

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

VOL. XXI.

OCTOBER, 1917.

No. 4.

ERASMUS AND THE BEGINNING OF THE REFORMATION.

The universality of the famous Humanist still compels our admiration. Nowhere is it more distinctly revealed than in his correspondence. It is this (now most available in the huge folios of the Leyden edition, 1703) which presents the generation of 1517 as it speaks to us nowhere else. With scholars, statesmen, churchmen (such as cardinals, archbishops, bishops), with authors, his relations were fairly all-extending. Among his correspondents were the archbishops of Canterbury and of York, Wolsey, Thomas More, John Colet, dean of St. Paul's, Budaeus (Budé) of Paris, the foremost classicist of France, with whom he sometimes even exchanged Greek epistles, Wilibald Pirckheimer of Nuremberg, Henry VIII of England, Spalatin and Frederick the Wise of Saxony, Melancthon, Justus Jonas, Cardinal Campeggio, the bishops of Basle, Breslau, and Olmuetz, and many others,—mainly the great ones of the world. Many of the letters are really essays and disquisitions, and the purity and elegance of their Latinity still makes the classicist marvel.

But in this year of 1917 and in this epoch we must rigidly limit ourselves to the concerns of our great anniversary. And so I shall make certain selections from the original text of certain of his missives, avoiding, in the main, influences and generalizations which the readers of these documentary data can very easily make for themselves.

MINISTERIAL DECORUM.

The consideration of the matter that properly belongs to this subject needs no justification. Though it refers chiefly to our behavior in the presence of others, and has therefore much to do with the merely formal and the merely external, yet its discussion by young men preparing to be ministers needs no apology.

It is true, the decorum observed by the pastor or preacher bears no relation to the purity of the doctrine he preaches, but it is equally true that the proper effect of a very excellent sermon easily could, by indecorous behavior either while in the pulpit or afterward, be very sadly neutralized by the preacher himself. For the conduct of the minister of God's Word as preacher and pastor does enter into, and does affect profoundly, the thought and social life of his people. His unofficial words and his general bearing have much to do with the thinking and life of those people for whom God holds him to account. We do not wish to inject into the busy and responsible life of the pastor any element that would, by its mere formalism or its elaborate mannerism, conflict with, or prejudice, or impair that sturdy, wholesome manhood always important, always so refreshing to meet. But on the other hand, neither can we look with complacency upon the tendency that would hold in contempt all respect for conventions among people and hold in defiance the rules underlying what is commonly known by the term "good breeding." The educated or schooled

bore is about the limit in social life, but in the ministerial life he is not only insufferable—he is a menace. The importance of self-training, discipline, and education in his behavior appears when we reflect that a knowledge of social customs or usages, a willingness and ability to conform to them, is very closely related to the ability to preach impressively. To illustrate: If men or women do not know or observe the rule of the road, "Turn to the right," their movements along any street or highway would be a continuous disturbance to traffic. They would be not only annoying in their movements at all times, but extremely liable to become, and be the cause of, a center of danger to themselves and to others at any time. In large measure it is so with the failure to know and observe social customs by the minister of Christ. He must become a menace to the spiritual welfare of others, and to that extent does imperil the efficiency of his ministry of the Word.

Decorum respects behavior. Behavior comes from the word *behave*, compounded of *be* and *have*. It signifies to have one's self, or to have self-possession. Other words, distinguished by a slight shade of meaning, but in a popular way used interchangeably with it, are conduct, carriage, deportment, demeanor, etc.

In the Christian minister this charming human virtue becomes a Christian grace. It is in his case a work of God's Spirit in the heart, touching the springs of life, and spontaneously flowing from pure, living faith. It is unquestionably enjoined in Phil. 4, 5: "Let your moderation be known to all men." Here is urged a good, wholesome, gentle, mild, patient disposition toward others and treatment of others. What the exercise of this grace means, the many difficulties it must encounter and surmount, the discouragements you are likely to meet with from others, you will find all of them involved in the concept selfishness—your own, and that of others. Here you will find it of advantage to explore the depths reached by Paul's words in Rom. 14: "For none of us liveth to himself." But do you remind me that this conduct of which we are speak-

ing is the mere external habit of behavior? Even so! But it is the external behavior of a man exercising the office of the ministry of divine grace! And the motive that impels a minister to carefulness in the little, incidental observances of this office is a very grave one. It is none other than that the ministry of the Word of Grace be not hindered by lapses in behavior insignificant enough in themselves, but that it have free course to accomplish God's purpose. Be it well understood that the minister is in this thing not a patronizing simpleton, who would become a dude or a fop out of consideration for his own popularity. The strong current of purpose, and the attitude toward others by which such purpose is consummated, is in the minister just what it was in Paul: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9).

