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is
RELIGION

a

RACKET

BY

REV. WILFRED G. HURLEY, C.S.P.

QUESTIONS OF THE DAY

No. 2

Is Religion A Racket?

By

REV. WILFRED G. HURLEY, C.S.P.

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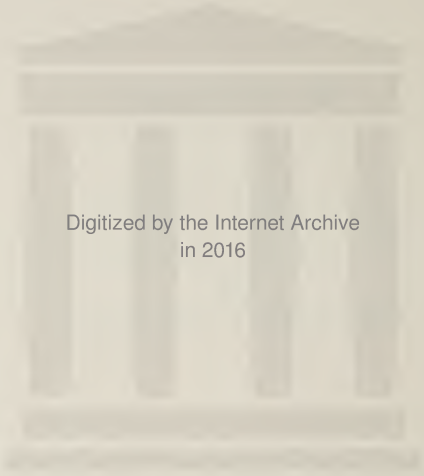
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TO THE READER

It is only just and
fitting that by "**Religion**"
the author has in mind
only
THE CATHOLIC RELIGION



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Is Religion A Racket?

“Religion is a racket.”

What makes you say that?

Oh, you heard somebody else say it. It sounded smart. So you repeated it. It shocked some people, so you repeated it again. The old formula. If you want to attract attention to yourself, then say something that will shock people. If the person to whom you are speaking reveres and loves something, then denounce it. If they have horror and disgust at a certain thing, then praise it to the sky. I know it is only a pose with you. Down in your heart you are really quite decent. You want to think, and truly want to say, what is right and true. And when you make a remark like that you want people to laugh, perhaps be shocked a little, then you want them to forget it.

But, unfortunately, evil is not like that. Evil is like a little snowball at the top of a hill. You start it rolling. Larger and larger it gets, until finally it is out of control, and then before

you realize it, some sickening disaster may have resulted.

EVIL'S INFLUENCE

The same way with an evil remark. When you are shocked and horrified you do not forget. The remark spreads. Its influence grows. Finally it crashes into some wavering soul. And what is more sickening and horrible than the destruction of a human soul, with its hopes and aspirations?

But you did not mean it. I know you did not. But, unfortunately, the evil has been done.

You may say, in sort of a horrified self-defense, well, perhaps, after all there is some truth in it. Perhaps religion is a racket.

Very well then, the only thing for you to do is to look into it. Find out the truth. Know what you are saying.

After all, you have intelligence, reason and common sense. God gave them to you to use. He expects you to use them. Does He not even command that you use them?

And surely, His worship is no exception to this rule. Look into it and investigate it. Really find out the truth. Is religion a racket?

WHAT IS A RACKET?

Now, in any intelligent discussion the first thing to do is to "define your terms." That is, what do you mean by your words.

What is meant by this word "racket"?

Racket is definitely an American word. It came into being during the gangster days of prohibition America.

Even looking back now, this seems to have been an almost incredible time. An unbelievable era. The days when crime ruled. Sawed-off shot-guns blazing in our main streets. A time of murder and destruction. Terrorized citizens. Laws flaunted. Corrupt police. Cheap gangsters with cheaper lawyers and judges. Racket, in those days, was a pretty ugly word.

But, eventually came the return to sanity. The inherent American spirit rose to fighting pitch. The G-men

went forth and the public enemies were one by one, systematically, mercilessly blasted into oblivion. The gangster days were over.

But the word "racket" remained.

TAKING ALL, GIVING NOTHING

Although today racket means, more or less, some system, lawful or lawless, of getting something for nothing. Of making people pay, and pay plenty, directly or indirectly, for something of little or no value.

But how does religion fit into this definition?

Well, they say, people build churches, go to church, pray, deny themselves, and all these things for a God and an Eternity that may not even exist.

There is nothing certain, they insist. Nothing sure. And since we know nothing definite, why bother about it?

THE CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

However, we must admit there is no question of the clergy or Sisters being racketeers. No American ever makes such a cheap remark, even in jest.

Surely in this regard we must give credit to the American people for the decency and courtesy they inevitably show to the Catholic clergy and religious. The American people gladly acknowledge the priests and Sisters to be what they know them to be. A hard-working, decent living, sincere and splendid group of men and women. They will go out of their way to point out that with twenty-five thousand priests and fifty thousands nuns in America today, nevertheless, their record is practically flawless and above reproach. Never does any scandal reach the headlines. And should one of these clergy or religious fail in their anointed lives, the average American sadly admits that it is only human weakness. He will tell you quite frankly he often wonders why there are not a hundred times the number who thus fail. The average American, especially if he be a non-Catholic, will then hasten to tell you of some splendid priest of his acquaintance. Some priest who was kind to him with the charity of Christ. Or some priest who stood by him when need was great. Or some

Sister who nursed him in some Catholic hospital. Some nun, uncomplaining, gentle and sweet, who waited on him there day and night.

