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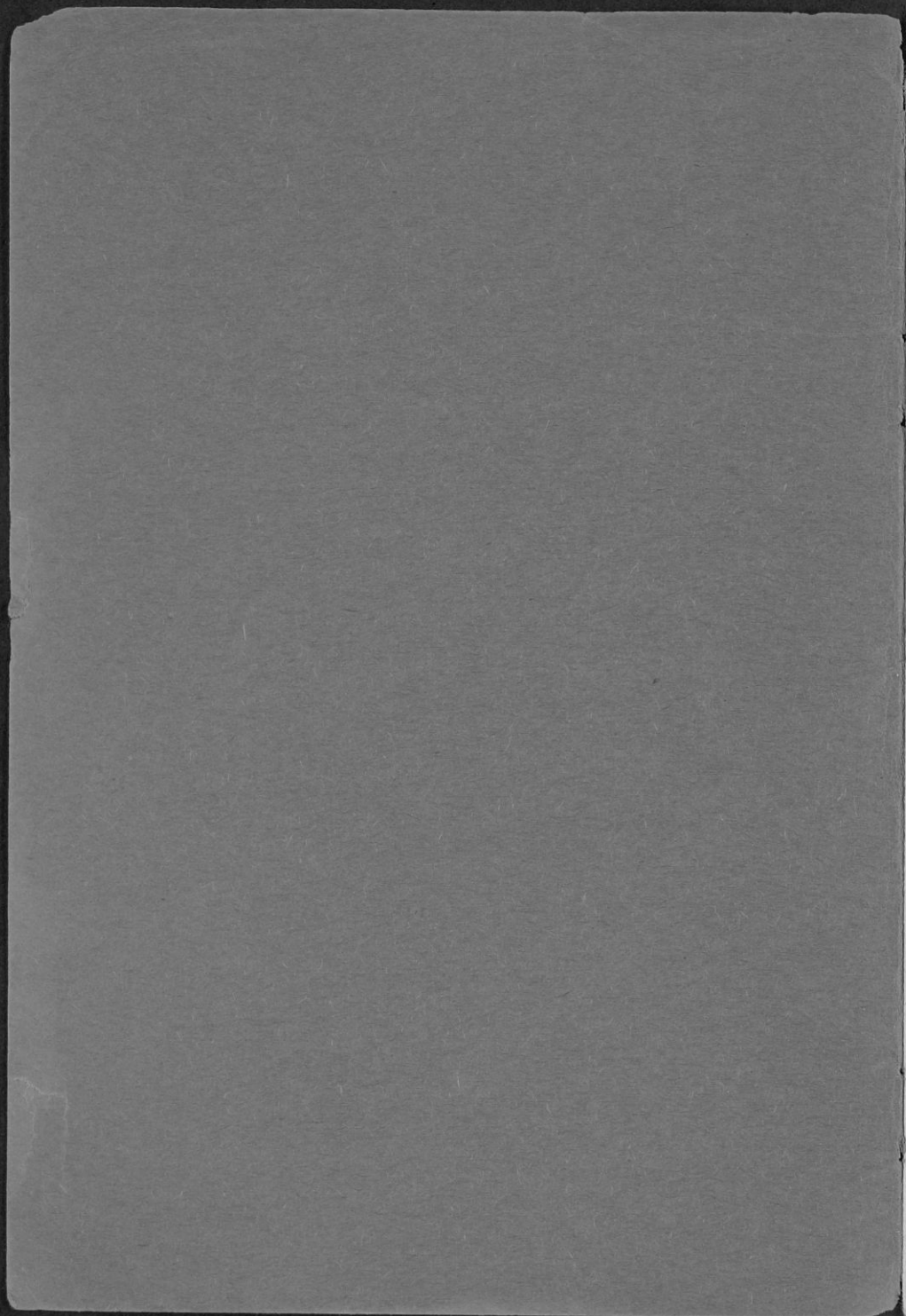
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DO YOU HELP
SUPPORT
YOUR CHURCH?



ELEVENTH (REVISED) EDITION

Our Sunday Visitor Press
Huntington, Indiana



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CHURCH SUPPORT

A DUTY OF JUSTICE.

The Church, in her external constitution, is an organization, a society, composed of rulers and subjects just as the State is. As the State should work, the Church does work for the common good of the people, and hence, like the State, she must be supported by the people. The Church is as much more deserving of support than the State, as the Church is higher than the State, as the good she does is greater than that done by the State. Yet people find no fault whatever when the State asks for much of their earnings, but when the Church asks for a pittance, what! The State levies taxes according to the amount of one's possessions—so much an \$100.00—and the people pay for it. If they do not pay it, the authorities sell their property. But in many parishes each person would like to determine for himself what should be the amount of tax or pew rent.