Keeping now in mind the source of right ministerial behavior, *viz.*, the work of the Spirit of God by His Word unto faith and careful conduct; and the human fundament in equipment best suited to base such behavior on, *viz.*, self-possession and studied mental poise, we are ready to note what things specifically are required that correct decorum in the ministerial office may be attained. This calls upon us to adjust or correct certain personal defects not only, but certain irregularities of habit that interfere with good ministerial behavior; and then, that the conduct of our office be in consideration for others.

1) One of the first things to which the minister should address himself in this connection is the control of petty irritations. There are in reality some such irritations, though in many instances they are more imaginary than real. Oftentimes these trouble-makers would be considered quite in the order of things, commonplace and to be expected, were they not seen through a highly wrought, perhaps overwrought set of nerves. That they are highly mischievous when uncontrolled, there can be no doubt. While under their influence it is exceedingly dangerous for you to meet a second person. In such abnormal

state your words and bearing, to that extent, misrepresent you. But what are some of these little irritations? They may occur at any time, but are particularly dangerous when they pop up during public service or immediately afterwards. It may be nothing more than a little blunder by the organist or by the choir; it may be a more or less trifling neglect on the part of the janitor, or, indeed, a petty, though inexcusable, break by the preacher. Such things do happen. But they are not a reason why the minister should execute all the details of a brain-storm on account of them. I suppose there are in every congregation a few well-intentioned and highly benevolent villains. They approach you generally with two things — a self-prepared list of the sick, and what they are sick with; and a list of minute inquiries as to the degree of respect accorded by you to a similar list the Sunday previous. Nor is it likely to improve your spirits to recall that of the previous list you found not one of the supposed patients at home when you called. These are only a few; there are many others, but they are easily recognized when you meet them. Now, if you were to permit yourself to be controlled by such irritations, your ministry would be greatly prejudiced thereby. But how can the minister control annoyances like these? The place to begin is not with the offenders, but with himself. He shall need a liberal supply of God's abounding grace through His Word, also a liberal and increasing supply of God's goodness in the shape of carefully fostered and properly fed nerves. You will need both. And if I were to emphasize the latter, it would be because that is the most commonly neglected. Turn into the channels of your daily life a perfect flush of common sense. Be sane. Don't eat, sleep, work, or play like a fool. Be moderate! You have great need to husband the highly delicate and sensitive system of messengers God has placed in your bodies. Nor should you forget the effect your impatience, your petulance as a minister must have upon your people. Let a generous allowance of your own faults counteract this tendency in you. Remember that the congregation, generally

speaking, needs quite as much grace to put up with your foibles as you need to put up with theirs.

2) It must further be remarked that a wholesome regard for conventions is materially impaired when the minister permits himself to be controlled by capricious or fanciful likes or dislikes. If in regard to nothing else within the sphere of your experience, right here your education, and the culture you derive from it, ought to show you comparative values. As a minister you should be above insisting on the carrying out of a mere whim. With regard to the thing that does not matter, is in itself indifferent, do not imperil your reputation or influence by making an issue of your judgment based on what you may happen to like or dislike. Just this excites opposite judgment, and even though you should win out, the victory were too costly. I know of a minister who separated and scattered his congregation over the question of placing a hymn-board in the church. He got the hymn-board, but at the awful price of a divided congregation. You can afford to win only with God's Word. And then it is God's victory, not yours. And the pastor should be particularly careful not to permit the temptation of an appeal to his taste or judgment to betray him into asserting and stoutly maintaining what the best interests of his office require to be suppressed. Now, it may not be entirely denied to a minister that he have and enjoy, in a private way, his own little fads and fancies. But the congregational life should, through him, bear no evidence of them. In this respect he should have the mind of Paul: "I know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Be engrossed and concerned with the things that matter, things of permanent and abiding value, and then your fanciful notions will not be so likely to bring harm either to yourself or to others.

