PLATFORM/ PULPIT DECORUM AND DRESS FOR WORSHIP

BY

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PLATFORM DECORUM

We have seen a decline in platform decorum and dress in many of our churches among members and leaders. This article seeks to remind us of the standard required by God.

“The speech of those who represent God before the church should be solemn in every respect. (T vol. 5 p.648) Common stories, anecdotes, jesting and joking is totally inappropriate for the worship service. The minister of the gospel who is a labourer together with God, will learn daily in the school of Christ...No light, trifling words will fall from his lips; for is he not an ambassador for Christ, bearing a divine message to perishing souls? All jesting and joking, all lightness and trifling is painful to the cross-bearing disciple of Christ.” (Evangelism p. 206, 207)” Some form the habit of relating anecdotes in their discourses, which have a tendency to amuse and remove from the mind of the hearer the sacredness of the word they are handling”.( Evangelism p. 208,209) “Ministers in the desk have no license to behave like theatrical performers, assuming attitudes and expressions calculated for effect. They do not occupy the desk as actors, but as teachers of solemn truths. There are also fanatical ministers, who, in attempting to preach Christ, storm, halloo, jump up and down, and pound the desk before them, as if this bodily exercise profited anything. Such antics lend no force to the truths uttered, but, on the contrary, disgust men and women of calm judgement and elevated views. It is the duty of men who give themselves to the ministry to leave all coarseness and boisterous conduct outside of the desk at least.”- (Evangelism 640.)” If he is the representative of Christ, his deportment, his attitude, his gestures, should be of such a character as will not strike the beholder with disgust.” (1T 648,649) “The flippant words that fall from his lips, the trifling anecdotes, the words spoken to create a laugh, are all condemned by the word of God and entirely out of place in the sacred desk.” (Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers p. i42, 143)

Let us take a look at some other aspects of our decorum.

Leaders should be clothed in a manner befitting the dignity of their office. Women's clothing should never be tight, short or revealing. Men and women’s clothing should be of such that it does not call attention to them. Pastors and Elders and other leaders should not allow anyone to officiate if they are not modestly and appropriately dressed. Improper dress brings our services into disrepute and dishonours God.

Our deportment on the platform should reflect reverence for God, the place of worship and be an example to the brethren. Platform posture should be sitting upright and not with legs crossed. Walking on and of the platform is distracting and should be avoided. Sleeping is totally unacceptable and dishonours God. It might be better if all leave the platform before the delivery of the message. “One minister conversing with another on the platform before the congregation, laughing and appearing to have no sense of their sacred calling, dishonours the truth, and brings the sacred down upon a low level of the common things. (Tv2. P 612,613)

Time should be managed efficiently and not wasted on lengthy apologies and even lengthy prayers. "Prayers offered in public should be short and to the point. God does not require us to make the session of worship tedious by lengthy petitions. A few minutes are long enough for any ordinary public prayer.” Gospel Workers p 175

When the minister enters, that should signal the beginning of the worship service. “He should bow down in silent prayer as soon as he enters into the pulpit, and earnestly ask help of God. There will be a solemnity and awe upon the people. The minister is communing with God; he is committing himself to God before he dares to stand before the people. Solemnity rests upon all, and angels of God are brought very near. Everyone of the congregation, also, who fears God, should with bowed head unite in silent prayer with him that God may grace the meeting with his presence and give power to his truth proclaimed from human lips." (T5 p492, 493)

Announcements are items of business and as such it has nothing to do with worship. All announcements should be made before the midday worship service begins. There should be no announcements **after** the Call to Worship or before and after the sermon. The last thing people should go home with is just the message on their minds.

The introduction of the speaker should be short and should be done before the special music which prepares the congregation for worship. When the introduction comes between, it disrupts the spiritual tone that was set by the item of special music.

Refrain from getting personal when introducing a speaker. Referring to the person’s size, clothes, and looks is inappropriate and sometimes insulting.

The pulpit should never be used as a forum to present our personal views or to talk about grievances we have with individuals, the Church, the Conference or our Institutions.

HOW TO DRESS FOR WORSHIP

“The God of heaven is honoured or dishonoured by the apparel of those who officiate in his honour. “(Gospel Workers, p. 173) “A minister who is negligent in his apparel often wounds those of good taste and refined sensibilities.” (Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 613)

“Let none dishonour God’s sanctuary by their showy apparel”.( T vol. 6, p. 170.) “All should be taught to be neat, clean, and orderly in their dress, but not to indulge in external adorning which is wholly inappropriate for the sanctuary. There should be no display of apparel, for this encourages irreverence. The attention of the people is often called to this or that fine article of dress, and thus thoughts are intruded that should have no place in the hearts of the worshippers. God is to be the subject of thought, the object of worship; and anything that attracts the mind from the solemn, sacred service is an offence to Him. The parading of bows and ribbons, ruffles and feathers, and gold and silver ornaments is a species of idolatry and is wholly inappropriate for the sacred service of God.” (T vol. p. 353)

“Many need instruction as to how they should appear in the assembly for worship on the Sabbath. They are not to enter the presence of God in the common clothing worn during the week. All should have special Sabbath suit, to be worn when attending worship in God’s house. While we should not conform to worldly fashion, we are not to be indifferent in regard to our outward appearance. We are to be neat and trim, though without adornment. The children of God should be pure within and without.” (T vol. 6, P. 355)

“Some who minister in sacred things so arrange their dress upon their person, that, to some extent at least, it destroys the influence of their labour? There is an apparent lack of taste in colour, and neatness of fit. What is the impression given by such a manner of dress? It is, that the work in which they are engaged is considered no more sacred or elevated than common labour, as ploughing in the field. The minister by his example, brings down sacred things upon a level with the common things”.( T vol. 2, p.614)

“Black or dark material is more becoming to a minister in the desk, and will make a better impression upon the people, than would be made by a combination of two or three different colours on his apparel.” T vol. 2, p. 610.

When we attend church we are going before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Especially should leaders be clothed in a manner befitting the dignity of their position and be an example. A shirt and tie or a suit will be appropriate for worship and to officiate.

Fellow leaders let us lift the bar on the way we dress for worship and to officiate. The church will rise no higher than its leaders.