Old Testament views of the social ethics of work

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Boston University

http://hdl.handle.net/2144/8113

Boston University
BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

Old Testament Views of the Social Ethics of Work

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
1955
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# Topical Outline

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Old Testament Views of the Social Ethics of Work

I. Introduction

It is significant that back in 1908 it was stated in an article on labor, "No thoughtful student of modern problems can fail to note how completely the future of the Christian Church is bound up with her attitude toward the labour question."¹ Many competent observers are pointing out today that the Protestant Churches have lost and are still losing many of the laboring people in this nation. For years, then, this matter has been one to alarm certain people.

In our churches we see persons both among the clergy and laity concerned and honestly confused about the Christian outlook and attitude toward work. This is a concern shared by both well-to-do and average church members.

The writer has been bothered by this social problem as he has seen churches struggling with it in the West Indies and in the United States, particularly in the East and Mid-West. It is one of those problems about which enough has not been written and done. It appears to be, therefore, a subject well worthy of a modest thesis effort.

This effort will be chiefly concerned with outstanding Old Testament views of the social ethics of work. Scripture, scientifically and reverently interpreted, still stands as the cornerstone of the spiritual being of the Christian Church. It is basic to Christian personality. Churches and individuals still committed to this premise

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¹. Hasting's Bible Dictionary, Scribner, N.Y., 1909
are legion. To them and to us the Biblical outlook is of supreme importance and is one of the great guides of our thinking.

The author limits his inquiry to a Scriptural treatment and interpretation of the Social Ethics of Work. Our purposes are simple. We want to know what the Bible teaches about work in order to determine a basis for Christian belief and action by the individual and his church.

The following pages consist of a documentation and an interpretation of Old Testament thought. They constitute the first part of a study that the writer hopes to bring to completion when the time comes for him to expand this Master's thesis into a Ph.D dissertation. Limiting this work to the Old Testament for the present has afforded him the opportunity to make a concentrated analysis and visualization that a wider and broader overview of the whole Bible would have precluded. A careful scrutiny of the first thirty-nine books of the Bible leaves twenty-seven remaining for similar treatment. It is felt that the unity of the bounds of the Old Testament provides the place for a line of demarcation to be drawn. We adhere to tradition and the authority of Scriptural scholarship in this decision. It will be noted that the outline of the Hebrew Canon has been followed.

The proximity of the fine resources of the Milwaukee Public Library to our suburb made it possible to evolve this thesis under nearly optimum study conditions.

All Biblical reading and Scriptural quotations are from The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, Copyright, 1952, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Church of Christ in the U.S.A.
The bibliography listed at the end of this paper indicates the sources of literature which I know to exist on the subject. These books were consulted in order to review my background and to acquire fresh knowledge on the subject. However, it was my intention to depend mainly on the primary materials of the Scripture itself to furnish me with the thought and interpretations I have recorded. I found that the Bible charters ideas and attitudes about work and workers in the Old Testament. Teachings on the subject did exist. Heretofore, I had had difficulty in locating material that singled out and showed, in a rather complete way, where the Old Testament stood on the matter of the social ethics of work. The current interest in this subject in the church shows a renewed desire to gain more information and that many others feel dissatisfied with the scarcity of ready knowledge. It is one of the topics that occupied the attention of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston, Illinois.

The literature I have seen strays away from the key matter of what the Scripture says by getting involved in the manifold implications of what the various Scriptural portions entail in Old World and New World context. It neglects the former for the latter. My purpose has been to do the opposite for the present. I feel the need to photograph and add one picture to the album at a time.

The inductive method has been employed and I have felt bound to say no more than what the accumulation of evidence has led me to state. Therefore, there is little effort to define a consistent philosophy of work nor do I go into the omnibus subject of work any
further than the Old Testament allows me. Existing literature amply
gives theories of the meanings and purposes of work from the vantage
point of a wider and broader point of view, but I have been curious
as to the context of the full Scriptural treatment of the subject.
However, I am acquainted with Oldham, *Work in Modern Society*, and have
seen Forrester's, *Christian Vocation*, and others of the leading works.
(See bibliography) I wanted to probe the Old Testament by chapter and
verse, bit by bit, for myself and it is here that I found existing
literature put me almost entirely on my own. That is why the approach
of the thesis is by necessity largely independent of literature on the
subject of the social ethics of work. Herein is the study I made of
the Biblical books from Genesis to Malachi which led me to reach the
conclusions stated in this thesis.
II. The Old Testament

A. The Hexateuch

The documents of the Hexateuch according to Robert H. Pfeiffer are J, S, E, D, and P. In addition there are a number of poems and legal codes inserted among those five great narrative sources. From a study and survey of the several hundred documentary references we determine some patterns of thought having to do with ethical views of work.