Thus, no one even suggests that the clergy or religious are racketeers. No one even thinks it. The viciousness of such a statement would be only too obvious to fair-minded persons.

LIVING FOR OTHERS

In these days of census taking, when nothing is held personal or private any more, everyone knows almost to a penny what the others receive. Knows that the monetary awards to the clergy are negligible. The highest salary a pastor can receive under Church law is scarcely a living wage. And the demands on that charity are so multiple and demanding that even this little is soon gone. And moreover, it is common knowledge that during the depression, many pastors went deeply into debt to feed the hungry and clothe the poor. Of course, this is only right and just. They, themselves, would be the last to ask credit for their

deeds. Hence, this is only the simple statement of a fact. Nor can it be overlooked that the vast majority of the clergy scattered throughout the thousands of towns and villages of America receive scarcely more than their board and clothes. Their lives are a constant struggle against the grinding menace of poverty in sustaining their little churches and rectories.

Furthermore, there are the thousands of "religious" priests and Sisters, as the Franciscans, Dominicans, and many others, who have taken the vow of poverty. Living only as Christ lived. Considering nothing their own. Sharing in a community life. Going where they are sent. Working at tasks assigned. Living lives of utter poverty, chastity and obedience until God calls them to Eternity.

RELIGIOUS LIFE A PROFESSION!

Atheists sometimes advance the claim that the clergy are only professionally interested. Such a lie is diabolical. Men and women do not enter into such a life, giving up home

and family, living lives of loneliness, hardship and self-denial, because they are "professionally interested." There is only one basis, one reason for embracing and living such a life. And that cause or reason or basis, call it what you will, is an overwhelming love for God.

Hence, the worst anyone might say is that these priests and Sisters are themselves deluded victims of this "racket of religion."

THE ELEMENT OF THE UNKNOWN!

The idea of racket seems to enter in through the theory that religion deals with the unknown. It is uncertain, they say, that God exists. The same with Heaven, Hell and Eternity. These may or may not exist either.

Nothing definite is known about these things. So why waste time, energy and money on an uncertainty? Why not take care of these things when they come? Why not take them in their stride?

The chief error in this reasoning is that religion is not dealing with an uncertainty.

The existence of God can be proven irrefutably, undeniably. The proofs of the existence of God—as Creator, as Law-giver, Almighty Ruler, Master of Life and Death—are overwhelming. It is but too true that only the fool can say in his heart, “There is no God.”

Consider some of the facts!

There is the fact that you exist, that the world exists, that the sun, the moon, the stars and the heavens exist. Does not the existence of the universe demand a God?

So much more so, when we remember that the famous Thomas A. Edison, brilliant scientist, inventor and thinker, had to declare that a single blade of grass with its intricate beauty of design, its unbelievable efficient structure and composition for its purpose in life demanded a supremely intelligent creator—God.

Look about you!

The rising and setting of the sun, the waxing and waning of the moon, the ebb and flow of the tide, the change of the seasons, and a million other evidences of the law and har-

mony in all creation cry out. "God."
"God the Creator." "God the Law-
giver." "God the Supreme Intelli-
gence." "God the Infinite Power."
"God, Infinite Love."

There is no uncertainty about it.
God does exist!

THE JOY OF LIFE

True, there is mystery in living.
We find it about us on every hand.
But what are mysteries except truths
which our puny minds cannot grasp?

And is it not good that this is so?

Without mystery what a drab and
dull world this would be. It is the
unknown that beckons to the scientist,
explorer and adventurer which is a
part of the make-up of every man.
It is this margin of mystery that
gives us the thrill of living.

But this thrill of living and adven-
ture is ours only because beneath
it all we have the foundation of cer-
tainty in the Eternal Truths.

And well this is so, too!

Otherwise would not our lives be
lived in agony and terror. Life seems
so hard at times. And at other times

so futile. Old age with its mockery, illness, sickness and suffering. The dread of poverty and all it implies. The certainty of death. The ever-present realization that every moment we are being relentlessly pushed on and on through life. And at the end of life—Eternity!

