

## The Christian Citizen.

Words are things. However well known and frequently used, it is not always safe to rely upon another's apprehension of the terms we use, as being precisely identical with our own. For this reason it is that I feel compelled to define the terms "citizen" and "Christian" as I shall use them today, even in addressing this erudite and critical "assembly".

Citizen, in the sense we shall use it today, is an American word. True, it has a Latin root and has come to us with the formal endorsement of every nation and tongue that has grown up in Western Europe, since the sun-kissed city ruled the world. Citizen, as denoting the relation

of some individual or class, to the State or municipality, is as old as the *Civitas Romana*, itself.

Yet our new Western civilization - our political New World - has seized upon this old word and stamped it with a new significance.

Webster defines this new American signification to be, in effect,

- 1 - One who is entitled to vote for election officers or to be chosen to fill an election office
- 2 - One who by birth or naturalization is entitled to full protection in the exercise or enjoyment of his private rights.

For our purpose today, I would define a citizen to be one of the constituent atoms of a self-governing community, including minors

This does not include minors or women because they lack the potential element. I do not say they ought to be excluded but they are, and it is desirable to confine our attention strictly to the facts of the present.

"Christian" is a word far more difficult of definition, though apparently simple in its significance. If we define it to be the one who believes in the existence and divine character of Christ, we shall catch many an one who jumps no head to his teachings and does not profess to do so. If, on the other hand, we define it to be one who obeys his teachings, we shall shut out a multitude who claim to follow him and stop with a mere filing of their claim.

It may perhaps seem irrelevant to some,  
but for our purpose today I would define Chris-  
tians to be ~~every~~ <sup>every</sup> one who is ~~inwardly~~ <sup>inwardly</sup> ~~by the~~  
~~spirit of Jesus of Galilee~~, who believes the  
teaching of Jesus of Nazareth; who is in-  
ward with his spirit or believes he ought  
to be.

This definition may be too broad for some of our  
ministerial brethren to endorse because they  
are accustomed to consider <sup>quite as much</sup> Christianity in  
its relations <sup>to the next world as to this.</sup> ~~both to this world and the next~~  
Citizenship, however, is bounded by time and it  
is the human side of Christianity that is to be  
considered in <sup>connection</sup> ~~relation~~ with it. I have  
made it thus broad also because the rights and

of the Christian citizen are not, in any sense,  
different from those of the heathen or Moslem  
citizen. So far as the state is concerned, the  
same duties are laid upon the one as the other,  
and the same privileges given to the one as  
to the other. The distinction between the Chris-  
tian and the non-Christian citizen consists sole-  
ly in the sanction which Christianity gives to  
the duties of the citizen and the added obliga-  
tions which it lays upon him to perform those  
duties faithfully and well. These obligations rest  
with equal weight upon him who thinks he ought  
to follow the teaching of the Savior as upon him who  
is actually imbued with his spirit, without belief  
in his divinity.

The rights and privileges of the citizen, I do not propose to consider. I shall speak only of his duties and only of that class of his duties which are termed political, that is, those duties which have a direct relation to the government and control of the nation of which he is a part. And I shall endeavor to trace the relations of Christianity to the performance or neglect of those duties.

And by this relation of Christianity to the duty of the citizen, I do not mean the Church as a collective body, an organization whose bound and limits are not those of the nation. I mean simply the personal injunction which rests upon the citizen to do or not to do, cer-

tain acts pertaining to the government of the nation because of his belief in the teachings, precepts and example ~~and~~ life of Jesus Christ. In other words, I wish to consider how far the political duty of the citizen becomes a personal duty of the Christian.

There are certain duties of the Christian citizen, in regard to which all sects and classes agree. That it is the Christian duty of every Christian citizen, to obey the law (if not as inconsistent with rights as to justify revolution), to keep the peace of the state, to pray for all in authority, to bear his fair proportion of the burdens of government, there may be said to be none to deny. That this is the proper limit of personal duty under a monarch

archical government even, may well be ques-  
tioned but the citizen of a Republic who  
thinks he has discharged his whole duty as  
a Christian citizen when he obeys the law, pays  
his taxes and stands on his hind legs and  
prays for the country is greatly mistaken.

The government of a republic is laid equally  
upon every man's shoulders, rich and poor,  
high and low, learned and unlearned —  
you and I my friend, ~~we~~ we are given  
equal rights are charged with equal respon-  
sibility as to the character of that govern-  
ment. A republic rests upon the will  
of the people <sup>or</sup> the will of a majority of  
the people; and that is believed to be the