The J Document

We begin with the J story and find that J relates that both Abram and Lot are rich in possessions at this time. They must have worked themselves and others hard in order to reach such wealth. Strife develops between their respective herdsmen. In a planned and orderly fashion Abram and Lot separate. The reason given is that as kinsmen such strife between their workers must not be allowed to incite Abram and Lot to enmity with each other. It is obvious that family codes of behavior and religious scruples dictate that other solutions must be sought.

Further on, Jacob's contact with Rachel at the well indicates, among other things, that work is performed as a matter of course by the high-born as well as the low-born. The account shows us that high-born Rachel keeps her father's sheep.

The same work requirement is seen to be a consistent part of Joseph's life. This favored son of Jacob is also a worker. Evidently
his share of family rewards and favors exceeds what his fellow workers, the brothers, consider to be a just share. Strife and enmity take place when conflict is unresolved.

In Egypt, Joseph's skill as a worker is a prototype of a typical success story. As a manager and administrator he starts at the bottom of the ladder of work progress and thereafter reaches the heights of achievement. He has answers that solve problems and reaps the reward of having the ability to be at the right place at the right time with his skill. The account supplies a characteristic climax of this Horatio Alger tale. In the happy ending, Joseph's ambitious propensities are vindicated. With shame the brothers acknowledge their villainy and Joseph is back in the bosom of the family. He is the hero of his natal group.

But more common work is not without luster. We find support for this contention by quoting Genesis: "You shall say (you) have been keepers of cattle from our youth even until now; both we and our fathers." (Genesis 46:33, 34) To Egyptians, shepherds might be uncouth and low but not to Joseph's and Jacob's people. Menial work is not to be despised or concealed. This is in sharp contrast to people in other cultures—ancient, medieval and modern—where success and status dictate that labor is outside their orbit of activity. J and E share this high evaluation of common work. This is remarkable in view of the fact that further on the text of J shows that the people of Israel put outsiders to forced labor. They, themselves, undergo forced labor. Yet labor does not become despicable. It stays in high repute though often performed alongside of slaves.
Relevant references in J show that work is the democratic concern and duty of all groups. But work for work's sake and pure material reward is not held as valid. It is a means to an end. It serves the end of tribal livelihood and well-being. It is subject to higher values and outside controls. The feats of Joseph as hero in the narrative does not completely parallel modern individual success because in the end he shares his success with the group and achieves his real greatness in so doing. As a matter of fact, he suffers penalty for his extreme individualism and private initiative in that his sons, not himself, are listed among the twelve tribes of Israel.

High placed workers are applauded but common workers, as a matter of course, are accepted with prestige as well. Keepers of cattle are people of respected occupation even as was Joseph in his high positions. The original attitude of Joseph's brothers may not have been pure jealousy but due to his conceited inference that as director of the family labor he held himself as being superior.

Slaves are not demeaned because they work. As persons they do not have full or equal status in the community. Objections to them are other than the fact that they must toil. They are not without rights and privileges. They should not be exploited.

The role of slavery in later Hebrew and Jewish history is tied to these antecedents.

J shows us in Joshua (16:10 and 17:11-18) that the Hebrews think nothing of putting the Canaanites to forced labor. We know from the Exodus account that the Hebrews, themselves, know what it is
to be slave laborers. Later on P tells us that Joshua rewards the Hivites for their cooperation in accepting peaceful conquest by letting them live and making them hewers of wood and drawers of water. Here is social advance, a substitute for massacre or exile. We do not need to go into detail to show that slavery was practiced by the Hebrews who, by so doing, were reflecting a social practice of their time. No evidence shows that slaves were demeaned because they worked. As persons they have limited status in the community. But they are not without rights and privileges and they should not be exploited.

The author of this thesis holds to the viewpoint expressed by Bailey and Kent that the Hebrews developed and practiced many of the democratic ideals that we cherish today. Among a people of whom the following can be said, "Whenever the independence of this liberty-loving group was endangered, each man rose to put down the despot. In time their ideals regarding the fundamental right of man and his duties to his fellows were expressed in definite laws, and all later democratic legislation is largely an unfolding of what is there set forth in principle," we can expect an institution of slavery having qualities of uniqueness. Anyone particularly interested in this problem will find ample mention in the codes, Deuteronomy, and other places in Jewish literature where the holding and treatment of slaves is the opposite of a wanton practice. The Holiness Code commands love to neighbors and also the alien stranger. That kind of attitude must have had effect on even the lowest of slaves. Here is a vision of concern for humanity.

Louis Wallis' book\(^1\) should be consulted by anyone wishing to go further into the matter of slavery.\(^2\) In his sociological interpretation of Hebrew history he reveals that the Hebrew nation was a two class nation consisting of the aristocracy or baalim and low class or abadim. He feels that on the whole question of tribalism and commercialism, of which slavery is a part, that the significance is not in the merits of the social program itself but in the fact that a social struggle took place.

