

The Administration Of a Church, Which is a Polite Phrase for Raising Money

In an earlier chapter, it was averred that we would be coming to the treatment of those skills and talents which really payoff for the preacher in charge of a congregation. We have now arrived at that promised point.

A congregation is fundamentally a business enterprise. No one mentions this, rather obvious fact, to the ambitious young theologs during their period of professional training. When you were required to write a paper on “The Theology of the Church” for Dr. Van Fuzz’s course Christian Doctrine II, you probably defined a church as “the gathered community of Faith” or “the Body of Christ” or employed some other equally-elegant theological phrase.

This was the thing to do, of course, for had you defined it as “a business enterprise,” the ancient and learned doctor would have flunked you without turning a single straggly gray hair. The author does not mean to imply that such definitions are wrong or that they are not useful on occasion. They are in the nature of ideals, of beautiful goals to move toward, if you can fathom what they mean. They have their place (in learned papers, mostly). But, do not confuse them with reality. Above all, do not plunge out of seminary and into your first pastorate, heart and mind aquiver with the solemn thought, “I am now in charge of a community of faith.” To do so is to invite professional

disaster at the very first stage of your career.

What you are in charge of is not a community of faith but a business enterprise. Your seminary professors do not understand this. Seminary professors are very short on knowledge of how a local church operates; few of them ever having been pastors, but your bishop understands it. The trustees or board or vestry or session of your church understands it. Your brother clergymen understand it; and your wife, who must cope with the frequently grim facts of parsonage economics, understands it. (You may be amazed at the rapidity with which she grasps the essential nature of the church).

Too many otherwise-promising young clerics are encouraged to minimize the business-management side of the pastoral ministry because it is so seldom mentioned. But, the fact that it isn’t mentioned or treated lightly, by even the tightest member of your board of deacons, should indicate to you, not its unimportance, but only that good and sensitive Christian people don’t like to be reminded of it. Or, to put it plainly, there is a conspiracy of silence as to the commercial aspects of the church. This, it seems to the author, is the part of wisdom. After all, our Lord drove the money-changers out of the temple. And there is something unbecoming about crass materialism in the house of God.

The knowledgeable clergyman, then, will co-operate in this conspiracy of silence. If he doesn't, he lays himself open to the charge of "worldliness" or "lack of spirituality," which will severely damage the public image of the cloth as a profession, and cause the sweet Christian souls under his care to be on their guard against any proposal or program he may suggest, lest it cost them money.

Experience will teach you that it is seldom necessary to make public mention of church business and finance. On those rare occasions when it is necessary, remember to avoid the use of the word "money." Speak of "bringing the tithes into the storehouse" or "the Lord's business."¹ It sounds so much better. It doesn't jar or grate on religious sensibilities. However, though you will seldom mention money and the church, you will learn to think about it all the time. It will become (if you intend to make your mark) the fundamental fact of your professional life.

"Church administration" is simply a refined term for "raising money:" It involves, of course, all sorts of activities—committee meetings, publicity, promotion, budget preparation, building supervision, public relations, etc., but it is all related to keeping your church solvent.

European churchmen from lands where the church derives its support from taxes are amazed that people will voluntarily-contribute enough money to finance religion. What they fail to understand is that extracting all this cash requires clergymen who combine business acumen, a good working knowledge of human nature, and the persuasiveness of a circus pitchman.

The Theology Of Church Finance

If the author had his way, he would include as a part of the core curriculum of

every school of divinity, several courses on "The Theology of Church Finance." For public relations purposes it would be wise to call these courses, "The Theology of Christian Stewardship," but for the sake of clarity, we have used, "Church Finance." Such studies should certainly take precedence over the pursuit of musty old biblical languages, which will never be of any conceivable use in the parish ministry; and should have as many, if not more hours devoted to them as, New Testament exegesis or church history. As we have noted, the vast majority of your pastoral cares will have to do with money, not Bible or history or Christian instruction. Why not, then, devote the bulk of your training to those skills, which will be your best and most important resource during the years ahead?

