

1901

# The social value of the clergyman

---

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/48038>

*Downloaded from DSpace Repository, DSpace Institution's institutional repository*

1901

—The—  
—Social Value—  
of  
—The Clergyman.—

---

Ernest Clyde Wareing

*Ernest C. Waring*

THE SOCIAL VALUE  
OF THE  
CLERGYMAN.

- o - o -

The specialization which the christian ministry demands is unparalleled. The functions of its office are performed in the highest realm known to man. Its requirements call for the unqualified adherence of the will, demanding an unwavering purpose based upon a deep, heart-searching conviction. Its obligations pertain to the most sacred ordinances of life. Its duties are representative, on the one hand revealing the divine solicitude, on the other unveiling the dependence of the human soul. Only in response to a special call would one presume to take up its duties, or attempt to perform its obligations. For whoever hears that call must stand alone, with a perspective of this world which diminishes its proportions, by relating it to an infinite realm and opening for man a future boundless career.

In this representative position the minister as he stands in behalf of men performs the functions of a priestly office, who before God in the presence of the congregation

leads them in their devotion, voicing their contrition in prayer, pleading for mercy in confession, and claiming His favor by promises of obedience. Or in his private devotions as an intercessor bears the interests of men to a throne of grace, laying with uplifted hands upon the mercy seat the iniquity of the human heart and offering the holy aspirations of his own soul as a pledge for the unrealized good in his brothers.

The minister not only performs the function of a priestly office in his representative position, but standing in behalf of God he performs the function of a prophetic office. His own personal communion with God becomes the divine revelation to the human heart, for by the exercise of his office as interpreter his experience proves to be, not special to him, but possible to all. His duties are now social. He is diffusing the life of God, revealed to himself, among men. From his personal touch he rises to social interests, a proper understanding of which, in all their complications, demands the ability of a prophetic Seer. The trend of society and its predominating principles must be ever before him. The interests of society can never weigh heavily upon his heart unless he has a clear perception of the value of the supremacy of righteous-

ness and the subtle influences of iniquity. Then, with a distinct appreciation of the social situation, he becomes the personification of the christian conscience, the embodiment of the better spirit of the times and a prophetic messenger to a wicked and perverse generation.

In the prophetic office is found the social value of the clergyman. Primarily, as the interpreter of life, he stands related to the individual. The necessity for such an office is found in the problems and mysteries of life. In the working out of our destiny we are constantly embarrassed by problems which must be given an interpretation for the practical interests of life. Here the way of progress is often blocked, for destiny has a goal to which all the activities of life converge. Nothing will so dissipate these activities and throw the soul into a listless and indolent condition as the problem of destiny unexplained, or an experience unappropriated by life's practical interests. The mind cannot content itself in limitations. If it is denied the possibility of growth, by constantly facing seemingly unsolvable mysteries, it falls back upon itself and ceases to grow. It must be lead out beyond itself to a realm of infinite possibilities. With a divinely commissioned interpreter every element of God's creation falls

into its proper place and the mind comes to a satisfactory understanding of every thing necessary for its growth.

The individual nature demands a satisfactory interpretation of experience. The completeness with which this demand is met determines the value of the prophetic office.

Life's experiences themselves are prophetic. Each one portends the coming of another and conceals within itself the likeness of its immediate successor and the shadow of its innumerable progeny. Since experience is not an indifferent factor in the destiny of life, but is rather the strongest element in its determination, it becomes necessary that we understand everything which it presents and relate it according to its value for the progress and retrogression of life.

The stages of life's experience were intended to be progressive, from infancy and childhood, with their immunity from moral obligation and development of physical possibilities, to the age of adolescence, with its completion of growth, reconstruction and adaptation of parts to new functions and powers, when the moral will appears, with the consciousness of desert and begins the struggle for the moralization of life; unto manhood and old age when the full powers are possessed and

a gradual awakening reveals the illimitable powers within, which make

"- - - progress, man's distinctive mark alone,  
Not God's, and not the beast's: God is, they are,  
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be."

Each advancing step in these three stages has its manifold experiences, which demand an interpreter. The adolescent in the midst of his struggles, with his changing physical nature, burdened with the consciousness of sin and overwhelmed by the mysteries of life, which press upon him in his mental change. needs, to guide him safely through, the counsel of one whose insight into life is deeper than the human ideal, or ethical conception and comprehends the fundamental significance of life's experience in its relation to the eternal welfare of the soul.

It is in this stage we find the crisis of life. The pastor will prove his value to the individual unit of society by safely meeting the demands of this crisis. With his general bearing of self mastery, high ideals and lofty thinking he can make himself of inestimable value to the youth, when the first consciousness of sin throws the soul into the gloom of self condemnation. And when the struggle begins to throw

off this morbid consciousness he can with his wise counsel turn the conflict into the soul satisfying endeavor for the moralization of life by showing that this continued period of the sense of guilt is the strongest call of God to a righteous life and that the physical and mental changes are in the natural order of things preparing for a broader and more useful life. With this interpretation of his struggles and experiences, the adolescent gains a grip on life which lends patience and gives full exercise to the better elements of his nature. Manhood finds him in possession of all his powers, while he contains for society a heart full of sympathy for the weak and a conscience strong in its condemnation of unrighteousness.

