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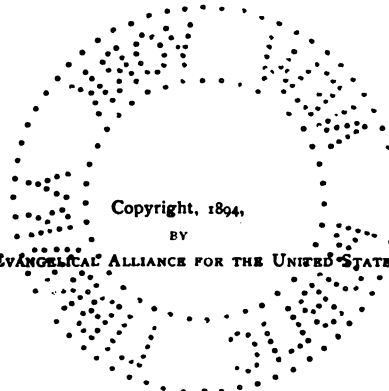
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## THE CHURCH AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT.

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ONE of the last things upon which the Spirit lays his finger in divine emphasis in closing the volume of Revelation is the matter of the city. It is the new city, to be sure, but it is city. It is the city come down from God, but it is city. In that consummating vision souls as individuals went out of sight ; went out of God's sight ; God forgot them for the moment ; and they subsisted in the Apocalyptic picture only as they were organically built into one another and bound up in a municipal bundle. That stands away out at the western end of the Bible, and is the Holy Ghost's "good-bye" thought. Regenerated individual souls are a vast matter, but principally because they are the material upon which the structure of regenerated *society* has to depend. Society is not an aggregate of men, any more than the body is an aggregate of muscle, bone, and joint. A man, however complete as such, is a fraction and always a fraction ; temporally and eternally a fraction. It takes society to make whole. St. John thought so, and St. John was simply thinking God's thoughts over after him. Much as we may have to do with the individual,—and that is not to be made light of either,—the supreme passion of human love, and the supreme vigor of human power, must throw themselves out upon men as they are livingly associated and vitally interrelated. Not only do *men* need to be born again, but the relations subsisting between them need to be born again. It takes a good deal of grace to be a good man all by one's self, but nowhere nearly as much as it does to be a good man with another man alongside of you ; and the more of them there are the greater the strain. It is the crowded areas, therefore, the points at which men in their organic relations rub most solidly on each other, that have the first claim and that make the severest demand upon Christianity and upon the men who stand for it.

St. Paul thought so, and the Book of the Acts is the record primarily of what was done in the large towns. Cities are determinative. They are the ganglionic centres of modern civilization. Convert Chicago and you will have all Illinois on the anxious seat.

And everything is tending to *become* city. We say of cattle that they are gregarious ; we say of men that they have an urban instinct. Two forms of the same thing. Oxen like to graze together, so do men. At present rates of condensation in population the country (as opposed to the city) pretty soon will not be much more than a zero, whose prime function it is to multiply by ten the integer that it stands alongside of. In 1790 *three* out of every hundred of the population of this country were resident in towns of 8000 and upwards ; in 1890 *twenty-nine* out of every hundred. So that it is clear where we have got to put our work. If Christians and the churches are not equal to the task of routing the devil in the cities, there is no use in praying "Thy kingdom come" on the Fourth of July. That is the problem, then, that we have to front. You can call it the problem of corrupt municipal politics, or the problem of municipal sensuality, or the problem of the municipal saloon evil. I would call it the problem of the devil in the large towns.

And let it be said just at this point of the discussion that we have not come clear out here to Chicago to whine. If a Christian has not confidence enough in God and in the competency of the law and the gospel to see a clear and a sure track in front of him, he would better go into some other business. The debauched condition of municipal politics merely happens to be the card which the devil is laying down just at this stage in the game. It is a Christian's originary privilege and obligation to keep in good spirits. A man who believes in the Lord and has good digestion has no business to be pessimistic. So we have prepared this paper, not because we are discouraged, but because we are so cheerful.