Though the restrictions of space do not permit here an exhaustive treatment of "The Theology of Church Finance" there is, so far as the author knows, no authoritative work on the subject extant,² so we will include a brief outline of the theology. Fortunately, there is no need to manufacture a Theology of Church Finance. It already exists, embedded in the body of Christian doctrine, which has been venerated for centuries and, thus, has the authority and power of tradition behind it. This eliminates the necessity of establishing and defending your assumptions, since they are already established and to question them is to commit the sin of heresy. Your good people would never even consider the possibility that accepted Christian doctrine could be wrong.

The Theology of Church Finance actually has only two cardinal doctrines, both drawn from the spiritual well of Christian orthodoxy.

The first doctrine and the keystone in the arch of our Theology of Church Finance is the "Doctrine of Original sin.

Now the author is aware that this time-honored and excellent doctrine, which is stated so beautifully in the Genesis story of the fall of man, has, in our time, been treated rather lightly in the liberal seminaries. There has been, instead, an emphasis on man's essential goodness, his potential for righteousness. You may have been taught that if we can only give people enough education and inside plumbing, the Kingdom of God will automatically-arrive. This, of course, makes for very popular preaching, since most of the people to whom you preach have an education and inside plumbing; so they are led to believe that the Kingdom has already arrived for them, that they are safely within the gates.

In fact, there is no reason why you can't use this approach for your preaching theology. If it comforts your people and makes them feel good, you have successfully-performed a pastoral duty. Actually, there is something to be said for making your flock feel good through your sermons, because this makes them feel good toward the church and prepares them spiritually for the financial appeal. But, many young preachers who are otherwise-able and show real promise, make the fatal error of carrying this positive, pleasant theology over into the hard, practical business of raising money. Then, true to their doctrine, they stress "Christian stewardship" and "giving gladly" and that sort of thing. Then they wonder why they have an eternal struggle with the church budget.

The reason is actually, quite-apparent. People can give fifty cents gladly-they are glad to feel they have given, and they are glad to have gotten the glad feeling at such a bargain price. But if you expect to extract any real money from them, you have to offer a motive with considerably more horsepower than simple gladness. This motive is contained in the Doctrine of

Original Sin. And just in case you don't have a firm grasp of the doctrine, perhaps a brief explanation will prove helpful.

Briefly, and forgetting, for the moment, the formal, biblical background for the doctrine, it says that every man is by nature predisposed to seek in everything, his own selfish ends; that he will always look after his own interests first. It also holds that every man is aware of this flaw in his nature, even if that awareness lurks in the murky depths of his subconscious. It has to be this way, of course. For if a fellow didn't know, either consciously or unconsciously, that he is a sinner, he wouldn't be a sinner.

Strange as it seems, the greatest thing that ever came down the pike, so far as the hard-pressed parish pastor is concerned, is the psychology of Sigmund Freud. Freud taught us about guilt and put his message across in a way that preachers had never been able to manage. He made guilt fashionable. Guilt is "in." Freud was an agnostic, of course, but then God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform, and for purposes of money raising (and let us put it in capital letters so that it will be emblazoned on your memory) NOTHING IS HALF SO EFFECTIVE AS THE EXPLOITATION OF YOUR PARISHIONERS' GUILT FEELINGS!!!

Perhaps it never occurred to you that the clean, sweetsmelling, well-behaved members of your congregation are really sinners. But depend on the absolute accuracy of the Doctrine of Original Sin. They are.

The Pallid Sins Of Nice People

It is true that not many of them are spectacular sinners. Their transgressions tend to be petty, unimaginative, and thoroughly middle-class. But, they are sinners

all the same, and while they pretend that they are not, they know it.

Very few of your good people pursue sin in the form of wine, women and song. This is because such pursuit is inconvenient, time-consuming and expensive. Most of all, it reduces one's effectiveness as a money maker; and the average middle-class, white Protestant much prefers building his bank account and collecting status symbols to indulging himself in the so-called pleasures of the flesh.³

Now, this is a fact which you need to keep in mind at all times, and especially when planning the annual budget drive or building-fund campaign or any other type of financial appeal. Scorching your people for the rough, rowdy, boisterous, bold, bawdy sins will bring very little cash into the till. This kind of talk just makes them feel smug and superior. Hardly anyone to whom you will minister ever even thought of sinning with abandon. Nice people don't do these things, and happily for us, the church has progressed to the place where it serves nice people, almost-exclusively. We have come a long way from the early days of the church when Christianity did not appeal very-much to the nice people of the time, and members had to be recruited from the rough, unlettered and profane classes. How much easier it would have been for our dear Lord had he been able to deal with the merchant and banking levels of society instead of with fishermen and petty tax collectors and the like. But, as noted, above, denouncing the sins which nice people do not commit, only makes them feel spiritually-superior. And the man who is encouraged to feel spiritually superior, generally ends up by revising downward the amount he had planned to give to the church.