A healthy state of the individual element in society is maintained by the constant influence of the man with spiritual perception. The clearest discernment of moral and spiritual influences is not possessed by the mind taken up with the busy affairs of this world. Only to him whose contemplation upon divine things and communion with God has quickened his spiritual perception do these forces appear in their true relation and nature. Upon the prophet must the individual depend for the interpretation of experience in the light of God's far-



reaching purpose for the destiny of man.

The value of the clergyman to the collective element of society is primarily that of a messenger from God. As a prophet thrilled with the impulses of deity he brings a message of supreme worth for the times in which he lives. He is the embodiment of the spirit of the times. He is as close to the heart of society as he is to God. Indeed he finds that the closer he gets to the heart of things the clearer becomes his vision. He is not dependent upon any subjective ecstasy. He looks not to his own nature, nor waits for the coming of divine impulses. The world of men where God dwells brings to him the thrill of deity. In it he finds his atmosphere, his universe. His religion is not personal tending ever towards rancid morbidity, but glows with interest in the social life of his brothers. He lives in the open air where the fresh breezes fan stagnation from his blood and thrill him with a call to life and light. His message is never out of touch with events. With prophetic insight he reads written upon the heart of society its great need. In the light of his understanding he becomes a fit subject to bear God's message. He speaks because he sees. He comes not as an interpreter for he bears not the message given to another. He has from God a message direct,

which needs no interpretation. He speaks in no uncertain language, but burning with a deep conviction, he fearlessly performs his mission.

The nature and value of his message determines the function of his office. For the nature of his message is determined by the social conditions. It would appear, at first, that a message might be conditioned by the state of the heart, but a message to the collective element of society is never an interpretation, which it must always be if bearing any value to the heart life. Although God speaks direct to the human heart His prophetic message must be an interpretation of the Prophet's own experience. The mode of procedure in the performance of the duties of his office is determined by the social conditions. The three conditions of society disintegration, reconstruction and development demand respectively warning, counseling and confirming. These are the determinant elements. They cannot be resisted by a responsive heart and the fineness of perception which complete the requirements of the prophetic office. All other influences are inhibited. The power to choose an alternative seems to be denied. The mind chooses its course, because it is drawn, rather than forced, to throw all of its

powers into gaining one definite goal, to surrender to the pre-dominance of one purpose, to the heralding of one message conceived by a far reaching, heaven-born conviction.

The value of the prophetic message depends upon its relation to the essential elements of the social mind. The immaterial nature of society demands a spiritual point of view for its understanding. Although its material elements have their value yet they do not comprise what we call society. We recognize a mental and physical nature. And as the body does not form our estimation of the man, so our great social values are based on spiritual considerations. When we pass from the individual to the aggregate we find diffusion of the mind of the unit. The emotional nature seems to form the nervous system, sympathy the means by which sensations are carried, aspirations and wants the nervous force, the will gives way to the social instincts, which control the natural changes of the social order. The demand for movements of the social body from the regularly pursued course is met by some individual seizing the directive power and becoming the will of the aggregate.

The social mind is maintained and performs its function by imitation and suggestion which are to it as sensations to the brain. By this process the mind of the aggregate

is sustained at a maximum consciousness. In order to produce conditions favorable for suggestion, disaggregation of this consciousness must be affected.<sup>①</sup> This can only be accomplished by personality. Since the intensity of personality is in inverse proportion to the number of aggregate men the demand for a disaggregated personality reveals the prophetic messenger of God as an absolute necessity and supreme value for the direction of the social mind.

The ethical aspect of the social mind we call conscience deals rather with the general than the details of ethical problems. In its activity it maintains an unstable degree of force, for the continuity of a high tension can only be sustained by increasing, or ever changing the number of its related objects. It is primarily related to personality, for here only can ethical responsibility rest. Not only is the possibility of its activity decreased in direct proportion to the submergence of personality in the aggregate, but when violated it seeks the personalities of the group, or, one in whom the elements of leadership are found and places responsibility. The value, then, of the social conscience depends upon the activity of a disaggregated personality, which, being free, acts under ideas suggested by social and individual conditions.

① Sidis'  
Psychology  
of  
Suggestion.