The typical nomadic social group had no class distinction of rich and poor. Equalitarian relationships were maintained because they must endure in order for the group to preserve its morale and existence. But nomadic social morality only related to the tribe itself.

Commercialism tended to base law and custom on property and other possessions. The whole of Hebrew and Jewish history evolved around this basic struggle. Hence there is much contention over the enslavement of kindred fellows. However, some of this "mishpat" benefited alien slaves as there was some sensitivity to their needs and social situations.

Later Hebrew and Jewish history is alive with the ideal that the primitive idea of the "mishpat" of the fathers must be revered and relived.

2. Also consult A Guide to Understanding the Bible by Harry Emerson Fosdick, Harper and Brothers, N. Y. and London, 1938
Old Testament human bondage as well as its counterpart in Judaism included slaves born of Israel along with gentile slaves. We must remember that emancipation from slavery came very recently in history.

We can say that in later Hebrew and Jewish history slavery grew weaker as the ideal of monotheism and brotherhood grew stronger.

The S Document

In contrast with other documents we note the pessimism and determinism of S. Work is a blight and a punishment. "In toil you shall eat of it" (the ground). "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread." "God sent him forth... to till the ground." Here work is a chore and a punishment for doing wrong. It leads to quarreling and even further evil. Abel, the keeper of the sheep, and Cain, a tiller of the ground, illustrate the point. The quality of Abel's work is thought to be better than Cain's. At least a greater value is placed upon it. "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" "If you do not do well..." Personality and sin are related. Successful work is without sin. Differences in qualitative attainment breed differences in rewards and result in discontents leading to bad worker relationships. In the case of Abel and Cain it leads to labor violence and murder.

Society is complex with work relationships. In addition to those who raise flocks or till the ground are those who play instruments (the lyre and pipe) and those who are forgers of bronze and iron instruments.
Noah, it was hoped, would enable improved working conditions to come to pass between God and his people. "Out of the ground which the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hand." (Genesis 5:29)

Here we need to inquire to what extent is work a curse as implied in Genesis 3:19. Genesis 3:19 is part of the S document. The tone of the whole account is that work is a curse. Work is a chore and comes as a penalty for wrongdoing. Original sin accounts for the presence of the necessity to work. Furthermore, the greater the sinning, the harder and less successful the work.

The outlook is one of little hope excepting for the longing, "one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands." Work is God's revenge heaped upon mankind for original sin and upon individuals and groups for wrongdoing. Failure is due to great wrongdoing. Failure is due to great wrongs done and result because of penalty God places on persons.

For those who do wrong (and all are heirs of wrong doers) there is little chance of escape from the terrible destiny of hard work.

Work as sheer toil is peculiar to the S document and appears also in Ecclesiastes and Wisdom literature.

In the Old Testament as a whole, work is generally regarded as good. This concept of work is characteristic of the best of Old Testament thought. The attitude of work as a curse is a departure from the main evidence of the Old Testament. We could infer that the fact that this negative idea appears at all reveals that such a belief was more
widely held than the record discloses. However, it is most unlikely that it was a prevailing belief and so we hold with Richardson.1

"The teaching of the Old Testament on the subject of work may be summed up by saying that it is regarded as a necessary and indeed God-appointed function of human life ... Men should accept it without complaining and thus fulfill ... the intention of the Creator for human existence ... The basic assumption of the biblical viewpoint is that work is a divine ordinance for the life of man ... a part of the divinely ordered structure of the world and of human nature."

We see that the positive interpretation of work characterizes the Old Testament narrative and the negativism of S and the few similar sources are not widely representative.

The E Document

In E we see work as the divine means by which God gives His people the opportunity to gain the necessities of life through their labors. One's work is worthy of recognition and payment. It is other than a burden. It is the means to individual and group survival.

Here we find Jacob is plagued by the need of himself and his people for the necessities of life. It may have caused his dream at Bethel. "If God will be with me ... and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear ... then the Lord shall be my God ... and of all that Thou givest me I will give the tenth to Thee." Jacob seems to see God and man getting at the problem together with mutual responsibility and accountability prominently involved in the situation.

1. The Biblical Doctrine of Work, by Alan Richardson, SCM Press LTD.
   London, 1952
Among equals at least, some form of wages is a part of the working transaction. Jacob works fourteen years for two wives. This arrangement is unlike the slave labor predicament which E tells us later befalls the people of Israel. Exodus pictures the King of Egypt saying, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get to your burdens!" Evidently Laban tricks Jacob in the financial arrangements covering his fourteen years of work. But he doesn’t mistreat him in his laboring. The King of Egypt persecutes his Hebrew workers. Slave work is a burden. This is different.