However, nice people are quite vulnerable at the point of their prosperity. The

average man really has a rather low opinion of himself, even when he covers it with bluster and bragging. He is astounded to find himself living in a forty thousand-dollar home, driving two automobiles and belonging to the country club. He wants you to believe that all this is tangible evidence of his wit, energy and general superiority. But, in his heart he knows, though he may never acknowledge it, even to himself, that it is mostly luck. He lives uneasily, with the information that he has managed to squeeze out of society far more than his contribution to society is worth. And since his security, the structure of his personality, and everything he holds precious in life is squarely dependent on these lovely results of what he pretends is his personal superiority; but what he believes to be his good fortune, he is haunted by one horrible, nightmarish fear-that somehow these things will disappear as easily as they came. This is why so many of your people support Robert Welch or Billy James Hargis. They are wildly-enthusiastic about anyone who promises to ward off those who want to take it away. In short, your average man is prosperous and he feels guilty about it. The astute pastor, then, will learn how to remind his people (there are a thousand ways) of how greatly the Lord has blessed them and that these blessings are far beyond anything they deserve.

This has the advantage of being good, sound, demonstrable biblical teaching, plus being a solid, practical approach to prying out of them the money you need to carry on the Lord's work. Couple this with the subtle, but frequent suggestion that "the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away" and that he might do just that; and you have created the ideal atmosphere for maximum results from a church finance campaign. There is, however, one exception to this rule, this appeal won't work with people of inherited wealth. They are

accustomed to having money and assume it is the will of God that they should have it. However, be comforted by two thoughts: **(1)** You won't have many such people in your flock and **(2)** nothing else works with them either.

The Peace Which Passeth Understanding

Creating in your good, prosperous flock, feelings of guilt (or, more accurately, bringing to the surface of their awareness the guilt feelings they already have, but which they attempted to dispose of by cramming them into the subconscious) is not sufficient to get the job done, though. You must, also, utilize the second cardinal doctrine in our Theology of Church Finance.

The official name of this doctrine is "Salvation by Works." It means, as you know if you did not neglect your courses in systematic theology, that God permits us to earn His favor by our performance of enough approved, good acts or deeds (works). It, also, involves the avoidance of those activities and indulgences on which the Almighty supposedly frowns.

Since nearly everyone is disinclined to exhaust themselves performing all the good works they suspect they need to perform, in order to be acceptable to God and insure that their names are inscribed in the heavenly reservation lists; and since we all harbor guilt feeling for real or imagined transgressions, there is a need for "a more excellent way," a relatively-painless method of obtaining the desired spiritual benefits.

Our Roman Catholic friends understand this quite well; and early in the history of the church, grasped the immense spiritual possibilities of the universal

need to earn favor with God. They formulated the doctrine of Salvation by Works, and included the payment of appropriate sums of money to the church in the list of acceptable good works. It must now be apparent to you that your problem is to "Protestantize" this fine and beneficial Roman doctrine. What is required is the encouragement of the conviction that expiation of sin, peace of mind and the kind smile of the Almighty are available to those whose generosity toward the church is notable and consistent.

The author is one who believes a little humor and levity associated with the demanding tasks of the parish ministry is a good thing among professionals; so the following limerick is offered to make our point, to help fix it in your mind, and perhaps, bring a bit of fun into an otherwise grim undertaking.

*There was a church deacon named Linn
Who succumbed to original sin.
When his guilt became onerous
He wrote a check generous
It's now a state of grace that he's in.*

Now, the question is bound to arise in your mind, "How can we encourage our good Protestant people to purchase their salvation, when the chief doctrine of the Protestant Reformation was 'Justification (or Salvation) by Faith'?" How can we tell them that the good work of generous financial support of the church will catch God's attention, merit His approval, and prompt Him to punch the blessing button and pour out on them His richest favors, when our official theology holds that not only do we not need to make ourselves acceptable to God, but that we can't do it no matter how hard we try? At first glance this would seem to be an insurmountable obstacle. But it is not so difficult as you might suppose.