In many countries, the tax for the Church is levied like the tax for the State; and the people pay heavily toward the support of the Church, though you may imagine they pay nothing. It is true that in these countries the government pays for the support of the Church, but are not the people taxed heavier by the government on that account?

Religion is free in those countries in much the same way in which the public schools are free here. But *are* the public schools free? They are the most expensive institutions which the state treasury has to support; for each child patronizing the same the people must pay from \$50.00 to \$80.00 a year. Had we none but denominational schools, though the people would contribute their tax in a more direct manner, the tax would amount to much less than it does now.

It matters not whether people have any children to send to school, whether their families have produced any orphans, or aged, or feeble-minded, or insane, or incorrigible members; they are taxed to support institutions for all these. They must support state and county houses, colleges and universities, reformatories and penitentiaries, insane asylums and orphanages, houses for the aged and the poor, and many other institutions under the control of the State, even if they have no relative on earth who is cared for in any of them. To enjoy the benefits of citizenship, we must bear the burdens of citizenship. This seems reasonable, and we hear no complaints about it. Applying the same logic (which has far greater force) to church-support, the truism reads: "To enjoy the benefits of God's Church, we should bear the burdens of church-membership," which are comparatively light. State representatives issue a call: "Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," and are obeyed; and the representatives of the Church issue a call: "Give unto God the things that are God's," and they are resisted. Give your Savior an unmortgaged house, furnish it, beautify it; support God's delegate,—the "dispenser of the mysteries of God," the one whom you call "father"; erect and support a school, in which your children will be made loyal soldiers of Jesus Christ in this world of sin and "fellow-citizens of the saints" in Heaven. To promote the greater glory of God, and to further *yours* and *your* children's eternal salvation the Church asks a little material assistance from you, and what is your response?

Some people imagine that because the Church is not of earth, because her work is of the spiritual, charitable order, she ought to get along without money. Would that she could! She is not of earth,

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but she is *on* earth, and who or what can get along on earth without money?

THE LAW WHICH GOD HIMSELF MADE.

God gave the first law regarding taxation for the Church, and He levied a heavy tax—one-tenth of all one's earnings. Listen to God's own words:

1. "I have given to the sons of Levi (priests) all the tithes (one-tenth) of Israel for a possession, for the ministry wherewith they serve Me in the tabernacle."—Numb. xviii, 21, and again:

2. "All things, which you shall offer to the tithes and shall separate for the gifts of the Lord, shall be the best and choicest things."—Numb. xviii, 29.

3. "Everyone shall offer according to what he hath."—Deut. xvi, 17.

4. "No one shall appear with his hands empty before the Lord."—Deut. xvi, 16.

5. "Give unto the Most-High, according to what He hath given to thee."—Eccus. xxxv, 12.

6. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and give Him of the first of all thy fruits."—Priv. iii, 9.

Look over these texts again and note how general their application is. "All the tithes," "every one shall offer," "no one shall refuse." People who would be insulted if others paid their grocery or butcher bill, are perfectly willing to let others pay for their place in church. The Protestant religions cost active members far more than the Catholic religion costs them. Hence complaint from Catholics is unreasonable, when we reflect how much more they get from their Church than Protestant churches can give.

Besides being commanded by God to give one-tenth of all their earnings, we read in Exod. xxxv, 29: "All the children of Israel dedicated voluntary

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offerings to the Lord." And again in I Paral. xxix, 9: "And the people rejoiced when they promised their offerings willingly, because they offered them to the Lord with all their heart." "God loveth a cheerful giver," says St. Paul.

HOW MUCH DO YOU GIVE?

Religion demands sacrifice, and people who are not willing to do much for the Church certainly do not prize very highly the benefits they derive from the Church. To do good is all that we are allowed to live for, and surely one can do no greater good or enjoy greater honor than by helping to build and maintain temples wherein alone God is properly honored.

But to sift things down to a finer point, how much do you really give to your church—you who think church dues are too high? Thirty to forty dollars a year? That appears to be a big amount, but it is about ten cents a day. Do you smoke? The price of one cheap cigar laid aside every day, would pay your church dues. Do you patronize the theatre or other amusements? What you give thus for pleasure, for a pastime, would pay heavy church dues. The butter you put on your bread would pay them, and you grumble over the amount; yet we have seen that nothing on earth is so useful and necessary to us as the Church is.