Trust, safety, and best form of govern-  
ment, because it is believed that a ma-  
jority will always be wise enough to know  
their true interest, honest enough to de-  
clare it, and brave enough to main-  
tain it. Such a government lays on every  
man's shoulders a burden which he can  
no more get rid of than if it were the  
old man of the sea. It is a duty which  
affects not himself alone but every one  
who comes within the purview of the govern-  
ment of which he is a part. It is no figure  
of speech that calls the citizen an uncrowned  
king. Not only do the rights and prerogatives  
of sovereignty inhere in him, in the last resort,

and in his collective capacity, but on him  
rest its duties and responsibilities, into  
our hands as citizens, God has such <sup>the</sup> right,  
the privilege, the future of our fifty millions of  
fellow citizens and the character of those who  
shall come after. It is no excuse to say that  
a like responsibility rests upon every other one  
of the fifty millions. Because you have a duty  
is no reason why I should be allowed to shrink  
mine. It must be done or I must bear the  
burden and the blame. You and I have <sup>the</sup> ~~got~~  
duty laid upon, to see to it as far as we may,  
that fifty millions of bodies and souls are  
made stronger, purer, nobler, more intelligent  
more moral, more religious — more <sup>purely</sup>

and more womanly because they were mightily  
and righteously governed. For our discharge of  
of that duty we must answer in the great  
day of accounts, just as much as for those  
more apparent duties of honesty and a  
peaceful life. The blood of the wronged and  
oppressed is on our hands, how shall it be  
removed? The cry of the souls that is prisoned  
in ignorance goes up against us; what shall  
we answer to the charge?

It is well that we should pray, but such  
momentous duty should be undertaken without  
prayer; but the man who thinks he is going  
to discharge his duties as a citizen by pray-  
ing for the nation oppressed and doing nothing

will ~~be~~ makes a sad mistake. You might  
as well try to butter down Diabolus with  
green peas, ~~and~~ You cannot pray a  
political wrong out of existence nor a polit-  
ical right into effect.

There are some sects, like the Mennonites and  
Dunkards, who stubbornly refuse to take this  
responsibility. They leave the Lord and the soul  
to fight out the problem of good government  
without their aid and accept the result no  
matter which one prevails. Our friends the Quakers  
some times proclaim a like doctrine and  
do practically interfere only when they see clearly  
that the Lord cannot get along without them.

There ~~is~~ besides these outside of these sects  
in most denominations a sort of anti-

never permitting that the nearer a Christian would be to God the further he must keep from politics. That it is incumbent for the sanctified soul to attempt to persuade a neighbor that his political course is wrong or to encourage another to persevere in that course of action which he is fully convinced is for the true interests of the fifty millions of whom God has crowned him one of the Co-ordinate Kings! He may gamble in stocks, swindle in wild-cat mining shares, grind the faces of the people by improvidently granted corporate powers and yet be one of the Lord's anointed, but let him not touch politics. It is true we have not reached

that point of disapproval which declares  
as a formal part of church faith that  
no politician can be saved but  
we generally assume that it will  
be a case of special grace if he is.

Many a man whose Christian  
character is his highest pride; who boasts  
himself on the performance of every duty,  
says with a smirk of complacency, "Of  
course, I go and vote when the time comes,  
but I take no active part in politics."  
He recognizes his duty but cheats himself  
into the belief that he has performed it when  
he has thrown a paper pellet that may  
be as powerless as a breath of the East wind  
while his influence - thrown into the scale

with that of other shirkers of the Lord's Army  
might have defeated evil and promoted  
good. The citizen who merely votes no more  
does his duty as a citizen in the government  
than the man who simply joins a church  
does his duty as a Christian. The man who  
has a duty to perform does that duty when he  
gives all of his power to its performance —  
not before. You have done your duty to  
the fifty millions whose interests you are  
charged to promote when you have done all  
in your power to give them good and  
vice government — not before.

But you who hear me — at least the  
great majority of you, I doubt not are  
saying to in your hearts "But politics is

such a dirty mess. No man of good repute who cares for the esteem of his fellow men can engage in it. What with bosses and riggs and bribery and corruption, what <sup>chance</sup> ~~chance~~ is there for an honest man or a Christian in politics".

We have a class of very good men among us who are never tired of this song. They think the whole duty of the Christian is to praise God and find fault. You remember Josh Billings' directions for milking a kicking cow: "Stunt off about twenty feet and holler 'So blister eye!'" This is the way the Christian Citizen sometimes performs his duty - too often indeed.

Is it true that the political life of today is such a reeking mass of infamy? Is it a fact that mere association with those who have our political matters in charge is so <sup>dangerous</sup> ~~prejudicial~~ that the Christian graces ~~are~~ <sup>are imperilled</sup> thereby? Is it true that he who would benefit his fellows by securing to them good government does so at the peril of his own soul?

I do not believe any such miserable cant. The man whose religion cannot stand the strain of a political life has not got enough to make it worthwhile to run it. Milton well says: I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, that shrinks

from the course where the immortal garland  
is to be run for — — — — — not without dust and  
heat!" I do not believe that the performance  
of political duty is any more corrupting  
or demoralizing than the ordinary em-  
ployments of business life. Nor do I believe

that the politics of today are as corrupt  
and degrading as those of the past which  
so many of our tender-footed friends  
are accustomed to applaud. In my opin-  
ion the political ethics as well as the personal  
morality of our political leaders and of-  
ficial representatives, is better and  
purer this day than it ever was before.