GOD EXISTS

Your reasoning powers, your thinking ability, your faculties for considering the future, cry out to the length and breadth and depth of the universe itself. Cry out not only that God exists. But that he must have given to us the truths of this life and death and eternity. Somehow and somewhere told us these truths. Told us what to believe, and how we should live worthily in accordance with these truths. And told us not vaguely and indefinitely, but precisely and exactly, in every detail.

I say that? No! But all the great minds of the ages. And even the humblest, less educated and thoughtless of men must agree. It is a truth written in every human heart.

Mysteries? Yes! There are many

of them. But, nevertheless, we know, and know well, the Eternal Truths.

It is this composition of life, of which St. Paul speaks when he said, "We know in part."

And from this "knowing in part" comes the beautiful harmony of life. The known and the unknown. The certainty and the uncertainty. One intermingled with the other. And governing this harmony of life from beginning to end is God's guiding hand in His Divine laws.

Thus the real glory of life. The higher aspirations of your soul. Your God-given faculties, abilities, qualities and instincts which set you above all other created things. That make you a living child of the Living God.

RELIGION AND CERTAINTY!

And that is exactly where religion does come in. That is its duty in life. Leaving out all technical definitions and summaries, this is the purpose of religion. Religion is the bringing of your life into close contact and harmony with God and His Eternal

Truths. Aiding, helping and directing your life according to the higher aspirations of your soul. Enabling you to fulfill your eternal purpose and destiny in life.

Hence religion deals with certainty. There is nothing of chance about it. Religion has very definite, positive laws and conditions to fulfill, and brings certainty of results.

Religion a racket because these truths are not certain?

To the contrary!

They are the only certain truths in life.

The theories of science are here today and discarded tomorrow. Nations rise and fall. Empires spring up only to dissolve and disappear as the years pass. Human beings we trust and love the most fail us repeatedly. Pleasures turn to boredom. Eventually every man must regretfully repeat to himself the words of the wise King Solomon: "All is vanity."

But why try to prove these truths to you?

You know these things are so.

Because they are written in your

heart. They are written in every human heart. And etched there so deeply that nothing can ever erase them. You may try to ignore them. Try to forget them. Try to silence them. But it is useless. The "still small voice" of God thunders to you above the clamor of the world which would stifle it.

We are here in life for a definite purpose. For this purpose we have been created. Called forth from the nothingness from which we came. That is the reason of this God-created world in which we dwell. That is the reason for the seasons which come and go. The food which grows to nourish us, the air which sustains us, the beauties of nature which inspire us, the joys of life which gladden us, the sorrows which grieve us—all are from God. A part of the Divine Plan that we should be made worthy for our eternal destiny.

And that destiny?

Eternal life for the everlasting ages in God's glorious Heaven.

Where, as St. Paul says: "That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard neither hath it entered into the heart of man,

what things God hath prepared for them that love Him."

God is!

You are the living child of the Living God.

Live worthily of your eternal destiny.

RELIGION ONLY AN INCUMBRANCE!

But sometimes a man may admit all these truths but object, "Well religion is a racket because it is an incumbrance. It is an imposition."

The only answer to that, is the sane, reasonable inquiry, "An incumbrance on what?"

On your time?

Or on your pocketbook?

Surely, your time is not as valuable as all that? Five or ten minutes in the morning for prayer? A few minutes more just before you go to bed? Now and then, during the day, a thought and a word for God?

Are these incumbrances?

As a matter of fact, nothing could be more helpful and intelligent. Surely, you do not want to live as a beast lives in the woods. Rising in

the morning, and rushing out to eat and work at your daily task. Spending a few uneasy hours in a feverish search for excitement. Then back to bed.

Without a thought of your place in this world.

Without a thought of your dignity as a man.

Without a thought of those intellectual powers which placed you as far superior to the beasts as the stars above the world.

As a matter of fact, such a life produces only disgust and nausea because you feel and know that you are betraying all the finer, more splendid qualities which are innate within you.

GIVE AT LEAST ONE DAY

Or perhaps, you mean it is an incumbrance on your time to ask for a half hour of peace and quiet and meditation on Sunday! On Sunday! One day out of the week.

Surely, out of the Ten Commandments of God which religion imposes on us, this commandment would seem to show, above all else, the love

of the Eternal Father for His unworthy children.

Suppose some worldly ruler and lawgiver was giving out these laws instead of God.

You know very well what his command to you would be. You would honor him not one, but six, perhaps seven, days out of the week. And your giving honor to him would consist of working for him to the limit of your endurance.