Nevertheless things are municipally in bad shape. They are so here, they are so in New York and Brooklyn, they are so in every town of any considerable size throughout the length and breadth of the United States. Now what are we Christians and Christian churches going to do about it? Of course the most thorough and fundamental work we can do is to carry the gospel

of Jesus Christ into the thick of our municipal populations. I do not say carry it to the "masses." I hate that word "masses." It is not a Bible word nor a Christ word. There is not a suggestion of the fine flavor of gospel sentiment in it. We have got to carry the gospel to the men, women, and children that live in the unfortunate portions of our cities. The moral average of the people has got to be raised before the morality of the municipal corporation can be raised as reflected in its politics and its local usages and statutes. The first grand step that the churches in any of our towns can take, looking to improved municipal conditions, is to quit fooling and to quit rowing, and to put themselves into personal touch with people who sustain bad government for the reason that they do not know the law of God or the love of Christ. Speaking now for my own town only, there is nothing in any large way that deserves to be called contact between our churching sanctification and our unhoused depravity. The leaven is in the attic and the meal is down cellar. The meal remains meal, and the desiccated yeast-cakes coddle each other. With us when a church finds itself in a difficult neighborhood it skips. In the first ages of the church the Christians used to run after the heathen, but now they run away from them. There is a great deal for a true church to do besides making sure of the salvation of the elect and collecting the pew-rents. It is important to save men into the New Jerusalem, but it is a good deal more to the purpose to make them fit to be citizens in the Jerusalems that we have already on our hands. This is not said in the interest of city missions *per se*. That is a matter that occupies another place in your programme. We are thinking exclusively of an improved municipal condition and of Christianity as the one principal means of arriving at it, and of the Christian church as the institution divinely appointed to avail of that means to that end. We are not talking in the interests of saints, but in the interests of citizens that are worth being called such and fit to enjoy civil prerogatives. See how this thing works. A man comes into your community or mine from the other side of the water. He knows nothing about statescraft unless he is an Irishman, and then he certainly doesn't. Ninety-five cases out of a hundred he comes here, not with any set purpose to work mischief, but to make a living. Now in the immense majority of cases, whether that new-comer proves a blessing or a curse to his city will de-

pend upon who gets hold of him first, the devil or the church,—or, to apply it to my own town, Tammany or the church. They are going to ally themselves with those who first ally themselves with them. Now every man who watches these things knows that the man who speaks first is the political manager or the heeler, or the presiding genius of the groggery or the dive. In that way confidence is captured. The ward politician becomes his mentor. The only political duty he knows, the only civic obligation he dreams of, is what he acquires under the discipline of the caucus-room and the saloon. The saloon is his civic church and his municipal Sunday-school. The church of Christ is nowhere, and the city missionary gets left every blessed time. The pothouse-politician cares more for his vote than the church cares either for his vote or for his soul. I have thought sometimes that if you could take one of these seasoned old ward-politicians, thoroughly convert him to Jesus Christ, then establish a chair in one of our theological seminaries, ripping out some of the stuff that is there now,—a chair whose function it should be to teach unfledged divines in methods of gaining an evangelical grip on community,—and then put your regenerated and sanctified pothouse man in the chair, you would be on the verge of results that would electrify the country. Efficient *political* method means every man looked after. That is the way Tammany wins, and I admire her for it. There is no lumping in politics. There are no “masses” to the man who is running for alderman. Every man has his political latitude and longitude calculated and verified. The managers do not erect their rendezvous on the back-bone of the town, meet at solemn and stated intervals to pray that light may break upon the benighted denizens of the down-town wards. They do not pray that the light may break; they go and break it, *in propria persona*. Every man is a field to be tilled; as much so as though he were the only field there were. Now if the church is going to fulfil its obligations in this matter of a clean city government it has got to go to work on those principles. There is no fancy method and no short cut. No matter how long it is postponed, it has got to be come to. Man has got to meet man. No diffused perfume till the stopper has been withdrawn. We are not intending to inflect human responsibility in a way to make God’s agency appear questionable or insignificant. The truth of the absolute sovereignty of God in these matters, and the certainty that his purpose is all

going to be fulfilled some time, is one of the most inspiring of considerations or one of the most paralyzing, just according to the way you take it. But after all due calculation has been made for God's sufficiency he never, so far as we know, has done anything in history, and he never, so far as we have a right to expect, will do anything in history, except so fast as a man or as men appear who fit the situation. In that sense humanity determines omnipotence. Wherever anything has transpired, whether in moral or Christian history, or anywhere else, you look sharp and you will find that there has been a man there. That is the meaning of this convention, that God is ready when we are ready, and that it takes God and man both to answer a man's prayer. We are interested to discuss these problems, not because of the meanness of the problems, but because something is going to be said that will put some man, some concrete man, in an attitude that will render possible the letting loose of a fresh access of divine omnipotence. We stand for effects and for results. This Chicago convention is going to help answer the municipal question because it is going to wake up somebody to the urgency of the situation and to the consciousness of having lodged in him a God-given faculty that *matches* him to the exigency.

