

Church Department

by C. H. Campbell in "Wesleyan Methodist"

Paul, in I Corinthians 14: 40, while discussing matters of church assembly, advised: "Let all things be done decently and in order." There is a *savoir-faire* which is like a cool breeze on a sultry night, when we follow his advice and exhibit common-sense church manners.

When and what to speak and when to be silent is implied in Proverbs 25: 11: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." You have probably observed the well-meaning person who, in prayer or class-meeting, boasts, "I never let the opportunity pass without testifying," and then proceeds to wear out the saints by lengthy meanderings that edify no one. Let us be frank. We may become religious hogs, crowding out the timid testifier. So, "in honor preferring one another," we are all benefitted.

The same holds true of the one behind the pulpit. The good minister, after lengthy discourse, stated: "Just this and I'm through." The patient parishioner whispered (past the back of his hand) to his wife, "He was through long ago only he didn't know it."

Pulpit manners and decorum are indeed jewels to be sought after to enhance the speaker. They form a pattern of behavior for the pew as well. Unnecessary whispering in the pulpit results in the same in the pew.

Protestants could learn a good lesson in reverence from their Catholic friends. The attitude of silent, respectful worship during the service should be maintained. Do not be chatty and inattentive. What saith the Scriptures? "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20). This is the initial phase of worship, as proven in God's exhortation to "praise the Lord" vocally and by musical instruments, and "shout aloud." Whether we are silent or vocal should depend on the Spirit's promptings—then we are always "in order!"

One of the conditions which is often found (and is indeed poor manners) after the service is grouping in cliques to the exclusion of "the stranger within thy gates" or those who need encouraging greetings. Something like this must have happened in the first church, for practical James describes (1:7) the overt attention paid the rich, well-dressed man in contrast to the perfunctory disposal of the poor, shabby visitor—perhaps back behind a pillar though he may have been one of God's chosen. This "respect of persons" is highly reprehensible.

On the other hand, the old, tried custom of the entire family sitting together is the nearest to the ideal; and when my pew includes three generations, and overflows into the pews in front and behind, my patriarchal "cup runneth over, and I (with them all!) shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

There are many little niceties which aid in the make-up of an ideal service, such as being on time in our places in silent devotion. There is less inconvenience when the early comers fill the front pews so that those following naturally fall in behind. Try not to be an end-squatter, or a human swivel chair—eyes front is the perfect position. Anything that distracts my fellow worshippers should be avoided by me.

Pastor-people relationship in worship is of prime importance. How good it is to have an understanding shepherd who does not constantly scold and berate his flock. In every service they lift with all their reasoned powers. If they criticize at all it is lovingly and constructively, in private, but they "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (I Thess. 5:13).

Do you want the best preacher in the conference? Don't call him from the First Church in Bigtown. Pray

more than you do for the one you have, especially while he is preaching. This is one of his greatest needs, and you will see him literally growing before your very eyes! And you? You'll be the best mannered person in church, for "My house shall be called the house of prayer" (Matt. 21:13).

And then when the altar call is given, redouble your prayer effort and increase the atmosphere of conviction. Nothing which might break the spiritual tension must be indulged, no unnecessary moving about. Oh that we might sense the awesome Presence of The Trinity who is about to perform the great miracle of redemption and act accordingly! Upon being dismissed, if you do not join in prayer around the altar, retire quietly and prayerfully.

Finally, what is the primary purpose in assembling in God's house? To meet and worship Him, the Head of the Church! Our little two-year-old grandson innocently brought this home to us. He had accompanied his grandmother and me to the evening service, and as soon as we were seated he looked about and queried, "Where's Jesus? I don't see Jesus." Profound philosophy—looking for the Lord in His house! "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings" we learn.

If we would only seek His face and His glorious Presence in every coming together, and so conduct ourselves that He is pleased, we would have no barren services and they would become progressively better.

WE MET IN THE AIR!

by Rev. W. L. Fernley

Fifteen minutes before the plane was due to leave the airport, I noticed the stewardess helping an old man along the path that led up to the steps and into the door way of the aeroplane.

Eventually the call for passengers to embark on the flight was given and I found myself occupying the seat next to this same gentleman. We began to converse together. During the thirty five minutes we were together in the air, we covered a lot of territory.

He told me that he was 82 years of age. Had just come from the cemetery and funeral services for his wife. A few years ago he had suffered a stroke that had partly paralyzed one side of his body. He had a son living in St. John who was an alcoholic. On one occasion while visiting this son, he was so cruelly beaten by him that he had to call the police. He went on to tell me that he had spent no less than \$82,000 during his son's life time in medical expenses on his behalf.

When I told him I was a Reformed Baptist preacher in St. John, he became talkative about his spiritual condition. Together we conversed freely about the great issues of life and death. I discovered I was sitting next to a man who had a general idea of God's plan of Salvation, and had somewhat of a Christian experience. Feeling a strong tendency to keep our talking in the realm of things spiritual, I was lead to speak in a definite way along the line of the value of being a Christian in life. The blessing it brings, the assurance of the future, the untold mercies of God that are ours.

Before we parted, we exchanged addresses, and with a hearty handshake, left each other.

Since this experience we have exchanged letters and in his correspondence he has expressed his appreciation of our talk on the plane and has given me to understand that he can now face the future with the assurance that his peace had been made with God.

Why did we meet in the AIR?! Coincidence—chance—O, NO!! I would say, "God planned it—God Willed it, and Blessed it"!!

We shall meet again in the Air!! Praise the Lord.