Most of your faithful flock has never even heard of the Protestant doctrine of Justification by Faith. And even the minority which has heard of it, has never connected it with themselves or real life.

Since we live in a world where everything has a price, where anything good has to be fought for, struggled for, sacrificed for, it is inconceivable to your people that even God is going to give them anything for free. They feel it deep in their hearts that they must somehow merit the divine forgiveness before it can be bestowed on them. They know with a primitive, sub-rational intuition that cannot be shaken by a contrary doctrine, which has only the Bible to back it up, that they must accomplish their own atonement.

The understanding pastor, then, will not confuse his good people with a lot of abstruse theology, however correct. He will not do this, especially, when the end result of its acceptance would be, in all likelihood, a drastic reduction in his church's cash income. Rather, any clergyman with a truly pastoral heart will covet for all of his people, the peace which passeth understanding. And if this can be had by a simple monetary transaction, why force them to accept and understand a difficult doctrine? As shepherds, we desire that the sheep under our care shall be spiritually-blessed and comforted — and if a little fleecing will produce the desired results, then who is to say that this is not good? We should rejoice in a situation in which everyone wins.

It may be that you are offended by the thought of encouraging a doctrine which runs counter to orthodox Protestant theology. If so, be comforted by the knowledge that even if you preached every Sunday on the teaching of God's free grace, you would discover that your people would be

extremely-reluctant to abandon the belief in the efficacy of good works to justify (square them) before the Almighty.

The reason for this reluctance is attributable, in part, to the fact that many of them have tried to be good, have abstained from carousing around, and, in general, avoided enjoying life overmuch because they have thought or been told that this is how God wanted it. Thus, if you tell them that what they have tried so hard to achieve is freely-available as a gift, you devalue the currency of their virtue. If they have the wit to carry this teaching to its logical end, they cannot avoid the conclusion that God loves the bum in the gutter just as much as He loves the sanitary, inhibited church member. This produces amazement, followed rapidly by anger and hostility. They will be angry at the thought of the wasted years spent behaving themselves, when it hasn't bought them anything after all. And then they become hostile toward the one who brought them this information, which is you. And hostile church members are nothing but trouble for the pastor.

You must never forget that the peaceful, happy church is the true community of faith. It makes life more pleasant for the pastor; it attracts new members, and it has a much higher stewardship (financial) potential than the quarrelsome congregation. One of the main goals of your pastoral administration, then, is to achieve and preserve a state of tranquillity in your church. Since Christians, from the early days of the faith, have shown a regrettable tendency to fuss and fight among themselves, this is no simple problem. However, a clever, tactful, courteous, thick-skinned minister can calm the most cantankerous of congregations. Here are a few hints to help you in this enterprise of Christian love.

Fundamental to success here is your self-image as the chief executive officer of the Lord's corporation. Our experience has led us to the conclusion that the pastor who thinks of himself as the manager of a private club is likely to outdistance his competitors in the race for clerical honors and pastoral eminence.

A club manager knows that membership and participation in the club is voluntary, so it is up to him to make it the kind of organization to which people want to belong. The best way to accomplish this is to make membership in the club a status symbol.

Private clubs, of course, are able to achieve this by a policy of excluding from membership those who would, were they to be admitted, detract from the image of an organization, belonged to only by those who already have status. No one wants to join anything which their Chinese laundryman or colored garbage collector can join, too. So private clubs do not admit such persons to membership, good people though they may be.

A church, naturally, cannot operate in just this manner. Theoretically, anyone who wishes to may join a Christian church. We aren't supposed to exclude anyone. In practice, though, it works about the same way as in the private club. The trick is to load your membership with enough of one kind of people so that other kinds of people will not ask to join.

The Status Church

You will discover that in each community there will be one or two "status churches," to which people from the better levels of society gravitate.⁴ You are indeed fortunate if your church happens to be one of them. It takes a long time to build a

church into a status symbol; and when it has become one, it is next to impossible to knock it out of this class.

