

Statements from Historic Orders

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Martin Bucer's *Strassburg Liturgy* (1539)

“And the Minister goes to the pulpit and reads out of the Gospels as much as he proposes to expound in a single sermon, treating the book in succession . . . and they should be dealt with in their order, not as heretofore by picking out several pieces, often without particular skill, so that all the other things given in the Gospels have been withheld from the congregation. In the afternoon and other hours, the other biblical books are also expounded.”

Scot's first *Book of Discipline* (1560)

“We think it most expedient that the Scriptures be read in order, that is, that some one book of the Old and the New Testament be begun, and orderly read to the end. In the same we judge of preaching . . . for this skipping and divagation (i.e. wandering about) from place to place of the Scripture, be it in reading or be it in preaching, we judge not so profitable to edify the church as the continual following of one text.”

Middleburg Liturgy of the English Puritans (1586)

“Upon the days appointed for the preaching of the Word, when a convenient number of the Congregation are come together, that they may make fruit of their presence, till the Assembly be full, one appointed by the Eldership, shall read some Chapters of the Canonical books of Scripture, singings Psalms between at his discretion: and this reading to be in order as the books and Chapters follow, that so from time to time the holy Scriptures may be read throughout. But upon special occasion, special Chapters may be appointed.”

Westminster *Directory of Worship* (1645)

“Reading of the word in the congregation, being part of the publick worship of God, . . . and one means sanctified by him for the edifying of his people, is to be performed by the pastors and teachers.

“All the canonical books of the Old and New Testament . . . shall be publickly read in the vulgar tongue, out of the best allowed translation, distinctly, that all may hear and understand.

“How large a portion shall be read at once, is left to the wisdom of the minister; but it is convenient, that ordinarily one chapter of each Testament be read at every meeting; and sometimes more, where the chapters be short, or the coherence of matter requireth it.

“It is requisite that all the canonical books be read over in order, that the people may be better acquainted with the whole body of the scriptures; and ordinarily, where the reading in either Testament ended on one Lord’s day, it is to begin the next.”

“When the minister who readeth shall judge it necessary to expound any part of what is read, let it not be done until the whole chapter or psalm be ended; and regard is always to be had unto the time, that neither preaching, nor other ordinances be straitened, or rendered tedious. Which rule is to be observed in all other publick performances.”