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THE  
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

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ARTICLE I.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL VALUE OF THE OLD  
TESTAMENT.

BY PROFESSOR OWEN H. GATES, PH. D.

A FEW introductory paragraphs may not be out of place. The writer is not anxious that the treatment of the subject should entitle it to constitute a chapter in a "Science" of Sociology. He will be content if he can suggest how men who are intent on the practical salvation of society can gain inspiration and information by the study of the Old Testament. It is not his fortune to have made a scientific study of the subject of Sociology, as will perhaps appear from what follows. He ventures nevertheless to use the word in the title, and a few times otherwise, in its natural, broad meaning.

In searching after that which will be of practical value, the claim is ventured that he approaches nearer the demand of the day than to aim at accurate scientific perspective without regard to the practical. What is it which has set the schools of the country on the *qui vive* to see which can organize the first or best department of Sociology? Is it the discovery of a new subject for scientific study, like a new element in the sun or a new bug? Not at all. It is the grow-

ing recognition that society needs improvement, the quickened conscience of men on the subject, and a strengthened purpose to aid in the work. This purpose is the wave on which Sociology has risen to its present importance, and it will not wait for the schools to search through the sub-sciences and elaborate the science of Sociology, or for philosophers to coordinate the various social sciences and enunciate a philosophy of Sociology. Vast improvements have been made in the centuries past in the condition of man, and that by men who would have been really nonplussed if they had been challenged to show the "scientific credentials" of their systems.

Moreover, the world need not wait for new discoveries. Society is not in its present state because men are ignorant how it can be improved and must wait until scientific workers have invented some new methods. The fact is, that the great fundamental truths in regard to society are as old as philosophy. That among the researches of Sociology which is novel, may be important scientifically, but that which is practically important to the understanding and control of society, has formed the basis of all missionary, benevolent, and educational institutions which the world has ever seen. It is now and then occurring that views are tentatively propounded as to the underlying defects of society, which have been the stock in trade of theologians since theology was possible. When the human race was young, so says one old and respected authority, there was a crime committed which involved a large per cent of the world's inhabitants. It was a murder. The murderer was at once subjected to an examination. One question only was asked and that sufficed, not indeed to make him confess his guilt, but to reveal that which rendered the crime possible. "Where is Abel thy brother?" The reply was equally short, "Am I my brother's keeper?" That was all, and enough. Responsibility for the well-being of our neighbor—there is no more fundamental truth than that. Re-

pudding of that responsibility underlies the various crimes against society. This incident must possess tremendous force for those who believe that it happened, for it was none other than God himself who thus probed to the seat of the trouble. But there is a class of persons, not all irreverent and some of them good scholars, who do not believe that it all happened as is here stated. This fact may disturb the passage in some of its relations, but its sociological importance still remains; for if it is a legend, it only shows the more convincingly what was the thought of those among whom it arose and by whom it was transmitted as to the correct and incorrect relations between men. It then becomes a very old and important theory of society.

That which is still undiscovered, or even uncorrelated, the lack of which keeps Sociology the science from being perfected is not the vital essential part, but the trifles, the odds and ends. Reformers need not wait for these, and need not apologize to the schools for the unscientific character of their methods. This is not saying that the scientific researches of the schools are valueless or that their results may properly be ignored. On the contrary, the childlike spirit of receptivity of truth which is inseparable from Christian activity will insure a proper estimate of them by every worker in the field of the best social reform. But if the worker will do well to learn from the investigator all that he is ready to teach, on the other hand the latter cannot, if he would be scientific, ignore the work of the former. It is quite right that Chicago University, which is perhaps our most elaborately organized school for the scientific study of the subject, should lay great stress in its announcements upon the numerous charitable organizations of Chicago as affording valuable opportunity for observation and study. There is indeed everything to learn from the study of past and present efforts to reform and purify social institutions. To one such program this paper would draw attention.

The unit for consideration in the Old Testament is the people, and not an individual.