Some enthusiastic young pastors have foolishly-tryed to shove their churches up the status ladder, by stressing excellent preaching, sound and attractive worship, and highgrade educational programs. This won't work. The author knows one church where the preaching is deadly dull; the worship, a hodgepodge; the educational program, a quarter of a century out of date; and the architecture of the building, gloomy and depressing. Yet, it rolls along, year after year, picking up a hog's share of the affluent and privileged newcomers to the community. This is because it already has a hog's share of the affluent and privileged residents of the community.

This church has come to its present enviable and well nigh impregnable position by following for many years now a carefully-selective policy of evangelism. It is aggressive in seeking out new members — but only in those sections of town where the kind of people it wants are likely to live.

When a newcomer arrives (in the right part of town), the moving van has hardly unloaded before representatives of this church are at the door. After the usual exchange of pleasantries, the visitors say, "Look, we know you belong to another denomination, but in our town this doesn't mean much. People of your station in life here nearly always join our church." The new people are smart enough, as a rule, to check around before committing themselves. But they soon discover that the church's representatives have given them the straight goods. The appeal is almost irresistible, so they join.

The author commends this church's example as a guide for you, as you struggle to put a shining public image on your congregation. Remember — if you can get enough of the right kind of people into your church, you have it made.

Since your pastoral experience is limited, you may be uncertain as to the grading and evaluation of prospective members. So that you may be spared the natural mistakes of youth and inexperience, you will find below a list of the common categories of church members, accompanied by a number for each, which is the value scale index. Thus, a member in the number ten category (the highest possible rating) is worth twice as much to your congregation as a status builder as a number five category.

It is impossible, of course, to be entirely accurate in an abstract scale. Personality, amount of wealth, degree of success in business or profession, etc., complicate the evaluation process, but if you master our index, you won't go far wrong.

Status Value Scale Index

Old, aristocratic family	10
(Without a few of these, you are fighting a losing battle so far as status is concerned)	
Millionaire (any kind)	8
(9 if multimillionaire)	
Medical Doctor	7
(successful specialist)	
Medical Doctor	6
(general practitioner)	
Lawyer	6
(corporation and tax)	

Lawyer	5
(criminal, divorce, etc.)	
Businessman	7
(owns own business, but not a millionaire)	
Businessman	7
(top-level management)	
Businessman	5
(owner of modest concern, middle-management, etc.)	
Teacher	4
(college with Ph.D.)	
Teacher	2
(college with M.A.)	
Teacher	3
(public school-administrative level)	
Teacher	2
(public school-high school)	
Teacher	1
(public school-grade school)	
Musician, actor, or artist	2
(unless "big name" - in which case assign value of 7 to 9)	
Undertaker	7
(successful-owns business) ⁵	
Undertaker	1
(employee status, embalmer)	
Osteopath	3
Chiropractor	1
Dentist	6
(orthodontist)	

- Dentist**
(general practice)
- Clerks, stenographers, business-machine operators (white-collar)**
(These are good people, no doubt, but they confer no status on the organization)
- Factory Workers**
(supervisory level)
(see explanation in above category)
- Factory Workers -1**
(hourly rates)
- Day laborers -2**
(outdoor type)
- Colored people**
(unless from wealthy South American, Oriental, or Indian classes - which is unlikely)
- South American-light skin. -3**
- South American-dark skin. -7**
- Oriental-Japanese -3**
(except in California)
- Oriental-Chinese. -5**
- American Negro-light skin. -7**
- American Negro-dark skin. . . . -10+**

The above index is not exhaustive, but is sufficiently-representative to enable you to assign any category, not included, its proper index number.

The able clergyman can, by the use of the index, portion out his pastoral time and efforts so as to obtain maximum return. For example, since an ordinary millionaire (not multi) carries an index of eight and a college professor (with PhD.)

carries an index of four, one millionaire is worth — to your church's status image — two college professors.⁶ Therefore, you may legitimately-spend twice as much time in the pastoral cultivation of a millionaire as you would devote to a college professor.

Or, if you are after two medical doctors, one a specialist and one in general practice, a quick reference to the index shows you that a general practitioner is only six-sevenths as valuable to you as the specialist, and indicates in which direction you should weight your efforts.

Picking The Right Negro

When we come to those categories assigned a minus quantity, we have a delicate problem, because the minus index measures the effort you must make to keep these people out of your church.

