

## THE SOCIOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF THE MINISTRY

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Under the name of the priesthood the religious class has had a history as old as the immemorial traditions of society itself. Wherever a religious cult can be found there the religious class will be found also.

Not only is the religious class old, but it has also been powerful in history. It has been the peer of the military class. If neither has been able universally and permanently to dominate the other, neither has been able to get along without the other, and both have from time to time made the lower classes dependent upon them. Among some tribes and nations the priestly class has notoriously stood for selfishness, for corruption and for superstition. These cases may, however, be passed by as instances of abuses from which even so noble an influence as the priesthood is not exempt. More characteristic is it to say that the priesthood is an active and interested sharer in every phase of national life. It goes with the people to war and it celebrates the proclamation of peace. It stands sponsor for the monarch as he governs and for the people as they follow their various industries. Their humblest occupations and their noblest aspirations are known and shared by it.

Historically the priesthood has been a well differentiated body, a group, an organization, a sociological unit, performing its sociological function as such. Similarly the Christian ministry is something more than a mere aggregate of individual preachers, isolated missionaries, and Christian workers in separate fields. They whose field is the world and whose mission in life it is to serve their fellowmen constitute a body, a corps, a social unit, having characteristic functions as such, exercising great power as such.

Whether we include the larger body of Christian workers or the smaller body of ordained ministers, the organization of the class is not a mere analogy. It is something real. The medical profession, loose as its organization is, succeeds in maintaining and enforcing a professional code of ethics among its members by no other means than the threat to disfellowship those who

violate it. The legal profession is organized and has its code of ethics, and the National Bar Association is a body of recognized influence. The National Educational Association and the American Historical Association are bodies of teachers and students which by the simple means of membership fees, the circulation of literature, and the holding of annual conferences, inspire their members with professional enthusiasm and accomplish educational reforms of no slight importance.

The modern Christian ministry is not a body like the Brahmins, the sacerdotal caste of the Hindus; nor like the hereditary Levitical priesthood of the old Jewish nation; nor yet is it like the celibate priesthood, that powerful agent of the Roman Catholic Church. Christianity is emphatically propagandic, and we must look for an adaptation of the means to the conditions with a view to the accomplishment of the great end. The Christian ministry is democratic. It draws its constituents from the people at large. Membership in it is voluntary; none are constrained to enter it by any other force than the sense of their own duty. Its members distinguish themselves from members of other social classes no more than these do from each other; the nature of its duties requires a sobriety of conduct, a purity of thought, and a spirituality of soul not required of the others. Yet the ideal of the class is not to emphasize and perpetuate these distinctions, but to lessen them; not, however, by becoming like other men, but by teaching them—regardless of occupation—to cultivate purity and spirituality. In point of method, also, the modern evangelical denominations stand in contrast with the authoritative hierarchical organization of past times. Instead of the coercive power that can compel men there is substituted the force of rational and moral conviction which mightily disposes men to will to do that which reason, morality and religion approve. If there is an element of weakness in that men cannot be ecclesiastically compelled to conform to the codes of civil, moral and religious conduct recognized by Christians, there is an element of untold strength in the assurance that a man who acts from conviction adds the weight of his influence to that social force which he would deplete were it necessary to exercise it in compelling his obedience;

and there is in addition the sublime confidence in that harmony which must exist between God's nature and law and that expression of them in finite terms, comprehensible to human minds, which we look for in the fundamental principles of religion.

Again, as to the scope of the interests which Christian workers and the ordained ministry especially may properly cherish, there is much more to be said than there is here either space or occasion to say. If there is a fallacy in the argument of the Pope, there is also a rich suggestiveness in his claim as head of the church universal that the monarchs of the world are the bounden agents of the church, holding the inquisitorial power of administration and the temporal power of the sword at his service for the discipline of heretics and the conversion of the pagan. If our religious conceptions are right they are fundamental, comprehensive and exclusive. Nothing which is inconsistent can be tolerated; nothing which could be looked upon as indifferent can be allowed unless it conforms. So all matters that pertain to society and to individuals must be tested by our religious ideas, to be sanctioned or prohibited by them, the amenities of social intercourse, the rules of industrial activities, the diversions that occupy the hours of relaxation, the principles of government, the standard of public and private morals; none of these may be sanctioned if it conflict with the development of Christian morals and spiritual religion; all that are sanctionable must conform to and contribute substantially to this development.