In this respect the Old Testament differs much from the New Testament. It will be seen later that the proper control of society involves a very definite consideration of the individual, but this does not cause the main issue to be obscured, and from the beginning onward the community is that which engages the attention of the Old Testament writers. In seeking illustrations of this fact we will confine ourselves to the Pentateuch, leaving the Prophetic writings to be considered later in another connection. In the quotations from the Pentateuch we will endeavor to observe, not simply the truth already stated, but also the adjustment of the legislation to it.

Long before the actual establishment of the nation whose fortunes are traced in the Old Testament Scriptures, God revealed to Abraham his purpose to make him a great nation. He had called him as an individual, but this call was for the purpose of establishing in the earth a people in which all the nations of the earth would bless themselves. The same promise was continued to Isaac and to Jacob. The nation was established by the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt. The difference between Israel after the Exodus and Israel before the Exodus was a difference not primarily in the relation of the individual to Jehovah, but in the community life which then began. The individuals composing the nation existed before, and the fundamental laws of human nature with which all proper legislation must correspond were their possession before as truly as after that time. It was an epoch for them because new relations were entered into, involving new duties, and new possibilities of blessing. The promises were theirs as a nation and they were to be realized, if at all, in the divinely directed development of their common life. The slaves of Egypt were set free in order that they and their successors as a nation might accomplish a work impossible except under these new conditions.

The new community entered at once into the very closest relations with Jehovah. In the oft-repeated sentiment "Israel is my son, my first-born," God throws his parental protection around the whole people. They receive his care as a unit and they owe obedience to Him, as a child to his father. In these days of pronounced individualism the doctrine here enunciated has largely been supplanted by the later doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood of individual believers, as if there were antagonism between the two. There is none; the older is not made obsolete by the rise of the later; the clearly defined truth that God is Father of a nation cannot be superseded or corrected, though it is very properly supplemented as God's revelation develops.

"I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God." This relation, existing directly between the people and God, was the basis of the commands which he laid upon them. This is clear at every turn as we read the Pentateuchal legislation. The claim that the first-born and first-fruits are his, rests upon the acknowledged claim that the whole nation is his. The ten commandments are expressly justified by a reference to the divine act which brought the nation into existence. "I am Jehovah thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." At the close of the Greater Book of the Covenant the blessings which are promised to the people if they are obedient, are such as will benefit them as a nation, and it is noticeable that many of the commands here and elsewhere in the legislation are of such a character that it must be the organized body which obeys or disobeys.

The sacrificial system furnishes an interesting illustration. Prominent among the provisions for sacrificial atonement for sin are the sacrifices which the nation as a whole must perform. All sins of individuals have their assigned methods of expiation, and in addition the sins of the public are to be acknowledged and atoned for. The motive of even

so individual a matter as purification for uncleanness is found in a reference to the God who brought them out of Egypt, and thereby gave them national existence. He is holy, they must be holy. One who sacrifices to another than Jehovah is to be cut off from his people; for the people have an obligation to holiness and obedience with the performance of which an individual is not to be permitted to interfere. In certain cases failure to inflict the penalty of excommunication will be followed by disaster to the nation. The land which was a continual evidence of divine favor, with which the promises of future prosperity were so inseparably connected that to this day possession of Palestine is looked forward to by many Jews, that same land was to vomit the nation out as it had done the nations before them.

The oft-repeated "I am Jehovah" had for the Jew a much greater significance than for others. Whatever the actual etymology of the name and whenever it was introduced into Israel, the explanation given in Exodus shows that they connected it fundamentally with the establishment of the nation. The idea of Israel as a nation must have risen in the mind as the phrase met the eye or ear. Observe what obligations a single chapter connects with it (Lev. xix.). They should leave gleaning ears in the field; should not steal, lie, nor deceive; should not keep back a workman's wages over night; should not be careless about the bodily infirmities of others; should not discriminate in the administration of justice; should not bear malice or hatred in the heart; should have just weights and measures; should treat strangers as native born. These are the duties that grow out of the thought of God as Jehovah. The laws concerning servants and their freedom at the year of Jubilee are based on the claim, reiterated by Jehovah and acknowledged by the people throughout their history, that they are all servants of God.