3) Ministerial decorum is greatly enhanced by controlling, or, better, by putting away entirely, the habit of careless speech. The minister of the Gospel, as a preacher of the doctrines of divine revelation, must abound in speech, and in the use of

sound words (2 Tim. 1, 13). But aside from the teaching of God's Word publicly and privately, it is surprising how little a pastor really needs to say. Even as in his capacity as teacher his words must be carefully chosen and sound, so in his unofficial social intercourse with people his every word should be considered. This ought ordinarily to obtain with every one for obvious reasons. But with the minister it is of exceptional importance because the prestige properly attending his official utterances is associated, in the minds of the people, with his private or personal speech. These two phases of the ministerial life are very sensitively related in the minds of the people, and that the first phase may be maintained in its necessary authoritativeness the other should receive thoughtful attention.

The necessity to exercise such care you will find to be ever present. But there are times when less opportunity for deliberate speech is afforded than at other times. I believe one of the most critical moments for the pastor is when meeting his people immediately after the hour of public worship. It is so for several reasons. The minister is then just emerging from a period of stress and nervous tension, with any one of the many possible feelings prominent; *e. g.*, it is possible for him to be playfully glad, verging on merriment, that it is over with; or he may feel depressed or discouraged at what he considers to have been a somewhat rocky performance; or in his sense of victory achieved, he may be looking for new worlds to conquer. Now, then, fancy yourself meeting dozens of people, many of them feeling it necessary to say something, and something that requires your attention. One wants to be clever, another feels it proper to be grave, still another thinks the courtesy of a compliment in order, while a fourth feels it incumbent upon himself to add to his word of appreciation a little slam, just so the preacher, entirely for his own good, doesn't get too big-headed, and the like. When such situations arise, whatever else you do, do not speak. Get your face working, be it smile, frown, or, perhaps better than either,

a blank: use your face, but hold your tongue. But such situations do not arise in every congregation, a thing for which both pastor and congregation should be profoundly grateful.

However, the social life of the minister and his congregation demands that they meet more or less frequently in hours of social converse. At such times and at all times of personal contact the minister should not only "avoid profane and vain babblings," but should be the man of God with few and well-chosen words.

Far better for the minister of the Word that in ordinary association with his people he be commonplace, that his speech call forth no remark, than that by an exhibition of wit or brilliance he be led to say at the moment words that, remembered, would impair the influence of his teaching for a long time. Better be known as a silent pastor than as a brilliant conversationalist. Not long ago it was remarked by a member in one of our prominent churches, "Every time I see my pastor in the pulpit I am reminded of a story he told me on one occasion, and the remembrance is disturbing, distracting." The story may in itself not have been very wrong, but it was very wrong to have come from the minister. Young gentlemen, I assume I need not enlarge upon a possible tendency among us to detail little bits of wit that in themselves are of a morally shady, questionable, or unclean nature. Do not be deceived into thinking that others will look upon you as only the more human, as the more a man among men, for so doing. The better among men will regard you as the less human and the more beastly, and must be led to think of you as not measuring up to the standard of a man among men. Always be clean in your speech. Whether or not you are committed in principle to a single standard of morality, or moral comity for the sexes, does not enter into this question. Remember, modesty in speech is not necessarily an evidence of effeminacy. On a grade even lower than this is the habit some people have of endeavoring to ornament a piece of wit with a commonly known word of Scripture. The pastor must not only never be guilty of this himself, but must rebuke it whenever it occurs.

Permit me to point to another very critical moment for the preacher. It is after the sermon, and before he leaves the altar. This is the time usually assigned to the making of announcements. Just then his mind and his tongue are likely to be rather active, due to their exercise in preaching. But have a care! While the moment is in a way a free one, do not say anything that may do violence to the spiritual tone of your sermon. Be cheerful, betimes, but never be funny in your announcements. Studiously avoid slang or witticisms. Because your sermon, in which you have been the mouthpiece of God, has now been delivered, you would do very unwisely and indeed very wickedly to spoil its effect by careless speech. State what you must say in a brief, dignified way, and then proceed to close the service. It is very alluring, and very easy to sin in this. And the effect of yielding here is frightful to contemplate. What a travesty upon an otherwise efficient ministerial career is it that people are led to feel and to remark that the most interesting and appetizing performances of their preacher are his announcements.

