

The Sacred Cow Pen

Nowhere in the Bible is a preacher of the gospel said to be accorded any special title. When then comes the almost universally ascribed "Reverend" which prefaces the names of preachers who have not managed a yet higher degree?

The appellation, which means "worthy of reverence, adoration or worship," comes to us from the same religious Babylon from which most unscriptural customs come. This one, as do many others, comes by way of the Roman Catholic blasphemy. Protestants, willing to abolish the persistent idea of a special order of "Christian" priests, nevertheless still want to retain some vestige of the hated doctrine of the Nicolaitans by yet providing some way to venerate their "men of the cloth."

Since the Bible specifically spells out and forbids us to call men "Father" in the religious sense, they have retained an equally odious title, which, though not specifically spelled out, is equally condemned by such passages as forbid worship or adoration to be given to any but God alone (Luke 4:8, Acts 10:26; 14:15).

"Reverend," however, has become too common for the ego of many preachers. They would be distinguished from the profane rabble of novices, ignoramuses, and lowbrow professors of "the calling" which floods the religious scene. These whose forebears loved to be called "Rabbi, Rabbi," now love to be called "Doctor, Doctor." I am not depreciating the validity and worth of a degree bestowed upon a man who has fairly earned it by completing the required scholarly work. Or even that of those conferred degrees which are given to a man who has through much time and labour and proven work earned it outside the academic halls. I am speaking about this proliferation of spiritual lightweights who covet and usurp this title, and who flaunt it as a cover for their own ineptness. No better are the churches and organizations who feel it beneath their dignity to feature a man not "doctored."

Now, we do realize that to many, "reverend" is simply a title which designates a man as a preacher, much as "counselor," and attorney, or "honorable," a lawmaker. And though we must be charitable with those who use it so, we may not use it of ourselves, and we should discourage others from using it in reference to us.

"Pastor" or "Elder" serves quite well for a man who is *functioning* as such. If he is not *and* is yet serving as a preacher, perhaps "Evangelist" would fit. If the particular character of his ministry is uncertain, there is nothing demeaning or disrespectful about using the term "Mr." In a formal address. In informal speech and among fellow Christians, no higher tribute in title is possible than "Brother." I might also add that in normal conversation among a family, we usually call each other by our first names. It will not be disrespectful for us to do the same among those with whom we are intimately familiar.

"But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; *and all ye are brethren*" (Matthew 23:8).

- C. M.