My dear friend, by your little outlay you make it possible for the truth of God to be preached in your locality, for Christ to dwell in your midst as truly as He dwells in Heaven; you draw upon yourself God's blessings, receive His graces, which are worth more than all the world. You are assisted on your way to Heaven. Do you get your money's worth? You could never give as much to the Church as you receive from her. God assures us that He will

not allow Himself to be outdone in generosity; but remember, "He who soweth sparingly, will also reap sparingly."

HOW IT LOOKS TO A LAYMAN.

"This big country has too many people who will tell you they do not believe in talking money in the pulpit. I would believe that way myself were it not that I know something about the Christianity of some of my friends. There are people who believe in free lunch Christianity. They favor a nice church, nice seats, good music, learned sermons, and the like, but do not want to pay for the same. They will use a dozen different tricks to wiggle out of what they owe to the Church. They want all the church service for nothing, and are sorely affected if the clergyman mentions money on Sundays. There are some modern Christians, who put a very low price on church services. They are anxious to be Christians. Some of them will pray all day Sunday in the church. They will smash their breast and they will wear out their knees in praying, but it cuts them to heart to part with a few dollars now and then to pay the legitimate debts of the church.

"When some of us say, and warrantedly, that this is the age of the high cost of living, we can say, in all truth, that this is the age of cheap Christianity. It is an age of free pews. The free pew business has bred a class of so-called church people who want everything connected with religion free. Thirty years ago the average miner paid \$35 and \$40 a year for his pew. He didn't stop at that. He gave up liberally to the other collections. His son and his family are not half so generous. The father had a cold, poorly ventilated church and made no kick. The son and his family have a steam-heated, well ventilated church, and good choir.

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"But cheaper than the father of today is the son of today. He goes to church in the best raiment. He goes to the temple of God with a good cigar in his mouth. He dodges the collection plate, he comes out of church, lights another cigar and tells you those money sermons make him tired. He goes home, says it's a shame that the theatres of the town are not open Sunday. He touches his mother for a few dollars, goes to the cigar store, loads up with cigars, buys a box of candy for his girl, and, if weather is favorable, takes her for a ride. Nothing is too good for the coming up Christian. There is no self-sacrificing, no abnegation in his make-up.

"Now let's find the blame! What is true of other things is true of religion. Give the people cheap amusements and they complain. If the young of today pay \$3 a seat for a show they will rave for weeks over the show. Ask the young man of today to wear a \$3 pair of pants and he looks misery. He wants to pay the highest price for clothing, shoes, dances, theatres and the like. His only value of things is the price marked on them. He doesn't know a woolen garment from a cotton garment. He knows the distinction in cigarettes, in toilet soap and toilet powder.

"Clergymen are to blame. They have cheapened their services. Many very devout young women will give six months' wages for a coat. They will give the earnings of a week for a plume for their bonnet. But to give the church a dollar! They could not do that without an attack of nervous prostration.

"If the church is to be respected it must put religion on a paying basis. It must cease its foolishness allowing 'free seats.' If the theatres were to say 'free seats' there would be few theatregoers. If the gentlemen of the fistic profession advertised

'free prize fights' their entertainment would be considered disorderly conduct. If water were five cents a glass less beer would be made. The people who have free railway passes ride the least, for pleasure.

"It must be evident by this time, to thinking clergymen, that free religion, like free water, is unprofitable. The church that will root out the religious dead heads will succeed, and the pastor will be in the frame of mind to preach religion instead of money. The dead-head in and out of the church makes life miserable for the man who is willing to pay as he goes. The only way to get rid of money sermons is to compel churchgoers to pay for church services as they pay for the other services of life.

"The laborer is worthy of his hire,' whether he be a digger in the sewer or an expounder in the pulpit."—Harold Francis, Elmira, N. Y.

HOW A PRACTICAL PASTOR SEES IT.

"The Church authorities will discipline a clergyman if he is not competent to make the business side of his church balance at the end of the year. He has to render an account of the temporalities of his church to his superiors no less than the spiritualities; and if he should fail to meet his own and the church's financial obligations, he would be discredited by the community in which he resides, and must give place to the man who can mix money with religion, and is competent to keep his congregation out of debt and pay as he goes.