But in addition to correcting habits of careless speech, the circumspect minister will no less give attention to carelessness and rudeness in action, and endeavor to correct these. You need watch your actions in official public and private ministrations, and, too, in all your social activities. To govern his activities in all these relations, this general proposition may be laid down: The minister should avoid unreserved familiarity with his people. It is likely to breed contempt. It will make very difficult, if not impossible, the proper discharge of pastoral duties in many a situation. Then, too, you may learn things of your people you do not need to know, and they may learn things of their pastor they do not need to know. Be easy, affable, accessible in your manners and bearing, but stop before you become familiar. Do not get intimate with a parishioner; it may be misunderstood,—unless you mean to marry her. And in that case have it over with as soon as possible.

But in these two relations, your official and unofficial capac-

ities, watch your personal habits. Do not make your toilet in public. Attend to your ears, nose, eyes, teeth, in the privacy of your own room. Scratch your head with your comb or fingers all you please, — but never do it in public. Use your sacristy for these things, and not your pulpit. You may not be able to afford fine clothing, — you do not need it, — but you can afford to be clean and tidy; indeed, you cannot afford to be otherwise. You should never need, or use, artificial perfumes. Particularly in the sick-room or in the public service your breath should not smell of tobacco or liquor.

Indulge me a few remarks concerning behavior before the altar. When approaching the altar, do not swagger leisurely as in a sense of officiousness on the one hand, or, on the other, do not hastily strut about as if in a nervous excitability. Since you are here handling divine things, let yourself be as inconspicuous and your actions as unnoticeable as possible. If it becomes your custom to occupy a chair by the altar, do not sit in the presence of the congregation with legs crossed or with feet or hands nervously twitching or unnaturally twisted. You will instinctively see all of your audience you need see, but avoid sly or furtive glances about the church. Actions such as these attract embarrassing attention, and may distract the mind of your audience. Avoid any action that may interfere with the devotional spirit of the congregation assembled. Proper decorum before the altar is, I believe, possible only if at all times and everywhere the minister exercises watchful discipline over himself, and when, in the act of ministering divine things, he concentrates his mind, not on himself or his audience, but on his work, the business before him.

But the minister is not always before the altar. As a pastor he will be a familiar figure on the street within the limits of his parish. The particular bearing or carriage of the pastor on the street is of sufficient importance to demand your attention. While you should not destroy your individuality, you should give it conventional training. In walking do not develop, much less cultivate, a gait, or peculiar manner

of walking. The untrained, awkward shambling of the lout is no more excusable in a pastor than in a business man or a soldier. When on the street, ever be ready to extend the commonly recognized courtesies to all people and to all ages. If I here insert a bit of personal experience, I assume you will not think me posing as a complete and ideal illustration of my advice. For I am frank to confess that my ideas may be a good deal better than my ability to execute them. Some time ago I was obliged to change my residence. Living in the vicinity was an old resident and rather a conspicuous character. He was unchurchly and a Freemason. At first he consistently sought to avoid a casual street-glance or any exchange of civilities with me, or, at least, I thought he did. But at last he was accidentally cornered, and was obliged to reciprocate my acknowledgment of his presence. Our meetings are now accompanied by mutual greetings and, now and then, bits of conversation. Our relation to-day is such that an approach to more pertinent matter would, I believe, not be considered inappropriate by either of us. While your accessibility must not dissipate your dignity, your dignity must never defeat the ends of your office. You will find it inadvisable, most of the time, to make your courtesies wait on formal introduction.

And when you are on the street, it will be assumed you are about your business; so do not smoke there. And why not? Not that you may hide the habit, of course not. You should avoid smoking on the street for much the same reason that you do not eat your potatoes or drink your coffee there. And when you make pastoral calls or visits, let your visits subserve some purpose of your office. Do not be a loafer among your people. Whether he be a blacksmith, a cobbler, or a banker, never make his place of work your place to kill time. Many evils arise from this habit. You are idle while doing so. And you cannot afford this. You interfere with another's work while doing it. This you have no right, official or personal right, to do. You are likely to talk too much or too unwisely while doing it. And in some cases it may be reciprocated. And

before you know it, you will have a loafer on *your* hands. And then you will have a situation of *your* own making that affords excellent opportunity for the development of a crisis that may require the good offices of the visitor of your district.