It would be superfluous in this connection and it would lead us aside from our purpose to discuss in detail whether and how we can find religious sanction for the current code of moral conduct and social intercourse and the current political and industrial institutions. Two things only it is within the scope of this paper to discuss: first, whether, proceeding scientifically, with minds entirely neutral, open and uncommitted, we can trust the principles of social science to lead us to put the same high value on the work of the Christian ministry, on morality, religion, and spirituality, that we put upon them, proceeding from the standpoint of religious institutions and biblical revela-

tion; secondly, whether or not science has anything helpful to suggest in the way of analysis which will enable us the better to appreciate the adaptation of the Christian ministry as a means to the ends we seek through it, or in the way of new methods or of convincing argument that will promote our ends and confirm our results. If, as we firmly believe and assume, there is an essential harmony between God's nature and being and the works of His universe, then science, which is essentially a method for increasing our knowledge and comprehension of that harmony, should help us to a deeper appreciation of it. If it has contributed so much in the domain of things material and things social already, may we not with confidence still use it?

First: It is an accepted function of the ministry to teach the Bible; and science supports and confirms the Christian view of its importance.

Is there anywhere in history or philosophy, physics or metaphysics, a body of moral truth more helpful, more important to mankind than is contained in the Christian Bible? Magnify the noblest thoughts of profane writers as we may, neither Shakespeare nor Browning, Ruskin nor Carlyle, has a message that will compare. Neither the Confucian nor the Buddhist nor the Mohammedan system can afford a satisfactory substitute for that system which begins with the revelation of monotheism to the Hebrews, and concludes with the atoning sacrifice of Christ on Calvary for the sins of the world, Jew and Gentile alike. Before a body of Mohammedans, of Buddhists, of pagans, of materialists, of atheists, the proposition would have to be supported by a line of vigorous argument. What the Christian preacher takes for the axiom of his life a man predisposed by birth and tradition and training to another system will with difficulty be brought to admit. It would be necessary with him to resort to the methods of science because they are neutral and common and accepted by both Christian and non-Christian. It would be necessary by long analysis to ascertain what these systems of philosophy purported to offer and what human needs they purported to satisfy. It would then be in order to show that the Christian system recognizes

the same and even nobler ends and offers a more satisfactory answer.

In passing let it be noted as an encouraging sign of the times that the Bible is coming again to be studied as perhaps it has not been studied since the days of the Reformation, when Coverdale and Tyndale and the King James translators placed it, printed and in the vernacular, before a people hungry for its precious truths. Bible study has been reintroduced into college curricula and college Y. M. C. A. courses. Bible and mission study classes are numerous and earnest and devout. Surely the revision of the King James version and the application of ripe scholarship to Biblical interpretation has contributed to this result. Have the new methods of literary study which have been introduced into our classrooms within the last fifteen or twenty years been put to their best and fullest use when they have helped us to interpret the literature of the Elizabethan age, the stirring liberty literature of the period of the French Revolution, and the literature of the Victorian age with its message of social reform? Prof. Moulton would say not, and in demonstration of his opinion has edited the *Modern Reader's Bible*. Taking the accepted text of the revised version without theological note or doctrinal bias, he has treated the Holy Scriptures as he has treated less sacred literature. He has given it a modern literary form, dividing it into paragraphs, separating episode from episode, giving to each its distinguishing title: be it the genealogy of David; the census of the tribes; the orations of Joshua; the song of Deborah; the prophecies of Ezekiel; or the apocalypse of John. He has invited us to study Job as we would study Browning, to study the Psalms as we would study the sonnets of Wordsworth and the lyrics of Tennyson, the prophecies of Isaiah as we do the biting criticisms of Carlyle, the gospels and epistles as we do Ruskin and Matthew Arnold. Is this reducing our sacred literature to the level of the profane? Is it not rather applying a method which we have tried successfully upon profane literature to the nobler work of helping us interpret the fullness of meaning in the Scriptures? If by this method we can get ennobling thoughts out of Shakespeare, Browning, Wordsworth,

Ruskin, Carlyle, George Eliot and Matthew Arnold, shall we doubt that by the same method we can get profit out of the literary study of the Bible?