In the next place let me spend a moment in emphasizing the fact that in order to be able as Christians to confront the situation with effect we shall be obliged to push to the front the muscular as well as the nerve side of Christianity. I mean by that, Christianity in its incorrigible as well as in its affectional aspects. We must remember that the cross of Christ stands for the infinite stubbornness of God as well as for his ineffable mercy. The hardest thing a man ever does is to obey, and he is never a man till he comes to it. What I feel that we are most sadly lacking in very much of our Christian preaching and Christian living is gristle. Conscience, by which I mean an axiomatic respect for that which is morally posited, has wrapped in all the possibilities of religion. No matter how high you may carry your piety, conscience is the only thing that will keep the top reach of it plumb. Mt. Calvary does not repeal Mt. Sinai. Men are not respecting law. They are governed by what they read into the law, not by what they read out of it. That is a feature of our times. It has never been more conspicuously manifest than during the last six months. In an increasingly large class of community criminality

makes candidacy for political preferment, not destroys candidacy. Maynard would never have been nominated to his proposed position in the state of New York except for the service he rendered and the celebrity he acquired in his capacity as a deep-dyed rascal. One of the largest positions of responsibility in my own town is held to-day by a confessed murderer: and he is the bosom friend of the man who goes about with New York City in his vest-pocket. This audience does not need to be told that not a great while ago the governor of a state pardoned a brace of criminals that had been convicted by due process of law of a thrust at the very vitals and existence of government, and convicted without any peradventure of mistake. That is to say, the state, through its official head, informed the world that there was no difference worth remarking between what is right and what is not right, between loyalty and treason. Now that position is the very own mother of all anarchy. It is the bread that anarchy fattens on. The genius of anarchy is the obliviousness of the difference between what is right and what isn't. In New York City there is not a crime but what has its price, precisely as much as in the old indulgence period of the Catholic Church. That is to say, that the administration of the greatest city in this new continent which is to determine the world's history—and by administration I mean that junto of cut-throats, whiskey-guzzlers, harlot-keepers, and dive-manipulators beneath whose nasty heel our city is grovelling—announces to the public that there is no such difference between what is right and what is wrong that a dollar, if there are enough of them, will not suffice to neutralize the discrepancy. Now, friends, this condition of things is eating into the very marrow of moral personality. It is gnawing the stuff that manhood is built of. It is obliterating the distinctions that make human society possible, and that lie at the basis of all reasonable expectations of a secure and wholesome national future. Well, what are we going to do about it? What are we going to do about it? When we see a wicked head, smite it—smite it till it is sore; and when we see that it is sore, smite it some more till it is sorer. We will remember the tears that the Lord shed over Jerusalem, but we will remember too the small cords with which he scourged out of the temple the knaves who were trying to convert piety and decency into shekels. What community needs is moral tone, a ringing reverberation that is clear up to



concert pitch. A man never knows, a villain himself never knows how villainous he is, till moral music is played into his ears two octaves above his own grovelling bass; and if he tries to smash your instrument, catch your breath and give it to him eight notes farther up.

