

IS IT RIGHT FOR MINISTERS TO ADVOCATE THE MUNI- CIPAL REFORM IN THE PULPIT?

The municipal reform has at last reached Lincoln, and the best men have taken it in hand. This wonderful movement, first instituted by such men as Mr. Stead and Dr. Parkhurst, has been taken up, one by one, by the large cities of the country. After reading Mr. Stead's book, "If Christ Came to Chicago," one feels as though reforms were greatly needed in our large cities. So when I first heard that our city had at last taken up the movement, I felt as though one of the best steps ever thought of had been taken in Lincoln. One of the best men for the position of mayor that could be found was nominated by the Civic Federation. This man was to act to the best of his ability—uprightly, honestly, morally, trying every way to make the city better and purer. One day I was astonished to hear someone say that there were people in the city and elsewhere who were greatly incensed at this movement being advocated in the churches and by the ministers. Not only advocated, these objectors said, but the names of the candidates were mentioned, and the ministers even advised the people to vote for them.

I heard two people talking the other day, both good men, but of entirely different opinions on this question. One of these people thought that, on the Sabbath, after the busy week, and when one was tired of working and striving and hearing political talk, one would like to enter the church, where all was quiet, and with nothing to disturb the tranquil peacefulness of the quiet sermon, hymn and prayer, to enjoy a rest from all bodily care. The sermon, as I understand this person, is to be from a text in the Bible that should be to our spiritual and religious welfare, and should have little mention of or application to our daily,

busy humdrum, and especially political life. He thinks this question of the election of officers by the Civic Federation is entirely a political one, and the pulpit is not the place to discuss politics. His friend is of an entirely different opinion. In the first place he thinks we do, or should, go to church with a different motive than that approved by his friend. He thinks that if we live to fulfill the end of our existence we must daily strive, seeking help from all directions. So we go to the place of worship on the Sabbath still looking for help with our daily duties and moral problems. We want a stirring sermon, one that touches upon the homliest of our daily duties (and what more needs the touch of religion in it than politics?) The two people discussed this further, but this was the burden of the argument.

Now, I find that this is a matter for consideration. In the first place, is the Civic Federation merely a political institution? It is not the same as other political parties. It has not the same aim. While with the parties the sole aim is to elect the candidate of their party, good, bad or indifferent, without discrimination, the Civic Federation is an organization *for the purpose* of purifying the city government by means of electing pure, honorable men for responsible positions. The Civic Federation does not, as a rule, I believe, even nominate its own candidates as an organization, but take a candidate from some of the party nominations. They take this candidate, irrespective of what party, the condition being that he be true and honorable, and likely to carry on his part in the city affairs conscientiously. If this is a political institution, then I think politics should be discussed in the churches.

Now, also, is this a question of right and wrong. In Lincoln and other cities where an effort has been made to purify municipal government, many people have said that it is foolish, even that it is necessary to have a part