

## CHURCH DUES.

In 1918 a Committee of business men, representing various Churches and religious bodies, both at home and over-seas, presided over by the Secretary of State for Scotland, met in Glasgow to consider the problem of Church Finance. They very soon arrived at the conclusion that the old familiar methods are not a system, but "only a series of emergency makeshifts," totally insufficient to keep things going nowadays. It was discovered that "practically every denomination was carrying on in a state next door to bankruptcy," while "the average person had not begun to be generous."

After a great deal of laborious investigation the Committee agreed that "in the whole sphere of Church finance by far the best system" is the method of regular weekly offerings, such as was established in Abinger some years ago under the Free-will Offering Scheme, to which, however, only a very small proportion of our people belong.

It is urgently necessary that the members of our Church should re-learn the religious obligation and the Scriptural methods of giving, in recent times largely forgotten. Much could be learned from Nonconformist bodies, who, having no old endowments, must pay for every spiritual benefit they wish to enjoy. It is said, for instance, that members of the Church of England contribute less to the support of the ministry of their Church than the members of any other religious denomination in the world! Here in Abinger they have to contribute nothing at all and, in like manner, because of gifts given by benefactors in the past, they have to give practically nothing for the sick and poor.

So Abinger people are only required to pay, mainly, for some of the benefits which they receive directly themselves, such as a clean, warm, comfortable church. Thus they are chiefly called upon, not so much to give "charity," but to pay their just debts. Those who give less than their fair share, in proportion to their means, are getting their religious benefits at less than cost price, being, in fact, spiritual paupers, others having to pay for what they enjoy.

Even those who are not church-goers have yet, no doubt, been baptised by the Church, expect to be married by the Church and hope to be buried by the Church, in a

decent churchyard, and therefore owe the dues to keep the Church going to do these things for them.

Sunday collections are insufficient and vary with the barometer—a wet Sunday means a "slump," and that without any corresponding increase the following week!

A regular and sufficient income, in order to budget for and meet the obligations of the Church in this parish—now reduced almost to a minimum—can only be obtained if parishioners learn and follow out the only scriptural and true method of giving, as laid down for us by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians xvi. 1:—"Let every one of you (*individually*) lay by him in store on the first day of the week (*regularly*) as God hath prospered him (*proportionately*)."

The reasonable demands which the Church makes upon her members may be summed up as follows:—(1) *To pay for what we ourselves receive.* (2) *To give in order that others, who are poorer, may get.* (3) *To contribute to charities.*

When these duties are fulfilled, we shall love and value our Church far more than we should otherwise do. For we rarely value what we get for nothing and it has been proved again and again that when people are really enabling their Church to pay its way properly, and are exercising the privilege of giving, they acquire quite a new love, loyalty, pride and interest, usually in almost exact proportion to the amount of real sacrifice involved.

The Hon. Secretary of the Abinger Free-will Offering Scheme, which we would most earnestly invite every member of the Church in the parish, young and old, rich and poor, to join, is Mrs. Carpenter, The School House, Abinger Common, and the Hon. Treasurer is Mr. J. A. Gibbs. *They only know* the amount each contributor gives, from one penny a week upwards.

Contributors are asked to say if it would be most convenient to pay weekly, or monthly, or otherwise, also if they wish to put their envelopes in the box, or the alms-dish, in church, or have them collected at their houses.

Contributions are acknowledged under the *number only* of each subscriber.

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