It is always a privilege, as to-day, to speak of these matters under the auspices of church organization, using the word church in its broadest and richest intention. Such concerns and obligations need to be distinctly adopted into the domain of Christian *service*. Our relations to our town are to be viewed as a constituent part of our Christian life: and that whether we are clergymen or laymen. We never get quite a solid grip on matters till every square inch of ground we tread on comes to be apostolically recognized by us as missionary ground. This quartering life off into lay and clerical, religious and secular, does not go to the core of the Christian matter. There is no man big enough to warrant his going at a thing in any such quarter-section kind of way. There will be a great deal that is cheerful in the condition of things when the time comes that a young man, on becoming a Christian and asking his pastor what Christian work he can do, is not limited in his choice of occupation to teaching in Sunday-school, visiting the sick, and conducting neighborhood prayer-meetings; the time, I mean, when such a man can feel that Christian work is not a matter of what you do but of what you are doing it for, or, rather, of Whom you are doing it for—spelling the Whom with a big “W.” This having four sets of books, and entering one order of behavior in the “clerical” account, and another in the “lay,” and a third and fourth in the “secular” and the “religious,” is feeble dilettanteism, it isn’t business. Which leads me on to say that one very substantial and practical service which the church has to render in the line of municipal betterment is to develop in Christians, as such, a civic consciousness; to teach the citizen to have at once a sense of his Lord and a sense of his city. It is as much the duty of a Christian to love his town as it is to love his God; and as much his duty to serve his town as to serve his God. Indeed, it is doubtless the fact in certain cases that serving his town is the one species of apostolic service for which he has been divinely cut out. To an American the Stars and Stripes ought to be as actually a part of his religion as the Sermon on the

Mount. Other things being equal, it is as urgently the obligation of a Christian to go to the polls on election-day as it is for him to go to the Lord's table on communion-day. The old Hebrew never thought of religion and patriotism as in any manner distinct from each other. Serving his country was serving Jehovah. The mass of civic virtue is not sufficiently instinct with Christian nerve to make it safe to be counted on for solid and chronic effects. What a wicked man will do on election day you can tell. What a good man will do you can't tell; it wouldn't be surprising if he didn't do anything. It is a singular fact that goodness cannot be trusted so confidently as depravity can to do what is expected of it. It is not so reliable. It takes a larger consideration to prevent a bad man from casting his ballot for the rum and brothel ticket than it does to prevent a good man from voting against them. Average decency is not so much in earnest as average profligacy. Elections in state and city are very likely to turn on the weather. Singularly enough, a watery day is apt to mean a rum government. Respectability looks at the barometer before it steps out of doors. Decency is afraid of taking cold. Piety doesn't like to get its feet wet. Wickedness is amphibious, and thrives in any element or in no element. Vice is a good deal spryer than virtue, has more staying power, and can work longer without getting out of breath and going off on a half-holiday. I wish there were some way in which we could make civic virtue and devotion to municipal life of the town part of our creed,—not the Apostles' Creed,—I do not mean that: it is too late for that; and I do not know as our Episcopal brethren would care to have it incorporated with the Thirty-nine Articles. And as to the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, you know there is a strict biblical ordinance against putting modern liquor into archæological bottles. My only thought is that it would at once put Christian integrity into a position of immense power in determining municipal event if in the pulpit, the home, and the Sunday-school we were to commence concertedly to treat such civic duties as attending the primaries, going to the polls even if it rains, accepting official position even if it is repugnant to you, and sitting on the jury even if it interferes with your business—if we were to treat such duties as these as distinctly comprised within the domain of Christian obligation.