Ordinarily, when your visit in a private family is extended beyond the time it takes for you to do your work there, you inconvenience some one. And when this becomes a habit with you, you become a nuisance. Do not accept pot-luck invitations to meals from the members of your church. Such invitations are, for the greater part, sincerely given, but they involve a freedom and an indiscriminate social mixture that renders it very wholesome for the pastor to keep away from. They are generally extended by people with more zeal than Christian knowledge and experience. You will likely by this time have a family. When you accept an invitation to dine out, let it be for yourself and family. I need not warn you against the habit of assuming a vacant chair and a welcome at any table in your congregation without invitation, the only requirement being that you happen to be in the vicinity of such and such a house at meal times. Only such as are in a class with the tramp or hobo work that stunt.

As a preacher or as a pastor you will of necessity make many appointments. On the first page of your appointment record write in capital letters the word "Punctuality." Be scrupulous in keeping the time of all your appointments to the very minute. Begin your public service on the minute. A prompt congregation can quickly be spoiled by a slow, tardy minister, even as a tardy congregation can be measurably brought to time by a prompt minister. Observe with exactness the beginning of your period for confirmation instruction. Do not teach children, by your example, the slovenly and indifferent habit of tardiness. They will readily conclude that your work with them is not of first importance. In all your engagements, whether they be official or merely social, learn to have as much regard for the other fellow's time as you would have him respect your time. This is especially to be looked to in your

unofficial life. What disappointment, distress, and even disgust are occasioned by the minister and his family appearing at the home of a member an hour or so after the time set for dinner. No explanation, on the basis of truth, can atone for the offense. For, generally, it is totally inexcusable. If your hostess, in consequence, is nothing more than politely agreeable, do not blame her; blame yourself. In every respect it is the mean habit; and if you are in it, get out of it before you enter the ministry. It is a wonder that any ministry can hold up long under the maladministration of a dilatory pastor.

To close my talk to you, I have reserved a matter which I regard as basic in importance: the supersensitive nature and the unduly suspicious disposition. This is so important, not only because non-attention to it may be the source of much distress to the pastor, but because education and culture has a tendency to quicken the sensitive nature of a person, which, in turn, so easily leads into unjustifiable suspicion.

The faithful minister will never experience the need of inquiring of his people how they like his preaching or himself. He not only quickly enough becomes cognizant of any waves of approval or disapproval, but seldom fails to sense intuitively an undercurrent of judgment or feelings with respect to himself, if there is one. The status that should obtain is, of course, this, that the congregation neither praise nor blame the minister, but praise and exalt the glorious word and doctrine he preaches as long as such word and doctrine be of God. Yet the pastor should not be content with the uncertainty of an isolated and purely official esteem, in which there is a noticeable lack of that personal confidence and cordiality every minister has a right to expect. But in case he may not be able to discern the presence of all he has a right to look for, he should not at once assume that it does not exist. He should not so anticipate trouble as to project only the possible or probable into the realm of the real or actual. Be not too quick to discover offenses, either against others or yourself. I do not mean that among your people you ought to be known as a nunskull,

unable or unwilling to recognize or to adjust an offense against your office or person. This you must never permit to pass by unnoticed, unchallenged, or uncorrected. But I do mean that the minister should exercise that rare grace of wisdom and of patience that takes time kindly and deliberately to look at a word or an act from every possible angle before reaching a conclusion. It is not necessary to become quickly angry, for you are likely to prejudge. The habit of prejudgment is likely to follow that of hasty judgment, and is fatal to the influence he should command among his people. If you would be wise as the serpent and harmless as the dove, you would do well to put into discipline that too sensitive nature you may have, and to curb that tendency you may have to look for trouble.

I desire to commend this matter of self-culture to your attention. In a given situation satisfy yourself that you are right; for this will go far toward giving you that mental poise upon which gentlemanly conduct so largely depends. I assume you know what it means to be a man, and I submit that only a man can afford to be a gentleman. And the stronger his manly character is, the more competent can he become in dispensing these polite civilities which render his social life agreeable to others, and which remove many elements of possible harm from his official life.

To be civil, courteous, and decorous in conduct you need not be a hypocrite. Dishonesty enters only when you are not sincere in what you say or refrain from saying, or in what you do. And this, in turn, is controlled by your motive. And this, in a nutshell, should be your motive: That the Word you preach, which is the power of God, be not hindered by your foibles, your thoughtless peculiarities. Yes, indeed, God will accomplish that which He pleases by His Word ministered,—but, O young man, you are to be the minister! Therefore neglect no opportunity that may increase your fitness to meet that responsibility with proficiency.

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