The examination might be carried on through the other portions of the Old Testament literature with equally clear

results. The community of Israel, called a nation from the political features of its organization, is the unit with which the Old Testament is chiefly concerned.

Let us note some features of the truth which are of importance. In the first place, this truth that Jehovah chose their nation to be his and especially directed its fortunes, is not a modern theory invented to explain the otherwise incomprehensible course of its history. It was a very practical matter for Israel. It was rehearsed in law and prophecy; it was acknowledged in song and prayer. The nation gloried in it, sometimes in a way they should not. It was their religious belief.

Secondly, this consciousness operated to bind the nation together very closely. Identity of religious views is always powerful as a social bond. But here there was more. This particular belief was especially significant. They believed that their God was theirs in a peculiar sense and degree. No other nation could speak of him in such terms as would describe his relation to Israel. The consciousness of superior privilege, the growing assurance of the power of their God, cultivated the spirit of exclusiveness to be sure, but at the same time bound them more firmly together in society. Theirs was a fraternity. They were alike in God's sight; he was no respecter of persons. Injury done to a fellow-citizen was done to God himself.

Thirdly, the truth intensified their patriotism. Their wars were all crusades, if right at all. Loyalty to their God was the test to be applied to their politics and to public opinion. On the other hand, irreligion, or polytheism, or impure worship of Jehovah, was rebuked by threat of national disaster. Religion and patriotism as we define them, strengthened each other in Israel.

Fourthly, this identity of the religious and secular was real. It was not a mere theory without foundation. The Old Testament doctrine of the divine right of kings was the divine right



to control kings, a doctrine which yields quite different results from that of which we are accustomed to hear. The doctrine was not the device of a king to secure allegiance otherwise refused or reluctantly given. It was not a made-to-order platform set up to work its natural result at some election, and to be forgotten afterward. God and religion were not national in the sense that they were controlled by the people and secular powers, but in the sense that these last were controlled by Jehovah. In our Bibles and perhaps in our thoughts the prophets and kings are widely separated; but not so in fact. The prophets were advisers in public matters. Those who wrote the books bearing their names are but a minority of the Old Testament prophets, and even in the case of this minority the writings were but an incident of their ministry, often an afterthought. Their chief activity was in other lines. Even in the writings themselves there is a very close connection with the kings. There are few kings in the northern or southern kingdom concerning whom there is not extant record that they were advised by some one or more prophets. But if this system was not a fraud perpetrated by the kings, neither was it a fraud perpetrated by the prophets. The uniform and consistent claim through the Old Testament must be regarded as true.

The belief corresponded to facts. God was indeed back of the theory. Jehovah is the same God who is creator and preserver of man and nature, the all-powerful, all-wise God, whom we acknowledge and serve.

We pass on now to consider that the development of the history of Israel according to this principle constituted a sociological experiment. The idea was worthy of a God both in its conception and in its elaboration. A people untouched by a culture which would conflict with their proposed future; marvellously led to a new country whose soil was fertile and climate unimpeachable; the former inhabitants so disposed of (at least so Israel believed), that on the one hand no shock

was given to agriculture, and on the other, no serious interference was offered by them to the continued possession of the country by the newcomers; the aspirants to world-power in the north and in the south so balanced that it was for the interest of both that the new state should be free and independent; wholesome laws given them, made in view of the ideal which was before them, recognized from the first; an unbroken succession of prophets chosen from among the people and so sympathizing with them, and yet speaking with divine tenderness or sternness as occasion required,—certainly here are all the essentials for a successful experiment; such a community should answer its own ideals; here there ought to be loyalty to the common interests and to the common God; each should cheerfully contribute his quota to the common good and might expect to receive divine blessing through the medium of the nation's life. Conceived by Jehovah, the idea was as wise as natural law, which he also formed—as good as was Creation itself.