We have cheapened religion by church euchres, church suppers, church fairs, oyster suppers and other devices in order to raise the money to meet the running expenses of the church. Our unmarried wage-earners would appreciate their religion more if they made some sacrifice for it. Free religion is no more appreciated by the people than the free

theatre is. Give something for nothing and it is never appreciated. Those who inherit money and have not worked for it, do not know the value of a dollar, and unearned money has turned out to be the undoing and ruin of the beneficiary. The pastor who neglects to use every laudable and legitimate means to make the working young men and women to pay their church dues, thus leaving the burden on the married men, who are less able to bear the burden, is not fulfilling his duty towards the paying members of his church, and unwittingly, perhaps, encourages dishonesty on the part of those who want free religion, when in conscience they are bound to pay for it.

“The dead-head in and out of the church makes life miserable for the man who pays as he goes. He certainly makes life at times burdensome to the pastor. If all those, who are members of the church paid in proportion to their means and income, it would relegate the money sermon to limbo, and would be the greatest consolation to the pastor, as there is nothing more disagreeable to a clergyman than to talk money from the altar or pulpit. It is very irksome and disagreeable for the generous and conscientious members of the church to be compelled to listen to such appeals for funds.”

ATTEND YOUR OWN CHURCH.

It is important that priests know who their parishioners are; it is necessary, for the observance of good order, that people attend the church, which, according to boundary lines or other stipulations, is declared to be their own parish church. To this church your children should be brought for baptism, from it your dead should be buried, in it you should have your pew, from it you must expect to receive the last sacraments, to its school your children

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should be sent, and outside of extraordinary occasions, you should attend Sunday Mass there. The fact that the pastor of another church is a better preacher, that you like him personally better than you do your own parish priest, is not a sufficient reason to justify you to attend his church regularly.

You are not allowed to vote outside your precinct, though it might count more there. You are not allowed to pay your taxes in another town, though the same be cheaper there. There must be order to everything, and particularly in the conduct of parish matters; the priest must be able to say: "I know mine and mine know me" (John x, 14).

Too many Catholics have the theatre notion about church contributions; they believe in paying only when they go. It was this lamentable condition which gave rise to the practice of collecting at the door seat rentals for one service. Catholics objected to it, but it rested with them to remedy it. Every pastor would certainly prefer that his people attend his church regularly, that every wage-earner have a seat and that every married man have a family pew.

WHEN YOU MAKE YOUR WILL.

Everyone who possesses any money or property should make a will, and should arrange this important matter in due time. During your last illness you will need all your time to think of your soul; don't deprive it of those precious moments by being annoyed about the disposal of your earthly possessions. Don't make it necessary for your children to withdraw their attention from you, in their worry concerning your neglect to adjust such matters earlier. Do not be unnecessarily disturbed by the visits of lawyers or the conflicting counsels of prospective legatees. You will rest more quietly, die more easily and happily, if you draw up a sensible

and just testament at the time when your head is cool.

Be convinced of the truth of the saying: "Who giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord," Who pays a big interest. Remember religious or charitable institutions, or donate to your parish church some article it stands in need of. The great Cardinal Manning used to say: "A will, in which God is not remembered, is a bad will." Nothing is more true, for the author of such a will makes no recognition of his indebtedness to the Almighty for all that he is able to leave behind, shows himself to have an ungrateful heart, and cheats his own soul.

How is God remembered? By a bequest to any laudable work, particularly to any work fostered by religion. Moreover, by such a course parents will be more sure to obtain God's blessing on the inheritance they leave their children. Such a blessing should follow every inheritance, for we know how money becomes a means of ruin to many people.

As to Masses, it might be better if the amount intended for this purpose were set aside and turned over to a friend before the person dies. The Masses could be said all the sooner for such a one, and the wicked or neglectful children could not deprive their parent of this consolation.

It is so sad to hear of Catholics contesting a will in which worthy charities are remembered by a relative. We read of such cases occasionally, and one must pity the blindness of such people who cannot see that their scandalous actions will bring down God's curse upon the money which, through the law, they have diverted into their own pockets and away from God's Church, from His poor, or the orphans, for whom the same was intended by the dying relative.

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Money left for the benefit of a particular church, if the church is not incorporated, should be left to the priest for the church intended to be benefited.

LEAVE A LITTLE TO YOUR PARISH CHURCH.

Not everyone is able to leave much for religion, but there are few who have anything to will at all who could not leave \$25, \$50, or \$100 to the parish church; and if this occurred ten or twenty times a year, the problem of paying for churches would be solved.

Food For Thought.