In the midst of any impending social crisis it is the providential plan to send a divinely commissioned personality, who being free, is influenced by forces that cannot affect the aggregate body, but which suggests lines of social activity to his untrammelled conscience, which must be carried out, even at the greatest cost to himself and society. This isolated personality by his claim of divine authority gains the attention of the social consciousness. He gives voice to its own thoughts suggesting lines of activity; produces disaggregation, which prepares the way for his message to raise the social mind to its maximum, where action only is possible. This opportune moment he seizes, and diffusing the thoughts which thrill himself he usurps control, leading society to repudiate unrighteousness and to stand consenting by while her prophets are slain.

The value of the clergyman to the institutional element of society is primarily that of a Seer. The value and necessity for his office is determined by the immaterial elements of the social structure. Although man as a social being is conditioned by a twofold environment, material and personal, the essential element is that of personality, which operates in the aggregate body, under the law of social solidarity. For

society is not a body in the sense of an organism, part fitting to part and responding in the unwavering accuracy of law, but rather a result of preconditioning natural forces, by which the individual under the aggregative instinct adapts himself to an environment of personality. This associated life produces institutions, which are the result of psychical processes and manifest some particular end demanded by special combinations of mental forces. These institutions, in turn, become the means by which the mental processes maintain their continuity as social psychological elements,

while the institution <sup>itself</sup> reveals its true relation and value to society in its functional aspect. This value ethically considered must be sought for in a continuous history, for institutions do not reveal their moral influence, until they have well established themselves, and even then, their ethical character may be so indeterminate, that the untutored mind is unable to pronounce upon them. Never-the-less a natural understanding of moral values is necessary for the continuity of ethical action and the moral nature demands that light be thrown upon the ultimate results of action before progress is possible.

Not only does the psychological basis of social institutions supply the necessity for the prophetic Seer, but the underlying purpose of society, found deeply rooted in man's spiritual nature determines his supreme value. This purpose has as its aim the moralization of life<sup>(1)</sup>, which proclaims the trend of society as progressive, the unit advancing by ideas, the aggregate by ideas embodied in institutions. For social evolution is not from one plain to another, as from base to summit, but rather by adaptation to new conditions and modification for changing environment, through institutions. There must then be in society a progressive element, which is ever increasing and finds in new conditions and environment its ever expanding life. The struggle through which the individual passes in moralization reveals this element. While our moral freedom with its implication of possible evil supplies the two elements for action, one the energy, the other the stimulant. For in any contemplated procedure we have the choice of alternatives. The moralizing choice demands the strenuous life, causing a protest from the material nature, which manifests itself in the perverse will. Simply as a protest it remains a stimulant for action, when it becomes the source, then evil results and the protest of the moral

will becomes the stimulant. The alternation between the moral and perverse will produces two currents of life in the social body demanding conditions and environment to which society must adapt and modify her institutions.

These currents of life produce respectively two social orders, the natural and moral. In the natural order instinct controls all procedure. The aggregative instinct adapts and modifies institutions to social conditions, working with a purpose of sanitation, defecating the healthy state by aggregating the unsocial elements, where contact, competition and localization will produce putrefaction, extermination and disappearance. Utility considerations then determine the value of an institution. If it meets the demand of the social conditions its unmolested continuance is assured, for there is no call upon it to assist in changing the order which necessitates its existence.

In the moral order reason adapts and modifies institutions to social conditions with a purpose of medication. The aggregative instinct still separates the unsocial elements for sanitation but with a quarantine purpose. For the moral order progresses by extenuation rather than extermination.



The sacrifice of the energy and interests of the healthy for the diseased element is the moral process of inoculation and sterilization, on the one hand, and regeneration on the other. In this order then ethical considerations determine the value of an institution. For the moral demands upon an institution are to serve ethical purposes by conserving constructive and regenerative forces.

Since in the natural order instinct is the controlling power, the directive will asserts itself in the moral order. And since the social will embodies itself in the disaggregated individual we must look for a moralizing personality as the supreme demand of the moral will. The social function of this personality is that of observing moral symptoms and conceiving remedial resources. As a Seer with penetrating perception infirmities in the social body are quickly discerned and reported to the social mind. Adaptation and modification then, begin the work of correction and reconstruction through remedial institutions. The Seer then, becomes of value to the institutional element of society, in as much as he meets the demand for a disaggregated moralizing personality, who with prophetic intuition discerns the portending

results of moral forces and conceives those institutions which will perpetuate a perfect uniformity in the social body.

The clergyman in his threefold social value occupies that relation where by society reaches its full development in God. Paul tells us that the individual completes himself in society and society in God. The moralization of the individual is facilitated by the assistance of an interpreter of life's experiences; it is achieved by the rationalizing of life's forces; and completed by the unification of individual interests with those of society. The moralization of society is the perfect unification of its elements in God's twofold relation of immanence and transcendence, by which He maintains the world and directs its unfolding processes. In the accomplishing of this divine purpose God uses an anointed personality in whom He can embody the message of His transcendent will and in whom His immanent presence in the social consciousness may find recognition. Thus incarnating Himself in a human personality once again may we hear the Master say, "As my Father hath taught me, I speak."