A second function of the ministry is to evangelize.

Christ's commission to His disciple's to evangelize the world is specific, abiding and imperative. The work enjoined by this supreme authority will not be complete when the gospel has at last been preached to the remotest heathen. It will have to be continued as long as there remain unconverted at home. As often as generation shall succeed generation and the years of infancy shall pass into years of discretion and judgment it will have to be renewed. So long as it is demanded that a man shall consciously, as an act of will, repent, be converted, turn his back upon unworthy ideals, and set his heart upon godliness, even so long must there be earnest, persistent, unremitting evangelization. Even so long must there be Isaiahs standing in the high places to denounce: "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help." Even so long must there be John Baptists crying in the wilderness: "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance and begin not to say among yourselves: 'We have Abraham to our father.'" Even so long must there be Pauls reasoning "with them from the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus . . . is the Christ."

It is almost appalling to reflect how many there are now enjoying the blessings of what we may properly call Christian civilization who, rejecting godliness, persist in wickedness and unholiness. If the principles of Christianity mean as much for men in the world as the Christian realizes they mean for him and believes they mean for others, his sense of social duty, *noblesse oblige*, will compel him to preach the gospel, a dying man to dying men.

Thirdly, it is the mission of the ministry to promote spirituality in Christian life.

Spiritual-mindedness is not valued and cultivated as it should be. One phase of evangelistic work seems to discredit it. "By grace have ye been saved", is the burden of evangelistic preaching, thereby expressing a great and fundamental Chris-

tian truth. "By grace", "through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." The blood of Jesus Christ and the grace of God are sufficient to save any who will believe. This is a fact; and a tremendously great and gracious fact to the repenting reprobate in the eleventh hour of his earthly existence, when his excesses in wickedness are bringing him down prematurely to the grave. But it throws for the moment into the background another religious truth, equally fundamental and of immediate practical importance throughout the long life of the child religiously trained by Christian parents or of the man converted to God in the prime of life.

It is agreed by all Christians and practically by all philosophers that man has a threefold nature: physical, intellectual and spiritual, that he has both a mind and a soul in his body. Now it is a matter of common experience and observation that he can develop both mind and body. It is recognized as an obligation with a moral sanction that he should cultivate both. If now the soul of man partakes, as we believe, of the nature of God, who is Spirit, we cannot by analogy consent to believe it to be so insignificant part of ourselves as even Christians by their conduct seem to make it. Is the spiritual faculty to remain uncultivated, undeveloped, until the decay of the mortal shall set the immortal free? Is there nothing in the world of to-day, no pleasure in living on God's earth in the midst of His works, among men whom He has created in His own spiritual likeness, which we could enjoy through our spiritual nature here as well as hereafter if we but set out to develop it more?

No doubt spirituality is a difficult virtue to cultivate. The Hebrews not only had the advantage of teachings which God revealed through holy men, but he himself appeared to them in theophanies and taught them. Yet would they not hear and learn. Their history is one long series of relapses into idolatry, superstition and formalism. It is sad, but it is significant that such was their experience; and human nature has not changed so very much since. The very virtues of our modern civilization seem to hinder the growth of spirituality. Men are constrained to live honorably, deal justly with their neighbors,

and give generously out of their abundance in benevolence not only by the precepts of religion, but also by the obligations of public esteem. But with that we are too well satisfied. The constraint stops short of the obligation to cultivate spiritual-mindedness as a supreme virtue.

The spiritual nature ripens and mellows slowly and men come to wear it naturally only after long experience in cultivating it. Yet it is properly reckoned an important qualification for the calling of the ordained ministry. Spirituality is power. Therein lies the strength of those Christian workers, neither sensational nor eloquent, who draw men, busy men, worldly men, hardheaded, unsentimental, intellectual men to sit at their feet and hear the simple gospel preached. In this age of boasted morality the thing which is most rare among Christians is spirituality. It is the thing most needed to convince the world of the reality of religion, because without it religion is insufficient to convince and with it religion would be complete; for it is the logical crowning part of the Christian philosophy of religion.