If but the very best generation of our pol-

It is possible to be focused in that blaze of light which is centered on a public man's life today, what do you think would be the opinion the C.S.I.C. would have of their worth and merits. Suppose a true biography of Clay or Webster or a thousand others whose names are never written, what one of you would dare place it on your center-table or put it into the hands of your son or daughter? They filled the measure of their day and our men of today are required to come up to larger and better standards. But yesterday the tale of crime or scandal died of old age before it crossed the line of a single state. ~~Today~~ Now, three continents reach

view of today's suffering at tomorrow's  
breakfast-table. The moon seems brighter  
than the earth because we only see its bright  
side. The past seems brighter than than the  
the present because we see only its brightest  
side.

But suppose that the political mach-  
strom of today is as bad as most legu-  
brons, whenever enquiries is to be, two ques-  
tions arise which are pertinent thereto:

- 1- whose fault is it?
- 2- what ~~are you going~~ is to be done to remedy it?

"Be are the salt of the earth" we are told. The  
figure is a good one for the religion of the Galilean.  
In order that salt may save from putrefac-  
tion, it must come into the most intimate

relations with every fiber of the substance to be preserved. We are not careful about the path but about that to which it is applied. It is as with the religion of the Nazarene, It is not afraid of the dirt. It is no soft and tender thing that must be carefully wrapped and boxed and hid away under lock and key lest the devil get his fingers on its precious folds. It is a brawny every day garment. It is a shield that courts the fight and the clash because the stroke of spear and axe, the grit and moil of conflict only shows its adamantine temper and heavenly luster all the better.

The great distinguishing element of Chris-

timidity is that it was made for man. Its great  
Master went up and down the earth doing  
what? Performing rites and ceremonies? Fasting  
and praying? Occupied in religious medi-  
tation? Portraying the beauties of heaven?

Revel the record of those three wondrous  
years. You could write the only public prayer  
he made upon your knoll. Of doctrinal ar-  
gument there is scarcely <sup>as much as may be</sup> ~~and~~  
read in half an hour. Of ceremonial he left  
so dim a record that sects were based on  
a question of Greek inflection! But from  
first to last the holy record is crowded to  
bursting with one great fact - "He went  
about doing good"; and impressing upon

others the duty of doing likewise. Christianity differs from all other religions in that it has no passive voice. There is no place in it for the ~~own~~ cell of the anchorite or the selfish isolation which would climb up to God by fleeing away from man. Christianity is an active transition idea. The Christian is not born again to be swathed in purple and fine linen, covered and encased and sheltered "from every stormy wind that blows"; He is shot out into the world like a shell from a mortar, to hit something, to do, to suffer, to achieve for man because he is a man, and for God because he is sent forth by his spirit.

If our national, state or municipal politics have become debased and corrupt it is the fault of the Christian citizens of the land. Protestant Christianity controls, modifies moves by its influence a vast majority of the uncrowned kings of our land. It dominates the councils of parties, stands beside the ballot box and is recognized in our legislative assemblies. If there are "rings" and "bosses"; if there is corruption and venality; if the will of the people is thwarted and greed rather than patriotism dominates, it is because the American Christianity has failed or has failed in the duty that God has cast upon them. There has never been an hour when the Christian intellect, culture and power of this land, actively and honestly exerted could

not central its destinies. The ills of our political life are not due to "bosses" "rings" or "machines". These monstrosities are but the indices of other ills - the symptoms of deeper disease. They are the natural fruit of that so-called Christian spirit that exerts itself to goad to engage in political work. They are simply the evidences of neglect. Christian intellect and conscience has said I have not time to attend to the minutiae of politics. I cannot attend ward meetings and serve on numerous committees, and do all the dirty work of politics. Let them do it who are paid for it. I will vote and that is enough." For a hundred years this has been growing daily more and more

true of our people, especially at the North.

The duty of coming every <sup>golden</sup> moment into a golden dollar or some decimal part thereof crosses out the duty to our millions of fellow-citizens. But do you mean to say that it is the duty of every citizen, himself personally and individually to attend to the dirty details of party politics in his township or ward? I mean simply to say that it is the duty of every citizen to give that attention and care to the political details of his neighborhood that is necessary to enable him to put his hand on his heart and honestly say, I have done all that I was able to do, to give my <sup>my state.</sup> country, my city, my ward my township or my school district good

and righteous government. And I mean  
to say that the man who does not do this  
violates the most sacred obligations to God  
and man.

There is a contract between you and me,  
my friend. We never met before. We never looked  
into each other's eyes. Nor heard each other's voices  
until this hour. Yet the obligations of a mutual  
contract rest upon us. Nay, when we lay in our  
cradles the bonds of this contract were already  
upon our souls. That contract is written in blood  
and witnessed by the soul of Heaven. It was  
dictated by divinity and is universal in its  
terms. Its provisions are that we shall do what  
we can to aid each other because we are men.

and that we will not omit any duty that  
may benefit the other, if not hurtful to ourselves.

This contract we have made as Christian  
citizens with every one of our fifty millions  
of fellow-citizens and with every one of their  
children and their children's children. It has  
the solemn sanction of Him who said "Do  
unto others as ye would that they should do to  
you" and who pronounced the penalty of his  
wrath against him who neglected <sup>his</sup> duty  
to his fellows.  
~~he prescribed~~ "As ye did it not unto one of  
the least of these, my brethren, ye did it not unto  
Me!