It failed. The ideal was not realized. The goal was not reached. Or putting it in a way which avoids the anthropomorphism of saying that God failed in an attempt, the people did not stand the test. Surely it is worth while to seek the cause of this failure. The reason given clearly and forcibly by the Old Testament itself is *sin*. There is sin in man. It is in his heart and shows itself in his acts. The institutions which he founds are tainted with it. He surrounds himself with it. It enters into his private plans and public policy. It perverts and defiles every virtue. It warps and twists and rots and withers; no department of human activity is unaffected by it. Here is a factor which is constant in the great problems of society. Climate varies; the diagrams showing changes in density of population, production of gold and silver, in prevalence of crime and insanity, look like mountains and valleys, but no chart is needed to show sin in human nature. Varying conditions require modification of remedies,

but a constant condition has its one remedy; and once found it is always applicable. The one great remedy for sin is a Saviour. To him all Christendom looks back. To him all the Old Testament looked forward. But in the course of preparation for his coming various ideas are developed in the Old Testament which are of utmost importance to the world. A rapid glance at the steps by which the new principle was brought to bear on the community must suffice.

First, the growing recognition of the sociological importance of character.

The leaders of religious and ethical thought in Israel were the prophets. They were the men who were raised up to instruct the people in their duties manward and Godward; and noble preachers of righteousness they were. Preachers, but just as truly patriots; men with a full knowledge of public affairs and with an absorbing interest in them.

What does it signify that we can date a prophecy from internal evidence? It simply means that the prophecy contains such plain reference to the issues, political and social, of the day, that a picture can be drawn of them; and if the state of society be known from other sources, the date of the prophecy may be regarded as reasonably certain.

The prophets were greatly concerned with the welfare of the public; and being so much in earnest, God could and did use them as his spokesmen, commissioned by him to reveal to the people his own thoughts and purposes for them. They had clear vision; God clarified it still more. They were courageous; he augmented their courage, renewed their zeal. Straightforward, frank, bold, they never waver, never appear doubtful however complicated or critical the situation.

The ideal of these prophets was a glorious community, answering to all the promises of God made to the obedient and faithful nation. The people should have a divine king and just laws; happiness and blessedness should be the possession of all. This ideal, however, they saw clearly enough

was possible only after a judgment day, a terrible day of Jehovah which would come and destroy certain forces that were hostile to the ideal, and would prevent its realization. Those forces that would thus prevent the realization of the ideal were the very ones which were recognized as mischievous in the existing society. Well-nigh every sketch of the glorious future for Israel was accompanied by a stern prediction of an awful destiny in store for the wicked.

Now they might have done as some Christians of today; full of faith that Jehovah would ultimately purify society, they might have sat still to wait for that salvation. Or they might have done as some also do nowadays, not all of them Christians, take it upon themselves to execute God's judgment upon those who they think stand in the way of their rights. They did neither. On the one hand, they acted as if God had committed the reformation of the nation to them, as he had; the judgment which they foresaw never relieved them from the duty of working for the welfare of the nation. On the other hand, they were reformers, not revolutionists.

Indeed the judgment was predicted very largely as the natural result of the sins of Israel. True it is represented as being a sovereign act of God, but it was the habit of those unscientific times to ignore second causes and refer all to the one first cause. The prophets used the judgment as a warning against sin. It was one of their arguments to prove that a righteous God required a righteous people.

Let a quotation from Isaiah show how one prophet understands the condition of Israel, the ideal, and the elements which antagonize it and render it impossible of fulfillment.

"Let me sing for my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he made a trench about it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out

a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to: I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up: I will break down the fence thereof and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed; but there shall come up briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry."

The parable is a universal one. Not a feature of it but applies at one time and place as well as another. Man is a free moral agent, knowing no control. He acts out his own pleasure in spite of environment. Hedge him in as you will, you have not tamed him. The most favorable of surroundings will not insure his realizing the expectations of those who seek thus to direct him.