Again, fourthly, the minister, the Christian ministry as a class, is the great champion of morals and teacher of righteousness.

Pilate asked with a sneer: "What is truth?" In the same spirit might such an one ask: "What is right?" seeing how different people insist on calling different things right when it would appear reasonable that only one thing can be right under given circumstances. One standard of right and wrong is the law of the state. Another standard is public opinion, with which in the long run the laws of democratic states must coincide. With formalists the presence or absence of a thing in the *index rerum prohibitorum* is sufficient to decide. This spirit of formalism was rebuked many times by Christ, notably when he defied the Jewish law regarding Sabbath observance in such a way as to make it plain that it is the fitness or unfitness of the means to the end which makes the means right or wrong. He thus put the responsibility upon us and left it for us to decide by reason, instructed intellect and enlightened conscience what is right and what is wrong. Surely there are



many reasons why we should have the responsibility of deciding for ourselves; otherwise we would become the slaves of an unchanging rule in the midst of changing conditions. The idea would be absurd and the reliance would weaken the moral fiber of our character. This being the case, we see the important function of the teacher of morals. Those who presume to instruct us as to our moral standards must be the most discerning in knowledge, the most discriminating in judgment, animated by the broadest, noblest, purest motives and most refined and spiritualized conceptions of God's nature. Not only will they be called upon to set the ideal standard by which to guide the conduct of the individual Christian; they will also have to indicate that which shall be made the standard of discipline in our churches. They will have to set a higher standard than the common opinion of the public around them or than the law of the state will recognize. They will be called upon to oppose and denounce the public standards in the pulpit and in the market place too; and in so far as by their efforts they can strive to raise them.

It may be assumed as the fundamental basis of Christian morals that the moral laws enjoined in God's word are not arbitrary injunctions, the mere sport of omnipotence commanding because it must be obeyed. Surely there is reason and justice in God's decrees. Surely his moral laws are such as conform to the great purposes of His universe. Things are right because they promote, and wrong because they interfere with, his all-wise fatherly purposes. If His universe is one and all things in it make for the upbuilding of His supreme ends, things in it are to be judged according as they promote these ends. Are we not justified in positing the development of the race as the immediate and the perfection of the individual as the ultimate end? And may we not lay it down as a practical principle and working hypothesis that things are right or wrong according as they contribute to these ends?

Roman Catholics have made marriage a sacrament. Protestants give it the sanctity of a religious rite and throw the protection of religious obligation about it. Now it is notorious that the state has declared marriage a civil contract and as such void-

able for a large number of causes specified. So long as public opinion sanctions and the state is prepared to grant divorce for minor causes it may be safely assumed that there will be those who will take advantage of the opportunity lightly to dissolve the marriage bonds regardless of the teachings of Christian moralists and the discipline of the churches. The situation is a real and a serious one, and the issue must be faced. Let the moralist beware of destroying his opportunity to exert an influence for good by denouncing divorce dogmatically and arbitrarily, simply on the ground that it is forbidden by the Bible, an authority which, from the circumstances of the case, it is evident that the community does not regard on this point. Rather let him assert his confidence that the prohibition is in the Bible because it is founded in the reason and the eternal fitness of things for the good of the race and the good of man. Let him therefore respect it and exhort others to respect it. Stooping to conquer, let him state the proposition—which will be generally accepted—that practices against public welfare must be discountenanced and prevented. Then the issue can be joined directly on the question whether the practice of divorce and the remarriage of divorced parties, as now permitted by law, does or does not come under the rule. Let the question be studied scientifically to find out. The family is a social institution of prime importance. Its importance for the nurture and education, the industrial, moral, religious and spiritual training of the new generation is plain. Is its efficiency menaced by the present practice of divorce? Are divorces growing more frequent? Are there other deleterious influences exerted upon public morals by the practice? Does not the New Testament condemnation of them point to some consideration, perhaps not readily appreciated by us at present, which ought to be recognized and which, being recognized, would plainly justify the prohibition? The National Divorce Reform League has long been at work agitating the question. The practice of many ministers and churches and denominations is strongly pronounced in favor of the stricter and higher morality. Public sentiment seems to be ripening and attaining to the same conviction. Let us urge our convictions with the

force of all the evidence and argument which we can command in the name of mankind and mankind's God; and let not the slowness of the progress and the occurrence of many obstacles discourage us and deter us from our efforts.