But the Eternal Father says: No! All I ask is that one day of the week be Mine. And you will honor Me by making it a day of rest, innocent recreation, and worship.

Hence, what despicable ingratitude a man shows, and how contemptible he must be in the eyes of all creation, when he deliberately refuses to give this honor to the Eternal God from Whom he has received everything, even his very life and existence.

An incumbrance on your time? How can a man say that, when time itself is nothing else but a gift from Him Who asks this small return.

Of all the objections against re-

ligion, this would appear the most shameful and contemptible.

A PROFITABLE RETURN

Is it an incumbrance upon your pocketbook? Usually when this objection is made, and if the objector is honest and tells the amount that he has weekly contributed to religion, the whole objection becomes laughable. Especially so, if he has the slightest idea of the amount he squanders on luxuries, idle entertainment, and "killing time."

Because after all, the amount contributed is infinitesimal. But forget all that, because there is no comparison for religious contributions considering the incredible value received in return.

Thus, consider the administration of the Sacraments. Disregard the spiritual value of the graces received and the priceless happiness which the Faith brings to the believers, and take it purely from a material standpoint.

And what have you?

Consider the sympathy and the kindness and the happiness which

comes from the presence of the priest at the supreme moments of a person's life. For regardless of the individual priest, the ideal of the priesthood is one which is a constant uplift to every man and woman. It has a spiritual appeal and significance which cannot be denied.

The priest carries with him always a certain sense of security as the representative of the Supreme Being. And as such, he fills a deep, abiding need in times when men stand close to the Infinite. Such as, at the Baptism of a child, or the marriage of the adult.

Or at the hour of death! Death which is no respecter of age or person. Death which comes to each and all with its imperative summons. Surely, the consolation religion gives at this moment cannot be even estimated in material terms.

RELIGION IN MARRIAGE

Thus, consider the value of religion in Matrimony.

Certainly, the joining of two people in the marriage union thus becomes sacred, a thing of reverence,

respect, and holiness. While otherwise, would it not degenerate into an event, frivolous, unstable, foolish, and cheap?

Cannot the same be said when a father and mother stand at the baptismal font with the tiny soul which they have procreated. The little babe they have brought into this world. This helpless being which has been placed under their protection, utterly dependent on their love and guidance. Inevitably, at such a time, the love of the father and mother for each other is reborn, renewed and restrengthened. But what would this mean without religion?

WHEN DEATH STRIKES

And need we say that at the hour of death it is impossible for even the most callous and hardened of heart not to wonder about the eternity into which he is entering. The new life which is now to be his destiny. Because no man, no matter what his utterances may be, really believes in his heart that the grave is the end of all. Such a thought even, para-

lyzes our minds with terror and despair.

For death without religion means hardening your mind and heart to die as an animal dies in the depths of the woods. Or dying as a shallow, cheap, egotistical fool.

WHEN CHAOS REIGNS

What about the value received from having the mighty religious organization, the Catholic Church? This glorious organization spread throughout the entire world. A tremendous organization whose only purpose is to bring Christian principles and sane living into a world which is constantly hovering on the brink of insane madness and destruction. Thus, today it is the one organization to which the world can look with any hope for lasting peace. This organization which, in season and out of season, insists on peace and concord between capital and labor. Demands a living wage for the working man. Pleads for recognition of the poor as children of God. Constantly seeks for charity, kindness, and benevolence among men.

Thus, today, Pius XII, head of the Catholic Church, cries out; and men hear his voice as the voice of God. Again that "still, small voice" thundering above the insane clamor of the world which would stifle it.

AIDING THE HELPLESS

And what about the value received from religion as the very heart and center of true philanthropy. A philanthropy which has a soul. Not a cold, barren, maddening help given in a cold, calculating way as to a chattel or slave. But rather, aid extended as from brother to brother, friend to friend, in the true brotherhood of the living children of the Living God. Help which uplifts. Succor which inspires. Assistance which strengthens and encourages.

Thus, for instance, in the Catholic Church the asylums for the helpless and the homes for the aged and children. Not cold, impersonal institutions. But real homes. Because they are conducted by these religious Sisters and Brothers who labor only for the love of God.

With them it is all for Christ.
Christ is the Head of every house!
The Unseen Guest at every meal!
The Silent Listener to every conversation!

What about the value received from the hospitals animated and directed in this same religious spirit. Hospitals where these gentle-voice Nuns and Brothers, with a patience unflinching, a kindness unfaltering, and a love deep and sincere, soothe the suffering and comfort the afflicted.