In thus tracing the evil of the community life back to its source in the human heart, Isaiah goes to the heart of the matter. For the rest he has but to describe the outworkings.

Examine the list of offenses with which Judah is charged by Isaiah alone in the course of a few chapters, and see how many are offenses committed directly against the welfare of society. Their religion is perfunctory; they come to offer sacrifices while their hands are stained with blood. The city is a lodging place for murderers. Their princes are companions of thieves. Their magistrates take bribes from those who are guilty, and those who cannot or will not offer bribes are unable to secure their rights. The land is full of silver

and gold, and military resources abound. The nation is puffed up with pride because of its wealth and strength. Idols and idol worship are present and are referred to in the closest connection with the great wealth in which they are confident, as if they thought that, rich as they were, they could have even gods of their own liking. They ape foreign customs which involve abandonment of their own, at once national and religious customs. After predicting the disappearance, in God's judgment of the nation, of the upper, controlling classes in the state, and the assumption of authority by incompetent rulers, Isaiah proclaims that this is the merited reward of their wickedness. Evidently the ill administration of public affairs, a condition constantly alluded to, was leading to the natural result, the elimination of those who were fit and willing to rule; for directly after, the prophet complains again that the rulers and princes were eating up the vineyards, crushing Jehovah's people, grinding the face of the poor and despoiling them.

Isaiah's picture of the women of his day is a classic. They were artificial in dress and manner, loaded with ornaments and trinkets. Was all this sinful? It was sin against God and a wrong against society, that those whose whole influence should have been exercised as guardians of public and private morals, were oblivious of any obligation resting upon them. Those endowed by the Creator with a nature sensitive to religious and moral distinctions were given up to shaking ankle-bells and flourishing mirrors and rings and nose jewels. In the Hebrew, the catalogue of ornaments has a curious rhythmical jingle, and it has been shrewdly suggested that very likely Isaiah incorporates into his own writing a song of ridicule for women, which was current among the wags on the street. Surely society is in a bad way when women have such a reputation.

Immediately after the song of the vineyard Isaiah enumerates several sins involving woe to those who commit them,

sins that may well have occasioned his complaint of the wild grapes which the vineyard yielded. First in order, if not in importance, comes the accumulation of vast landed estates, carried to such an extent that there is no room for others than the few owners, and the land is deprived of its "servants," as the Hebrew calls those who till the soil. What penalty was more inevitable and natural than that the soil should lose its fertility from sheer lack of cultivation, and the palaces become desolate from lack of occupants?

The prophet next rebukes the sin of spending long hours in drinking. "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink: that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them." Thus occupied and thus stupefied, they do not possess the inclination or ability to grasp the significance of providential acts and facts. They "regard not the work of Jehovah, and do not consider the operation of his hands." There is an understanding of nature that is more profound and true than the mere comprehension of natural law. The result for Judah was that the people would go into captivity from lack of knowledge.

Woe to those, Isaiah continues, who are so secure in their sinful careers that they insolently challenge God to hasten his threatened destruction. Others deserve and receive the prophet's condemnation, whose conscience is so out of order that it registers good when it should register evil, so that men actually feel a moral obligation to do that which is really evil, and a conscientious repugnance to do what is in fact good. The prophet closes the series of woes with denunciation of the obstinate and conceited, and reiteration of his denunciations of the heroes of strong drink and the venality of judges. This list of sins perhaps does not read so racily as the recent developments in New York and Chicago, but there is, to say the least, a strong family resemblance between those times and the present.