Let's take the extreme example. Suppose a very darkskinned American Negro begins attending your services and there is, in your opinion, a real danger that he will ask to join. This is an ever-present possibility in these days of racial change and unrest. It could easily-happen in your church and you must be prepared for the day when the problem overtakes you.

It would seem best for you to handle this exigency by doing nothing about it, yourself. Rather, have a word with a trusted layman — a faithful usher, perhaps, or some other member, outstanding for his tact and air of friendliness and good will. You can suggest to the layman that he have a word with the colored brother some Sunday after service. He might say, "George," (all Negro men expect to be called, George) "I was talking to the pastor of the African Methodist Church (or

the Mount Pisgah Baptist Church, or some other colored church) recently, and happened to mention that you were attending our church. And he said to me, 'Yes, and I wish he would come down here and help us out. You have a fine, strong church and we have such a struggle to keep going. He could do so much more for the Lord with us. Besides, he would be happier with his own kind. You tell him I said that, will you?'"

A kind, considerate approach such as this, with no race prejudice, no rude suggestion that he isn't wanted should take care of the matter nicely. We must always exhibit a Christian spirit when dealing with these touchy situations.

Some of our more progressive and far-sighted pastors, though, are using a different approach to the problem. They contend that it is a genuine asset, in fact, almost a necessity to have a Negro member of your church these days. One of the most successful men in the author's circle of clerical acquaintances says (when speaking privately, of course), "Every church needs to have a pet nigger." And while we wouldn't want something like this said so crudely, (in public), he may be right.

The idea is that one Negro member works for you and makes your church look liberal, decent, Christian in attitude, and integrated. Your author is still a bit dubious about so bold a step, though, because it entails all sorts of risks. To mention only one, it might encourage the idea that your church actually-wants and welcomes any and all Negroes who care to join. This, as you immediately-perceive, would be disastrous if colored people, in any significant numbers, took advantage of your good will.

My advice to any young, ambitious pastor would be to step very carefully here. Being young and open-minded, you may be several steps ahead of your good people in your racial attitudes. After all, you don't want to. force your attitudes on your people. You want to lead them gently, shepherd them carefully. And this takes time.

Should you decide to take on a Negro member for the reasons stated above, make certain that you pick the right kind. Avoid, at all costs, the educated, professional, superior type of colored man, who is a pace setter in the Negro community. Where he leads others follow.

The very best kind, for your purposes, is a coal-black, poor, semiliterate Negro bachelor, the "Old Black Joe" type. He is no threat, whatever, to any of your people (a Negro schoolteacher, for example, would be better-educated than some of your staunch members, and they would resent this bitterly). And he would remind them of the days when racial relations were clearly defined and tranquil, not ambiguous and tension-filled, as they are in our present society. In short, he would be looked on with affection as a pet. He would be coddled, protected and prized. And he would not encourage other Negroes to follow him because they would be a threat to his privileged position.

How To Handle Committees

Let us turn now to the problems which will confront you as you seek to implement your policies and programs through the internal administrative structure of your church.

The ambitious young divine, wading into his first parish, is often confused by the abundance of church committees through which he is supposed to carry on the work of his ministry. There is a com-

mittee for the promotion of missions, a committee on music, a committee on ushering, a committee on social relations, a committee on worship, a committee or board of Christian education, a house committee, a parsonage committee, a pulpit committee, a committee on finance, a benevolence committee, an interchurch relations committee, an evangelism committee, a committee to promote (raise money for) the denominational colleges of the area, a committee to promote (raise money for) the denominational hospitals and/or orphans' homes and homes for the aged, a committee on holy communion, an altar guild, a board of trustees or vestry, various committees of the ladies' organizations, and, above all these, an official board or session which is supposed to have final authority on all matters of internal administration.

Nothing you learned in seminary has prepared you for this. Seminary professors are as baffled by the purpose, function and use of local church committees as you are, so they skip this part of instruction in administration. And, unless you are forewarned, you may actually-attempt to put these committees to work — or, what is worse, try to carry on your administration through them.

Calculate, for example, the drain on your time if your parish has thirty committees (a modest estimate—the number is often much higher than this) and each committee were to meet every month. Your only free nights would be in those months which have thirty-one days. Also, were all these committees active, it would tax the resources of IBM's most efficient electronic computer to keep track of what they were doing. It is quite beyond the capacities of even the brightest clergyman to handle such assignments.