The same is true of the liquor traffic. The law of the land regards whisky as property and protects it as jealously for its owner as it protects those other articles which the conscientious moralist will consent to own. The law declares the liquor traffic legitimate under certain conditions and as plainly protects it within those limitations as it penalizes severely those who exceed the limits. Surely there are many who think that the manufacture, sale and ownership of liquors ought to be limited still further. The common basis for determination, the only effective criterion, is public welfare. Cultivate a sensitive discrimination not only as to what contributes to public welfare, but as to what contributes to the highest and most refined public welfare. Then devote your best energies to showing how seriously the public welfare is involved, and in due time the public sentiment that has provided for denying his liberty to the man who steals, and for punishing capitally the man who murders with malice and premeditation, will surely stop the liquor traffic. This is not putting morals and righteousness on a low plane. It is assorting arguments which will convince according to the intellectual and moral limitations of those whom we would convince in order that we may so win them to the support of our higher ideals.

In the matter of the liquor traffic it is now more apparent than ever that the moralist has a great ally in economics. Men who have property and business interests at stake are coming to recognize that those men are the most reliable servants whose moral habits are good. This appeals to the lower, selfish ends. But it is very effective because these ends can be appreciated by people who are not yet prepared to appreciate the broad public ends and to cherish the highest motives.

There are also social diversions and pleasures and many other things that, not necessarily wrong, may easily be abused or used to mislead others.

I have often been much interested and instructed in studying

the paradoxes of the Bible. There are principles which are antithetical, contradictory. Yet each restricted to its proper sphere of application is rich in admonition and wisdom. "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate" is one. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till all was leavened," is another. They point to two fundamentally different conditions and indicate the action appropriate to each. The one points to certain things which the sociologist in his terminology designates as unsocial and which the moralist calls demoralizing, irreligious, and despiritualizing. The principle with regard to them is that they must be utterly discarded and cut off, tabooed as unclean. The other contemplates some things that may be quite harmless or neutral in themselves, at least are not so positively bad in character and so actively deleterious in their influence but that by putting the good in contact with them they can be redeemed and made good. To them the propagandic rule applies: Put with them things of the character which you would have them acquire and let them be assimilated. The rule is perhaps especially popular in these days. Our civilization is so high, has to such an extent come to be based on Christian principles, that we are encouraged to go further. It is urged that our religion should not be a thing of the closet or of the Sabbath and public worship only. It should be carried into our business, our pleasures, into everything we do. Christians should not keep out of employments or diversions because the irreligious and immoral abuse them. They should go in, carry their religion with them, and rescue them for high and noble and spiritual uses. This is plausible, it is public-spirited and noble, it is ideal. Amusements and diversions like card-playing, theater-going and dancing; professions like politics and business, in some lines of which conformity to high ethical principles is none too scrupulously observed, are cases in point. The ministry, to which we look for leadership in morals, would do nobly if it could succeed in rescuing some or all of these for high uses. Especially do we need innocent diversions in which we can seek relief from the stress of toil and recreation without deleterious effects. But there

is danger lest the thing which we wish to reform should prove to have the stronger nature and should leaven with unrighteousness instead of being leavened by righteousness. Evidently both principles must be applied concurrently. There are some things which must be cut off utterly because spirituality, religion, morality and the lesser principles of social science unite in denouncing them as anti-social and unholy. Some things we ought to seek to leaven because they are socially and spiritually sound in principle and because we are strong enough to undertake to deal with them. Still other things we must be more cautious in taking hold of now lest they degrade us. Here, as elsewhere, it must be made clear that it is beyond the limits of this paper and beyond the specific purpose in hand to settle these questions. Most of them cannot be settled in a day nor within the lifetime of one generation. Some, if not all of them, will require aggressive campaigning. It is hoped that it will be thought worth the while, since there is a hard battle to be fought, to state the issue squarely. More especially it is the purpose in hand to show that the issue is not an issue of religion and morality for their own sakes alone, as though they were something separate and apart from all forms of worldliness. On the contrary, the issue is a social issue for society and for the good of the individual whose perfecting is to be sought through social means, and of religion and morality as social forces. Finally it is an issue for the ministry to take hold of and lead in by precept and example, not simply as seeking to bring men into conformity to the laws laid down in the Bible, but as showing that society reaches the fulness of its development in the everlasting principles there laid down.