Isaiah is not unique among his fellow-prophets in his

grasp of the social problems of Israel. A study of the range of prophetic literature convinces us that the prophets held in mind continually the ideal of a community answering to all that is best in humanity; that they analyzed society as it existed and found that it differed from its ideal just as an individual member of it differed from his best possible development, or in other words that social problems were really ethical problems; that it is impossible to force men to constitute an ideal community; and that the way to improve the whole was to reform the individual. Thus there is a growing recognition of the value of individual character as fitting a man to be a member of society. Professor Wilhelm Nowack of Strassburg, in his Rectoratsrede, 1892, writes:—" . . . zu keiner Zeit der israelitischen Geschichte treten uns die sozialen Gegensätze in solche Schärfe und in diesen eigenthümlich ethischen Beleuchtung entgegen, wie in dieser nachexilischen. Freilich haben wir auch schon in der älteren vorexilischen Litteratur Ansätze zu der Umbiegung der sozialen Gegensätze zu ethischen."

Secondly, the relation of the doctrine of the Messiah to this higher estimate of character. The Messianic blessing was to extend ultimately to the whole race. Even from the time of the call of Abraham, when he was singled out from among the nations to receive blessing for himself, the larger hope was expressed that all the nations of the earth would be the recipients, through him and his posterity, of his and their blessings. They were to be a kingdom of priests, and a priesthood exists for others. They should exercise for the nations priestly functions; should be the medium through which God was to bless the race. Isaiah and Micah quote a prediction of a time when all the nations shall stream to Jerusalem, there to learn Jéhovah's ways of peace. The nations shall seek unto the root of Jesse. In Egypt, which shall feel Jehovah's hand heavy in judgment, shall be an altar to Jehovah, and they too shall have a saviour. "And Jehovah shall



smite Egypt, smiting and healing." Assyria also shall worship, forming with Israel and Egypt a triple alliance that shall be a blessing to the whole earth. Zephaniah predicts a pure lip for all the nations, with which they shall call upon the name of Jehovah, making a proposition to serve him. For the exilic and post-exilic prophets this doctrine was a commonplace.

The persistence of this belief in the universality of the Messianic salvation is in contrast to the development in other features of the doctrine. We notice two points, viz., the narrowing of the agent and the heightening of the work. At first there is no Messiah distinguished from the nation. It was the whole people that was to be the channel of blessing to mankind. Then the promises were to the righteous in the nation, and as the doctrine grew the Messiah becomes a single well-marked individual. Coincident with this narrowing of the Messianic agent, was a gain in the content of the Messiah's work. Originally a work such as Israel could do for mankind, now it becomes a work which must be done for Israel as well as for the rest of the race. It still remains true, as before, that the blessing comes through Israel, but now Israel is able merely to transmit the salvation which it has itself received. Only as it is upheld by God and transformed by the work of the Messiah can it accomplish its benign mission for the race. The ideal was so far in advance that of himself man was unable to reach it even for himself. How then could Israel accomplish for other nations the work of securing for them the realization of the ideal of the race? The inability to attain the ideal became clearer and clearer as the centuries rolled on, and the appearance of the Messiah was timed by this growing consciousness. "When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son."

The change in the Messianic work was chiefly a change in its character. It was constantly taking on more spiritual phases. Victory in battles was at first the height of the as-

piration. Then there was added to victory over foes a strong righteous reign of the Messiah which should bring abundant material blessings to his people. Then the peacefulness of the rule, and then the extension of that peaceful rule over other peoples was predicted. In a still further advance, the Messiah is endowed with spiritual qualifications, and this outpouring of the divine spirit testifies to a relation with his people more intimate than a sovereign's and an influence over them more thoroughgoing than would be exerted by a simple ruler, ideal though he might be. The Messiah was to receive, that he might impart, an insight into God's character and an appreciation of his designs. Corresponding with this change in the conception of the Messiah's work, we find the later representations emphasizing increasingly the character of the Messiah.

This development of thought about the Messiah is in entire agreement with the modification, already roughly sketched, in the valuation of the individual and his place and work in the community. There is in the case of the development of Israel, and of the Messianic ideal, the fundamental conception of a community. In both is a community within a larger one, whose function is to bless this larger body. Then the salvation and the blessing concerned assume such proportions and character that a work must be wrought for the community, in the one case by individuals within it and in the other case by a personal Messiah, also within it. The work is more and more a transformation of character, and in both cases this demands corresponding uprightness of character in the individual doing the work.