Religion is for the soul, true; but the things material required for its practice cost money and their maintenance should be systematized.

The smallest Liberty Loan during the war called forth sufficient money to buy all Catholic church property nine times over. Loyalty to God, therefore, is a poor second to loyalty to country—which itself is not 100 per cent.

The Church gets some of the people's dimes and quarters, but how few as compared to the movies!

Religion costs the least of anything valuable offered to the people. If people did not postpone the payment of their church dues until the end of the year, when it becomes necessary to defray them by one act, they would never feel what they give to religion.

If you paid your meat bill, or your egg bill, or even your butter bill only once a year, you would be surprised how much more any one of these items costs than your church obligations.

"Pay as you go" in supporting the church and school, and the maintenance of religion will be no burden at all.

One of the reasons why so many people imagine that it costs considerable to be a church member is that they must listen to many appeals to "pay up."

You would like your priest to be spiritual and engage himself wholly in things spiritual. The priest, more than you, longs for this same thing. Then it is bad enough for you to burden him with a financial responsibility without expecting him to create the money needed to meet it.

The priest feels the burden, like yourself, of the increased cost of living, even at his own table. But his personal discomfort would not be considered, if you increased your offerings to meet the advanced cost of building, of repairs, of coal, etc. The priest's personal support is one of the smallest items of expense in a large parish.

There was no war tax on your seat in church as there was on your seat in the theatre, as there still is on nearly everything you buy since the world war.

If more people paid their church dues at the beginning instead of at the end of the year, a considerable sum could be saved in interest.

People who criticize their pastor for spending money to beautify God's dwelling place deserve the rebuke which Christ administered to Judas.

The theatres in the United States have cost as much as the churches. How unfair this is to the Lord and Master?

Can't Afford It?

You cannot afford *NOT* to give (1) because God demands it; (2) you lose both spiritually and temporally by shirking the duty; (3) you are training your children to be "slackers" in one of the most pressing of obligations.

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You can't afford to pay doctor bills, or to lay off from work on account of sickness, but you often find yourself compelled to do so. May this not be one of God's ways of taking from you and giving to another what you owed Him and neglected to pay?

Who is poorer than the orphan, and the Church must support thousands of them?

Who is poorer than the average student for the priesthood, and the Church must educate thousands of them covering a period of many years?

Even if you gave *one-tenth* (the Biblical *tithe*) to religion, the nine-tenths would go farther than do your ten-tenths now. God says so, and He is the One, Who can pay big dividends on that one-tenth. But the Church would have all the money she needs if all people gave even one-twentieth.

Protestant clergymen are now educating the people to give the full tithe. Judging from the success they have been having during the past five years in relieving parishioners of their coin, they will probably accomplish their aim. That *double offering* contributed in a two-pocket envelope *fifty-two times a year* at the morning service, and another collection at the evening service, is raising an enormous amount right now.

Slackers.

Place in parallel columns your pleasure account and your church account, and note the contrast in the former's favor.

We have no complaint against the very poor, who are not such through their fault. Usually they contribute more than their proportionate share to the upkeep of the parish. But every large congregation has a multitude of members, who do not count the quarters and dollars they spend lavishly on worldly

pleasures, but who loathe to part with the cent or nickel which they are accustomed to reserve for the church collection basket.

The world has no nickel resorts, few theatres have nickel seats, refreshment parlors no longer have nickel glasses, even the street cars have abolished nickel fares. But the old nickel is still big enough, people think, to buy religion, despite the advance in cost of building material, labor, repair, work, fuel, light, insurance, and every other item of current or extraordinary expenditure.

During the war we learned to know who a "slacker" is; the name was applied to one who, though not convicted of downright disloyalty or treason, found fault with the government, picked flaws in the administration, censured the President, and withheld his services or closed his purse to the nation in time of peril.

Now you can readily suspect who the Church "slacker" is. He is one who wants to be a Catholic, enjoys the blessings of the Mass and of the Sacraments, who hopes the priest will visit him during rain or blizzard to prepare his soul for eternity, but who thinks nothing of criticizing the Church or her clergy, is unwilling to render any service to religion, and refuses to part with a few dollars annually for the things needed to maintain church and school, locally, and to propagate the faith universally.

You gave most generously for the exaltation of the Flag during the late war. Should you not give with at least equal generosity for the exaltation of the Cross both at home and abroad?

The 24,000,000 Protestants in the United States contribute several times as much for the support of Missions as do 300,000,000 Catholics of the world.

