they be odious in all men, so in hym that ought to be as an example to others of perfection, in no wise are to be suffred; especially, if so be that, according to Godes rule, being brotherlie advertised, he acknowledge not his faut and amend.

### Interpretation of the Scriptures.

EVERIE weeke once, the Congregation assemble to heare some place of the Scriptures orderly expounded. At which tyme, it is lawfull for every man to speake or enquire, as God shall move his harte, and the text minister occasion; so it be without pertinacitee or disdayne, as one that rather seketh to proffit then to contend. And if so be any contencion rise, then suche as are

appointed moderatours, either satisfie the partie, or els if he seme to cavill, exhorte hym to kepe silence, referring the judgement therof to the ministers and elders, to be determined in their assemblee or Consistorie before mencioned.

**The Forme and Ordour**  
*of the*

**Election of the Superintendents,**

*Quhilk may serve also in Election of all uther  
 Ministers.*

*At Edinburghe the 9th of Merche 1560 yeiris,  
 Johne Knox being Minister.*

FIRST was made a Sermone, in the quhilk thir Heids war intreated. First, The necessity of Ministers and Superintendents. 2. The crymes and vyces that nicht unable thame [of the ministrie]. 3. The vertues required in thame. And last, Quhiddel sick as by publict consent of the Kyrk wer callit to sick Office, nicht refus the same.

The Sermone finished, it was declared be the same Minister, (maker thareof,) that the Lords of Secrete Councell had given charge and power to the Kirkis of Lauthiane, to chuse MR. JOHNE SPOTTISWODE Superintendent; and that sufficient warning was made be publict edict to the Kirks of Edinburghe, Linlythgow, Striveling, Tranent, Hadingtoun, and Dunbar; as also to Earles, Lords, Barones, Gentilmen, and uthers, having, or quho nicht clame to have voite in Election, to be present that day, at that same hour: And, tharefore, inquisition was made, Quho wer present, and quho wer absent.



Efter was called the said Mr. Johne, quho answering; the Minister demanded, Gif ony man knew ony cryme or offence to the said Mr. Johne, that mycht unabill him to be called to that office? And this he demanded thryis. Secundlie, Questioun was moved to the haille multitude, If thair was ony uther quhome they wald put in Electioun with the said Mr. Johne. The pepill wer asked, If they wald have the said Mr. Johne Superintendent? If they wald honour and obey him as Christis Minister? and comfort and assist him in every thing pertaining to his Charge?

*They Answerit.*

We will; and we do promeis unto him sick obedience as becumethe the scheip to give unto thair Pastour, sa lang as he remains faythfull in his office.

*The Answers of the Pepill, and thair consents receaved, thir Questionns wer proponit unto him that was to be elected.*

*Questioun.*—Seing that ye hear the thirst and desyre of this people, do ye not think yourself bound in conscience befor God to support thame that so earnestly call for your comfort, and for the fruit of your labours?

*Answer.*—If anie thing wer in me abill to satisfie thair desyir, I acknowledge myself bound to obey God calling by thame.