Now to put ourselves in the sort of attitude implied in the

foregoing means warfare from the start. The only righteous peace that we can look for upon this planet is to come by conquering a peace. It is not the number of good people in the world, it is not the number of good citizens in a city, that determines either the history of the world or the ethical character of a municipal administration. What determines is the amount of integrity that is so uncompromising and incorrigible that there will of necessity ensue a collision with the powers of this world. The only route to peace is over the highway of warfare. The apostle who has done the most to bring nearer to us the day of the Lord is the one whose life bore the nearest resemblance to a Napoleonic campaign, and whose very sentences and metaphors were most suggestive of the battlefield and the rattle of artillery: all of which is rendered possible by two facts,—St. Paul's passionate love for human souls, and his ineffable loathing for human sin. "I came not to send peace, but a sword," said the Lord; and with us as with the Lord, the passion of affection is not going to dull the sharpness of the duel. It is no more possible to stand up in the presence of community and speak the truth in cold monosyllables to-day than it was two thousand years ago. Wicked people prate about the duty of Christians to deal with sinners in a manner of Christly gentleness, nor can we over-emphasize that duty; but the fact to be remembered is that Christ, notwithstanding the infinitude of his tenderness, convicted the world of sin, and because he convicted men they hated him, and because they hated him they killed him, and they would kill him now. Human nature is just exactly what it was two thousand years ago. There is not so much wickedness now as there was then, but what there is is just as wicked and just as malignant. If a man butts his head against the wall he may be able to do a little something toward weakening the wall, but it will be certain to give him the headache. And what is wanted is the evangelized robustness that shall qualify a man to face existing conditions, to exhibit them in honest portraiture and then amuse himself by picking the shot out of his skin. I believe that the one tremendous prerequisite for coping successfully with the hostile energies that threaten municipal civilization is sanctified grit. Men are afraid. This is a matter that has been burned into my soul. I have had *anonymous* sympathy enough to back a reformatory expedition to the planet Mars. There are men in my

town—I could give you their names right here, and you would recognize some of the names too—who in their instincts and in their prayers—that is, their closet prayers—are thoroughly with us in the attempt to crush the particular form of municipal iniquity—complicity between the police and the criminals—against which the Society for the Prevention of Crime in my city stands arrayed, and yet men who would no more stand up and be counted with the movement than they would fire a powder-magazine in their own cellar. It is not because they are not good men; it is not because they do not give us their blessing,—after sundown. It is because they are scared! If they had lived in the old Hebrew days, a pretty kind of Daniel they would have made, wouldn't they? There would never have had to be any den of lions ordered for them, would there? They would have eaten of the king's meat ten times a day, with lunch between times. The matter that our thought needs to fasten itself to most concernedly is, not the strength of the enemy's guns, but the rotten stone and mean mortar that so often gets built into our own fortifications. The strength of a cause under God is the number of people who plant themselves down, flat-footed and square-toed, on distinct moral ground, in burning love to men, in consuming loyalty to God, and with a prophetic grip on the great years that are coming. If the criticism is hurled back at us by flaccid piety and knock-kneed integrity that this style of appeal lies suspiciously close to the tone of old Puritanism, all I care to say is, would to Almighty God we had about ten thousand Puritan thoroughbreds scattered all the way from Chicago to Manhattan Island! There would be a shock in our social, our religious, our national, and our municipal life that would send off divergent lines of earthquake to the four quarters, and set the ground quivering clear through to China.

Now the half-hour that has been allowed to me I have not spent in particularizing the municipal disorders that menace us and that make their demand upon us. Men who are alive to the times (and they are the only ones that are worth a rap in the way of correcting them) know them without my delineation, and it is the men who *are* alive to them, and alive with an anxiety made out of passion and pertinacity, that will have to be looked to for their deliverance. There are people in every community, especially those who are members of whichever political party happens for

the moment to be out of business, who have acute and retching attacks of municipal reform every year, just about the time the leaves turn. You may spell a man Republican or spell him Democrat ; a man is not to be counted on if he is subject to fits, even if it is fits of virtue. The only men whose effects can be planted down and confidently built upon are the ones who fasten upon these things with a grip that has in it a fibre of adhesiveness and deathlessness ; and motive-pressure of that quality is not made out of ambition, nor out of consideration of bread and butter ; and it is because I know that the only material that can compose such motive-pressure is the old Hebrew fear of Jehovah coupled with the new gospel love of Christ and man, that I am absolutely confident in my conviction that it is the church of the living God that has got to take up this matter and put it through. We trust it will be one of the efforts of this convention of the Alliance, not to make us less heavenly, but to make us a good deal more earthly, and to give us that appreciation of the intention of Christ that shall cause us to regard all ground as holy ground, every service as Christian service if done for him, and every department of life a claimant upon our holiest power of passion and endeavor.