It is, of course, entirely-unnecessary for you to attempt such a formidable task. What you must understand is that the committee structure of a church was never intended to be used. It is strictly for window dressing, to give the appearance of a democratically-operated organization, or to use a more felicitous phrase, it exists for the purposes of public relations — nothing more.

The folklore of American church life has as one of its most sacred tenets, the belief that the way to create a loyal church member is to give him a job to do. This is a part of our activist faith, and it is, to be sure, an excellent part, for it has produced the most lively, busy and high-powered army of the Lord ever known. But it is obviously-impossible to keep everyone in your church busy, or to keep even a significant fraction of your members busy. So, the committee system was devised to give the appearance of everyone in the church feverishly-engaged in church work.

It will soon become abundantly-plain to you that it is not desirable to have very many of your good people mixing into the internal affairs of the church. For one thing, most laymen — stalwart Christians though they may be — are only mildly interested in church work, most of which is a deadly bore. For another thing, the average man in the pew is incapable of running anything; and would only foul up the operation, were he permitted any real authority in the handling of the church's affairs. But he likes to think he carries weight in the solemn assemblies of the ecclesiastical organization. So the thing to do is to put him on a committee (which has been created for the single purpose of having a place to put him) and he will be content.

One should never reduce the number of committees in the church structure.

The author, who modestly lays claim to some skill in administration, has always followed the practice of creating several new committees, shortly after unpacking his bags in a new parish. It is, also, well to make the purpose of the newly-created committees so obscure that the people will be unable to fathom it. Thus, they will assume that in your experience and wisdom, you have perceived a need they did not know existed, that you are plugging a yawning gap in their church's organization. Such a procedure will quickly establish you as a hot-shot administrator, a real go-getter. You may even be told, "Reverend, you have missed your calling. Why, with your administrative ability you could make a million in business." This is the highest compliment a layman can pay you — indeed, it is the highest compliment he can conceive of paying anyone.

The Men To Cultivate

Even the clergyman with relatively modest intellectual equipment will learn, after a few years of parish experience, that there are only two committees in the church organization which are of any real importance. These are, by whatever particular name they are called in your denomination: the pulpit committee and the finance committee. They are important because they are the committees which **(1)** control your tenure and **(2)** set your salary. No amount of thought, trouble, care or cultivation is too much to expend on selecting and maintaining the proper personnel on these two committees.

A few suggestions on staffing these two committees is in order. Let us consider first, the pulpit committee, because, all things considered, it is of primary significance.

Let us assume that there is a vacancy to fill on the pulpit committee. As you scan the list of possible nominees, there is one overarching principle to keep in mind as you make your selection. It is this: Put on the pulpit committee only those persons who are unreservedly-enthusiastic about you. It is desirable to have this committee made up of prominent, able, articulate, persuasive types. But, all other considerations pale to insignificance before our above-stated first principle. When pondering a choice always ask the question "Will this person be as immovable as Gibraltar in resisting any suggestion that a change of pastors might be in order?" Unless the answer is an unqualified yes, if there is the faintest tinge of doubt about him in your mind, ruthlessly strike his name from the list. Only those pastors who have pulpit committees which are 100 percent, bottled-in-bond for them can expect consistently-peaceful slumbers. All others frequently awaken in the middle of the night and toss restlessly through the small hours, wondering what would happen in the event of a showdown.

Once you have established an effective pulpit committee, you should turn your attention to strengthening the finance committee. A profile of the ideal member of the church finance committee would be: **(1)** A man whose annual income substantially exceeds the most optimistic estimate of what the church might pay its pastor in a period of unprecedented economic health. This is because it is unreasonable to expect anyone to vote the pastor more money than he makes himself. It puts too great a strain on human nature. Extensive research by the author has failed to uncover even one layman who puts a higher value on a clergyman's contribution to society than he puts on his own contribution. **(2)** A man whose income is derived largely from salary. This is because capitalists, owners of businesses,

and coupon clippers think of salaries as “costs of business” — they consider salaries as moneys they could retain if there were any way to avoid paying them. Thus, in this view, salaried employees are necessary evils, and the problem is to calculate that salary figure at which — were it reduced further — the disgruntled employee would be an economic liability. Capitalists have an uncanny ability for estimating this exact point. **(3)** A man whose personal contribution to the church is minimal. (Nobody minds being generous with other people's money.)

