

may be called the moral conscience of nations is still in a very rudimentary condition.

States, as represented by the policy and action of rulers, diplomatists and statesmen, and by ordinary public opinion, are still influenced and directed in the main by the instincts of self-preservation and self-interest, and all the kindred selfish motives; though we recognize with thankfulness the constantly growing signs that the higher life steadily advances in spite of every drawback.

For while the tired waves, slowly breaking,

Seem scarce one painful inch to gain,

Far back, through creek and inlet, making,

Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

This brings us to the practical and final consideration, how we may best hope to facilitate or expedite this progress; and our thoughts naturally turn in this connection, first of all to the influence of religious teaching, and next to systematic training of the young in the ethics of citizenship, and to the aid which may be given by ethical societies.

What religious teachers and leaders may perhaps be said specially to need in a time of settled and conventional religion, is to realize their prophetic office more clearly and more fully than is commonly done.

In the midst of a highly conventional society it is only too easy to forget that the true office of the religious preacher is to stand forth as the messenger and interpreter of Divine Law in its application to all contemporary activities and relationships, to be a preacher of both individual and national righteousness, like Amos, Micah, or Isaiah, impressing always the ancient text: "That which is altogether just shalt thou do, that thou mayest live,"

and to inspire and lead men to apply that rule to their daily public life, as suggested, for instance, in the fine words of Mr. Gladstone, when he said: "That which is morally wrong cannot be politically right."

Moreover, the prophet is needed in every age, because as a matter of fact, it is through inspiring and uplifting the personalities of the prophetic type that every great forward movement in human history is set going and sustained. Again and again, as we read the record of human advancement, we are moved to say, "See how a great prophet has risen up among men, and God has visited His people," and therefore it is that teachers of religion are especially called upon to cultivate the prophetic office of the Church of God in regard to all the various departments of the common life.

This view, when simply stated in general terms, meets with general acceptance and is even commended and applauded; but when we endeavor to carry it into practice in public affairs it is apt to meet with a different reception.

The prophet, or preacher of righteousness, claiming to base his exhortations or protests on Divine Law, is not, as a rule, a popular character.

The opportunist, whether in church or state, does not like his utterances. The man of prophetic conviction and courage is apt to be jeered at as a tyrant or a prig, or an impractical philosopher, or a sentimental philanthropist; and yet the fact remains that the men of this type, and not the opportunists, are and have always been the true salt of their society, or rather let us say they are the Promethean torchbearers, who bring fresh gifts of Divine fire into the life of men, generation by generation.—The Nineteenth Century.