Again, the ministry must be the censor of our social institutions, economic, political, and the like.

When one laborer strikes work, dissatisfied with the wages and conditions of labor and unable to negotiate satisfactory terms with his employer, we say that the principle of freedom of contract applies under which dismissal by the employer or strike by the employe is a sufficient and satisfactory remedy. But when fifty men, 500, 5,000 men, 50,000 coal miners strike, dissatisfied with the hours, wages and conditions of labor and

unable to negotiate a satisfactory settlement with the combined coal mine operators, we find that neither the principle nor the remedy applies. In such cases the strike or the lockout inevitably leads to intimidation, violence, boycott, and great sacrifices by an innocently involved public. In the present organization of industry serious disagreements between aggregated employers and aggregated employes are unavoidable. The aggrieved party in each case will say that it is in a dilemma: it must either submit to an injustice at the hands of the other party or it must resort to methods that are against law, unrecognized by law, and that amount to a modified warfare between social classes. Society has nourished in its bosom an industrial organization which it cannot control. There is need of a remedy. The economist and the statesman must do their parts; there is something for the ministry to do also.

Once again. If a man going alone stumbles he can get on his feet again. If a man stumbles in the midst of a surging crowd it will trample him to death. In the simple conditions of agricultural life poverty is seldom distressing, and by thrift the poor can ordinarily succeed in redeeming themselves from poverty. But to be poor in the city, without work, without health, is to starve; and the honest and industrious and frugal and God-fearing are as helplessly crushed under the industrial juggernaut car as the thriftless. If they are few they suffer and perish and no one hears. If they are many they cry aloud bitterly in their discontent and threaten a social revolution. They deny God, despise religion, and hate the church because God, religion and the church belong to their enemies and join with their oppressors. The situation is at times appalling. Moses of old looked upon the burdens of his brethren and saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, and slew him. "And he went out the second day, and, behold, two men of the Hebrews srove together; and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" and Moses feared. The task may be difficult and perilous, but the conditions must be faced and the issue must be met. The problem is an economic one and the remedy must be economic, no doubt; but the ministry as a

class must participate. The contending classes are industrial; the ministry is neutral and so suited to mediate. The state is looked upon as the protector of property and vested rights and on the side of the property classes; and the standards of justice and the principles of equity which it recognizes are those calculated to protect property. But the ministry is a class which must look higher to find the guiding principles of its conduct and the standards of its judgment. For the sake of society and for the sake of religion as well, the ministry must vindicate the higher law by which it is necessary that men should regulate their conduct in order that man, the noblest part of God's created universe, may by the equity of his rules and the harmony of his social functioning bear witness to the goodness and the holiness of his Creator.

With this thought I close. I have tried to show that science is not simply a body of accumulated knowledge, but essentially a method for ascertaining knowledge. I have tried to show that social science points out the best means for elevating the individual through the development of society, especially since the ideals which the Christian holds dearest all find their proper places among the noblest ideals of social science. I have tried to show that while the individual is but an atom in comparison, the social group of many individuals permeated by a common purpose and stimulated by a common interest is unmistakably great. Moreover, each group has its peculiar and appropriate function. In particular, those men whose glory it is that they have been called by God to the work of the Christian ministry, a great, grand, united, powerful body of workers devoted to social service, are engaged in performing functions—in teaching the Bible, in evangelizing, in promoting spirituality, in perfecting social institutions, and in promoting the highest standards of morals and righteousness—which social science ranks highest. Thus does science magnify this sacred calling.