It is wise to exclude farmers, schoolteachers and women from membership on the finance committee. Farmers are almost without exception on the stingy side. Schoolteachers have no hope whatever of making any important money and so will have little interest in seeing to it that you do. And women are as emotional about money as they are about everything else, and, thus, highly unpredictable as to what line they will take when salary-setting time rolls around.

Tell Them They Are In Charge

We can sum up the correct philosophy of church administration by setting forth two general principles for you to follow. If you let them shape your *modus operandi* success is bound to follow. They are:

(1) Talk constantly about the democratic nature of the church's organizational structure.⁷

(2) So organize your parish that all really important decisions are made only by you.

Do not try to operate on either one of these principles without the other. If you utilize only number two (as many impa-

tient and headstrong pastors do try to operate, always with disastrous results), you will soon acquire a reputation as a dictator, as overbearing and unreasonable. Such a reputation never helps a pastor in getting on with the Lord's work. Also, if you make no attempt to conceal the fact that you really run things, you will have no one else to blame when some plan or decision of yours backfires — as, sooner or later, it inevitably will.

If you attempt to operate on principle number one, without including principle number two (as weak and indecisive pastors frequently do), you will exhaust your energies in the endless-effort to persuade pigheaded parishioners to make decisions any seeing-eye dog of average intelligence could tell at a glance are the right decisions. You will spend your waking hours in a perpetual ensnarlment of red tape. You will be forever-fighting to get off the lowest rung of the ecclesiastical ladder, a position which affords you an excellent view of your contemporaries as they race swiftly and joyously for the tantalizing prizes, reachable only from the upper rungs. In short, you will spend your ministry trying to get a decision on what to do. You will never get anything done.

It is possible that among our readers there are especially-sensitive souls who might consider the recommended *modus operandi* to be indistinguishable from plain chicanery. But it is far from that. Remember that our purpose is to lead our flocks to Beulah Land, and the quickest, easiest route to the blessed city is the right route.

Be assured that we have described that route. We know the way more surely than our dear Christian people, else we would not deserve to be their shepherd. We would be unfaithful guides were we to let them thrash about in the wilderness

when the land of milk and honey is just over the horizon. Yet, as benevolent pastors concerned for their spiritual welfare, we are aware that they need to think they are plotting the course. So it is out of our hearts of pastoral love that we arrange for them to believe they are guiding the pilgrimage. When, in the sweet by-and-by, they are able to understand this they, will surely rise up and bless us for it.

1. See the author's article "The Effective Employment of the Sacred Euphemism in Raising the Church's Annual Budget," which was included in *The Compendium of Practical Theology* — now unfortunately out of print.

2. This is quite understandable. You can't find any published information on "The Philosophy of Fee Setting for Medical Doctors" either.

3. Do not neglect to imply, though, that you know this kind of hankypanky goes on. Even in the most proper congregation you will snag an errant soul now and then who wonders ruefully how you got onto him.

4. It is quite simple to spot the status churches in any community. Just observe what happens when

a new doctor or well-to-do lawyer moves to town. The status churches go after them like hungry tigers chasing a tasty young gazelle. The winning church will gloat, and the loser or losers will try to hide their chagrin.

5. Make every effort to cultivate successful undertakers. More people than you imagine leave it up to him to select the clergyman for a family funeral, so he is in a position to throw several hundred dollars a year your way in fees — which he will do if he likes you and your services are short. Also, he talks to a lot of people and if he speaks highly of you, it will do you a lot of good. People respect an undertaker's opinion on preachers.

6. College professors, as a class, are susceptible to intellectual pride, and carp about the sermons more than any other category of members. They want you to quote Kierkegaard, Tillich and John Dewey. A preacher can't stand too many of them in the congregation. On the other hand, the average millionaire can't tell whether a sermon is good or bad, so there is no limit on the number of millionaires you can use.

7. Recommended phrases: "Democratic decisions democratically arrived at"; "This is your church, and the people run it"; "The democratic community of faith"; "Let us take counsel together"; "In the church your vote counts as much as much as anyone's" (this is not strictly true, of course, but it is a nice sentiment).