TEACHING CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

And finally, what about the value received through these same Christian ideals and teachings carried on in these schools without number. Where these same priests and religious labor long and well for the instilling of real education. An education in which, not only the intellect is trained, but the will also. Where a child is not only shown what is right and what is wrong, but where his will is trained to do almost instinctively what is right. Where a child is taught most effectively because he

is taught by the best of all teaching, the teaching by example. Where the desire for right living, kindness, charity, and all the Christian virtues which go to make life worth living, are daily instilled into the hearts of these children.

Religion an incumbrance upon your pocketbook?

In the name of decency and justice, to what better advantage could money be spent than for the promotion of all these Christlike works? Works which these religious organizations strivantly struggle to carry on. Works which bring help to the helpless, comfort to the comfortless, joy to the sorrowing, hope to the despairing, love to the despised.

If these works, carried on so lovingly, kindly and charitably in a world cold, indifferent, calculating and heartless, are an incumbrance on your pocketbook. Then treasure that incumbrance with all your heart.

For these small contributions of yours may some day be the "bread cast upon the water" which may return to you a thousandfold.

One more objection.

The idea of religion being a racket is sometimes thoughtlessly voiced because of the idea that religion is something apart. That it is something existing away from ordinary life. That it is something mystical and intangible. That it is something unnecessary. That it is something people do not need and can easily do without.

RELIGION IS ONLY MYSTICAL!

Now, of course, down in your heart you really think no such thing.

The movies have, more or less, familiarized us with the mythical "Frankenstein."

Frankenstein constructed a monster but he failed to give him a soul. He gave him a brain, intellect and a mind. But the monster still remained a crude mechanical being. It had a body, emotions, passions. It was a prey to terror. But what was much worse, it had the power to create terror for others. But, nevertheless, it was irresponsible. No crime could be imputed to it. Because it had no soul. And in the end, as was inevitable, the monster brought death, suf-

fering, terror and misery to all with whom it had contact. As was expected, it even destroyed its creator.

Living in a Christian country, in the environment of a Christian civilization, it is easy to forget that we owe all our security, peace of mind and happiness to the Christian religion. Because of the fact that religious principles rule the life and actions of our neighbor. Especially is this so, in his relation to ourselves. When that religious influence is destroyed, as it has been in Russia, and to a great extent in Germany, it is easy to see that without religion our civilization is only a thin veneer. That men's passions and brutal instincts are ready to lash out at any moment when this restraining power is taken away.

SOULLESS NATIONS

As we read of conditions in Europe today, they seem incredible. Actually impossible for us to believe. Floggings unto death for minor infractions. The varied brutalities of the concentration camps. The unspeakable cruelties heaped upon helpless old men, women and children.

The diabolical lust and brutality enforced upon the helpless by whip, bayonet and torture of loved ones.

Despite the overwhelming proof that these things are occurring, not only frequently but as a matter of course, we still cannot grasp that they are actually happening.

Because we do not realize that these new Nations, these new Great Powers, have been constructed without religion. They have no soul.

Imagine, if you can, Frankenstein monsters multiplied by millions.

That is the new Super-Slave State.

But these terrifying tales are just propaganda, someone may say.

Do not be too sure!

Remember these packs of "wolf children" have grown to manhood and taken command.

HOLD STEADFAST TO RELIGION

Terror, brutality, bestiality, all reign because religion and religious principles have been abolished.

For remember without God, faith is gone. And when faith is gone, men are without hope. And when hope is gone, charity is dead.

And when love dies, hate reigns supreme.

And a nation is only the sum total of the beings who comprise that nation.

Religion a racket?

God forbid the lie!

Would that God give us the light to see that all happiness, all peace, all charity, all real joy, all that makes life worth living can be found only when a nation has a soul. When the individuals of that nation have souls. And when religion keeps these souls in close contact with the Eternal Truths of the Eternal God.

But you may not be interested about nations, or about other individuals.

Then what about yourself?

Here is the answer. NOT my answer, but the answer of the Eternal God Who gave you life and being!

Without religion your soul must die the death.

Without religion, better for you that you had never been born.

Religion a racket?

May God forgive you for ever making such a statement.

**QUESTIONS
OF THE DAY
SERIES**

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TITLES

**Religion Is Only Wishful
Thinking!**

Is Religion a Racket?

Religion Is An Opiate!

Religion Is Only for Weaklings!

Religion and the Fifth Column!

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