If the paralleling of these various features seems artificial, the artificiality arises from the attempt to keep separate as two sequences of thought that which is not two but one. The course of the history of Israel, thoroughly studied in the light of divine revelation increasingly bestowed through the centuries, produced in the minds of the best in Israel the profound

social philosophy of the prophets, and the same men, possessed of the same object lessons, made use of the same philosophy in their delineation of the Messianic community of the future. This community was an ideal one; ideal, not merely in the negative implication of the word as unreal; but ideal in that it gathers up the ideas of its portrayers with regard to a community. Messiah's kingdom was a picture of what, in the mind of the prophets, Israel ought to have become. From this fact arises the difficulty often encountered by students of Messianic prophecy, of distinguishing between prophecies truly Messianic and those which are merely optimistic hopes for Israel's immediate future.

The portrait of the Messiah contains all the features of the ideal citizen of a perfect community. Such as he was in character, every one should be who would be a perfect citizen of any community. The Messiah was unique but not in the type of character which he possessed; rather in the degree and perfection in which he exhibited that type. He was depicted as he was by the prophets, because to their inspired vision such was the ideal character, the one which ought to be copied.

Messiah's work likewise shows an identity with that to be wrought by an ideal citizen, although, as above, we must be understood as speaking of the kind, not the degree, of the work. The whole structure of Messianic thought and prophecy is based on the demand for a work on behalf of others. He exists not for himself alone, but for what he can accomplish for those about him. Very little is said in the Old Testament of the personal relations of the Messiah to God, except in this way, viz., that God sustains him in his work, and endows him richly with his spirit for the better accomplishment of his mission. He existed that he might save; he was what he was in character, because to the prophets that was the character which would save men.

We have described though not by name, the much ex-

tolled law of service. The law, Christian though it is, does not take its rise in New Testament times, but rather under the old dispensation. Indeed it forms a convincing proof that the old and the new are essentially one. It appears not as the outgrowth of New Testament individualism, but of the Old Testament collectivism. It is proclaimed because the minds of the prophets dwelt upon the community and its common life and needs.

The Old Testament representations of the Messiah find their climax in the Servant passages of the second part of Isaiah. These passages rise above other Messianic predictions in their descriptions of the Servant, of the service rendered, of those who are benefited by the ministry. No other picture of the Messiah is so complete and satisfactory to us who can test the prediction by the Messiah of the Gospels, as is the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. And yet the attention of the student of these passages is largely absorbed by the difficulty of identifying the Servant as variously presented. It is unfortunate and strange if we cannot determine the essential meaning of the writer. Of course we do not expect to escape doubt as to unimportant details of the prophets' teaching, but at so vital a point and in such essential conceptions ambiguity cannot be excused. If it is necessary to an understanding of these passages to determine absolutely in each several case whether Servant refers to all Israel, pious Israel or the Messiah, then the prophecies are sealed to us until the distinction can be made and accepted as free from doubt. But in fact there does not seem to be any antithesis involved in the predictions. What is in one place predicted of Israel, is elsewhere asserted concerning the Messiah. The sections do not lose in significance, on the other hand there is a great gain in unity of thought and simplicity of representation if we assume that there is really no change in the essential meaning of the word servant; that the prophet recognizes and delineates a certain character; that he regards this character as

Messianic, whether it is seen in one, in many, or in all of Israel, Messianic in that it is indispensable in the members of the ideal community.

The Messiah can be called a servant because to the prophets service was the law of the ideal society. This principle is an essential sociological truth, and it is in the Old Testament that it is found. But a right principle in a wrong place is a calamity, and in this respect also the teaching of the Old Testament is in accord with the profoundest social philosophy. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is in its proper place in the prophetic literature. In the Pentateuch it would be a failure. It is ethical not legal. As expressive of the principle the verb "serve" is not found in the imperative mood, and is oftenest used in the first person. It is God's own law for nature and for society, worthy the attention of the thorough student of social problems.