

## Voting on the Pastor

An editorial in "The Herald of Holiness" by the editor, W. T. Purkiser

Nothing is more important in the actual work of a local church than a happy relationship with its pastor. And nothing is more vital to the effectiveness of a minister than the confidence and support of his people. It is these considerations which make the vote on continuation of pastoral arrangements a matter of deep concern to all.

There is probably no completely perfect way of making and continuing pastoral arrangements. Some would argue for a system of appointments by superintendent or bishop. But this has drastic limitations. Others would hold for the system of absolute congregational sovereignty. But such also has grave weaknesses.

In the Church of the Nazarene, developed out of the early experience of the church, we have a system which seeks to combine the strengths of the episcopal and congregational forms of church government, while avoiding their pitfalls. Responsibility for making and maintaining the pastoral relationship is shared by the district superintendent and the local church.

It is probable that in 90 per cent of the cases, this system works well. It is the other 10 per cent that hurt. I full well realize that it is hard to make general statements which will be entirely fair to 4,740 pastors, or to their 313,741 church members. There are just too many individual circumstances and conditions in such a complex situation to make it possible to speak with papal certainty.

Yet this is the time of year when problems begin to emerge. There are, unfortunately, some who regard the pastoral vote as "open season" on the preacher. And there are, sometimes, pastors who in the face of all sound advice and good sense are determined to hold on in a dying situation.

Should a spiritual Christian ever cast a negative vote? Some have gone so far as to say that it is a sin to vote against the continuation of a pastoral call. Of course, it could be a sin to vote "no," if the motive is to "get back at" or "get even with" the pastor, his wife, or his family. A spirit of retaliation is always carnal, no matter who shows it. On the other hand, the church makes provision for a negative vote, and it would hardly make provision for its members to sin.

This much is sure, so long as a negative vote carries twice the weight an affirmative vote carries, this power ought to be used with extreme reluctance and only when no other course seems possible. Even though it is now possible for a pastor to remain for one year with a simple majority, it is still true that a normal pastoral relationship requires a two-thirds affirmative vote. This means that one "no" weighs as heavy as two "yeses."

Still and all, we must face the fact that persons of equally sound judgment and spirituality may differ as to arrangements for the Lord's work. The classic example of this is the time in Acts 15:36-41 when Paul and Barnabas disagreed as to having John Mark for their "minister." Barnabas voted "yes," and Paul voted "no." Neither would change. The result was the organization of another missionary party.

What has always interested me in this case is that Barnabas seems to have been "right." At least within twelve years we find Mark with Paul in Rome (Colossians 4:10), and one of Paul's words was that Mark "is profitable to me for the ministry" (II Timothy 4:11).

When acute problems arise in the relationship of pastor and people, whatever their source, the demand is for the utmost in Christian maturity, consideration, and courtesy. Grave injustices may be done, and souls scarred

irremediably by thoughtless, critical, and stubborn attitudes and acts.

Here, if anywhere, is a place for strict obedience to what has been called "The Eleventh Commandment." Jesus gave it in His "Last Supper" talk with His apostles: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

## Sisters, All!

A column for those whose interests are primarily home-centered, but who are concerned also to have "that good part which shall not be taken away . . ."

Dear Martha,

Your letter really made me feel good, first, because it sounded so much more cheerful than your last one. I was glad, too, that you could make sense and even use of my rambling attempt to answer your question about personal devotions. That is a phase of Christian living about which I'll always have much to learn myself.

Time ran out before I could tell you anything of Frannie's problems with her high school friends, but you surmised correctly that she's having the usual difficulties with "being different." You may not run into the same situation with Gordon, as he is very serious-minded and already keenly involved with his science interests. But Dorothy is a lively one—pretty, too!—and she'll soon be in high school.

Our young people's group begins with the teens, which includes eighth and even some seventh graders. The Sunday after I wrote you, they all crowded into our large living room to discuss the question, "When and how do you say no?" The pastor and his wife were there—you know, Mrs. Parker leads the group—but it wasn't long before the young folk stopped being formal. In fact, for a while everyone was talking at once.

Well, after the sparks cooled and the dust settled a bit, Brother Parker made a practical suggestion. Someone had pointed out that other religions had their do's and don't's too, and so he proposed that our group sponsor a panel discussion, together with several Jewish and Catholic young people, on the taboos of each religion.

John came down about then to see what was going on, and since he has personal contact with so many high school students, they asked him to arrange the panel for the next Sunday. Frannie volunteered to help him find members for it, provided she didn't have to be one of them. It's bad enough having to be in her own father's English class this year!

It took some scurrying and a lot of persuasion, but they finally had a Catholic boy and girl, a Jewish boy and girl, and a boy and girl from our own group. It was well they decided to hold the meeting in the church, for word had spread fast and the place was almost crowded. A lot of visitors, too.

Each gave a three-minute presentation of the prohibitions in his own religion; then they directed questions to each other. They all were rather on the defensive at first, but John is a good moderator and his friendly informality soon loosened them up. When they found that no one was there to challenge their religious taboos, but everyone sincerely wanted to understand them better, they began to talk more freely.

It did us all good to hear some frank discussion of each other's practices, and I am sure it gave us more understanding and respect for each other. Anyway, Frannie reports that her classmates have ceased urging her

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