

Stringfellow Quote

Freedom from the idolatry of money, for a Christian, means that money becomes useful only as a sacrament—as a sign of the restoration of life wrought in this world by Christ. The sacramental use of money has little to do with supporting the church after the manner of contributing to conventional charities and even less with the self-styled stewardship that solicits funds mainly for the maintenance of ecclesiastical salaries and the housekeeping of church properties. . . . The offertory is integral to the sacramental existence of the church, a way of representing the oblation of the totality of life to God. No more fitting symbol of the involvement of Christians in the everyday life of the world could be imagined, in American society at least, than money, for nearly every relationship in personal and public life is characterized by the obtaining or spending or exchange of money. If then, in worship, human beings offer themselves and all of their decisions, actions, and words to God, it is well that they use money as the witness to that offering. Money is, thus, used sacramentally within the church and not contributed as to some charity or given because the church, as such, has any need of money.

The sacramental use of money in the formal and gathered worship of the church is authenticated—as are all other churchly sacramental practices—in the sacramental use of money in the common life of the world. . . . The charity of Christians in the use of money sacramentally—in both the liturgy and in the world—has no serious similarity to conventional charity but is always a specific dramatization of the members of the Body of Christ losing their life in order that the world be given life. For members of the church, therefore, it always implies a particular confession that their money is not their own because their lives are not their own but, by the example of God’s own love, belong to the world.

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