

The Pulpit



Its origins and its purpose

In most European languages the pulpit is still referred to by its original heathen name, "ambo." (Latin: ambon)

The pulpit pre-dates Christianity and is wholly pagan in origin. The heathen priest, standing in a heathen temple, moved out onto a walkway which had a banister around it and made his announcements to the pagan onlookers. This was called the ambo. (The Pope still does this.)

Those first Christian church buildings followed this heathen practice, putting an *ambo* inside the building, high upon one of the columns. Centuries later when the Protestants took over northern Europe, those Protestants inherited thousands upon thousands of Catholic church buildings.

The Protestants (Martin Luther in particular) tore out that unapproachable area up front where the priests had conducted their magical mass. Not stopping there, they literally ripped the ambo off the church column and placed it up front in the center.

So was born the Protestant pulpit.

The word pulpit came to us from the Latin "pulpium." It originally meant a scaffold or platform. Even today the harpoonist, who stands way out on the front end of a whaling ship, stands on a pulpit.

What is the purpose of a pulpit today? No, it's not so that a "preacher" can have a place to prop his notes and lay his bible.

A pulpit is used today to make the person standing behind it feel really Big and really Important.

A pulpit is used today to purposely impress you and to awe you, the humble pew-sitter.

A pulpit is used today to keep you from asking questions; and from falling asleep.

A pulpit is used today to keep you, the lowly, second-class Christian apart from those first-class, full-timers up front.

Its very presence is intimidating to dialogue, communication, and sharing.

The pulpit strongly encourages "*showmanship*" on the part of its occupant. Remember, part of the definition of a pulpit is "*a stage*." The praise and applause of the people (in the form of "amens" and "head noddings," as well as the "after-church" hand shaking ritual and compliments at the back door) makes it very tempting for teachers and preachers to work harder at "performing well" than teaching the truth.

While the pulpit encourages this type of behavior from its occupants, it likewise encourages everyone else to be "*spectators*." (so the term "*Spectator Christianity*")

So, as can easily be seen, and we may as well face up to it, in the "post reformation" Church scene, the "pulpit" is much more than a "fixture"; it is much more than just another piece of "*religious furniture*" scattered throughout "*the church*." The problem is not with the inanimate platform, but with what it means to so many people, what it represents, and what it contributes to the further corruption of the Christian faith.

Furthermore, being what it is and being used as it is used in the "*church system*" today, the pulpit is tailor-made for other abuses.

It may be used as:

- (1) a political tool to put forward and promote ones own agenda within the church structure
- (2) to pressure the other "church leaders" into certain decisions
- (3) to pressure the congregation into desired directions
- (4) a flogging station, at which the preacher flogs the weak and defective disciples week after week
- (5) a sanctuary, a *protected place of immunity*, from which the preacher either attacks or strikes back at his personal enemies.

Remember, just like with some other things we do in the church today, the use of the pulpit has *its origins in heathenism*.

Keep all of these things in mind the next time someone says in a grave and sanctimonious voice:

"We stand here behind the sacred desk preaching obedience to the Word of God!"

<http://www.wickedshepherds.com/ThePulpit.html>