The Deuteronomist Code (D)

D or the Deuteronomist Code’s (Deuteronomy 12-26) most noteworthy contribution to our study is found in Deuteronomy 24:11. A hired servant is not to be oppressed. He is to be paid for his day’s work on the same day. He is poor and needy and his condition requires that he have the use of his wages. To do less will cause him to pray to God about it. God will count failure to be fair and prompt in payment as a sin.

With the consideration of the Deuteronomist Code we need to note that it is more humanitarian than earlier codes. The slavery issue again intrudes itself. Louis Wallis takes issue with us that slavery among the abadim was more humanitarian than practiced among other peoples. This is a troublesome point if we agree with him and others that reforms and concerns were exclusively for the poor and needy baalim that fell into the non-Hebrew slave group. Here is a thorny question. I resist the idea that the evolutionary development of respect for personality among the ethnic group does not spell out some change for
the better in the treatment of alien subjects. But it must be admitted that more intensive study is necessary to lend substance to this assertion. However, there could be a parallel in that many Greek slaves had good treatment during Roman times. Furthermore, those who knew the feel of the yoke of submission were more sensitive to the plight of others who were so unfortunate as to become chattel.

There is substantial agreement that ample evidence exists for the welfare of Hebrew abadim. In the time context of the Deuteronomistic Code we should bear in mind, "that though like the rest of the Bible the existence of two social classes composed of Master (baalim) above and slaves (abadim) below, the abstract idea of human freedom was practically unthinkable at that stage of social evolution; and we ought not to look for it anywhere among the people of antiquity."¹

The Deuteronomistic Code does take slavery for granted. But it improves in its version of the Ten Commandments upon the earlier Decalogue, and Wallis also points out, upon the Mishpat Code in Exodus.

It includes new economic provisions to check the fall of unfortunate baalim into slavery. (See Wallis) Improving on the Ephraimite Code it seeks higher status for Hebrew woman slaves as well. It is also superior to the latter code in that it withdraws previous religious sanctions for permanent slavery of Hebrews. Yahweh no longer gives ceremonial accord to permanent bondage of any person known as Israel's son.

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¹. Op. Cit., p. 252
Amending earlier codes, Deuteronomy is evolutionary not static. It contains by implication a matrix of progressive universal justice. We see therein laws of justice for human society because its ideal of Monotheism logically entails "Mishpat" to the nations. (plural) God’s physical laws are not partial so neither are His religious and moral laws. Here again we note the fruitage of universalism in Hebrew Scripture.

It is my belief that the more credence we give to the ideal of universalism in the Old Testament the more telling a case we make for maturing humanitarianism for all Old Testament slaves.

The Priestly Code (P)

Work for God is an emphasis of this code. Men, who are faithful, are instruments of God’s hands at work. Many times the work is His work. God’s treatment of workers is fair. The standards of workmanship are challenging, highly fixed and yet attainable. God sets the example. Men can reach it.

P by no means divorces work from daily living and worship. Lot and Abram separate from each other. There is no negative comment about it. Their work problem has become tense so they act in a way consistent with the Priestly Code.

Here is another example. In Egypt their prosperity is commended. These are the fruits of their good labor well received. Conditions are such that many children are born and the population increases. God approves of them. Consequently, He will make the land of Canaan available to them to bequeath to their descendants.
Later, in Egypt, under tyranny there is definite recognition by P of the hardships unfairly inflicted in daily labor. God hears their complaints, sees the conditions, and remembers His promise to people who have worked for the privilege of His blessings.

The building of the Ark is carefully detailed in this document. God's instructions to the workers are exacting. He sets high standards for good workmanship. But they are good standards and not impossible to attain.

"Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh you shall have a holy Sabbath of solemn rest to the Lord." Work is sanctioned by God under the proper conditions with controls. "Whoever does any work on it (the Sabbath) shall be put to death." Here the priestly confront the secular. The former demands and commands.

It is recognized that God gives the workmen their intelligence and ability to do every kind of work. That is the testimony of these P passages.

Joshua rewards the Hivites for their cooperation by letting them live and making them hewers of wood and drawers of water for his people. It sounds like a friendly gesture. To permit an honorable work assignment as a substitute for the usual death penalty commends itself as good social ethics. It also speaks well of the noble conception of work as held by the writers and practitioners of the priestly code because being friendly here means accepting these outsiders in the work community. It is interchangeable value. Friendship and work are both valued in this case. One enhances the other and implements these high conceptions through good practice.
The whole Old Testament does not take work lightly or carelessly. It is not indifferent to the moral demands surrounding the most menial and trivial of daily tasks. Work is so highly and deeply regarded that, strange as it may seem to us, Joshua honors the Hivites by appointing them to be wood gatherers and water carriers.

**Codes of Law**

In the Covenant Code (Exodus 20:22-23:19) labor is directed by God. Six years the land will be sowed. The seventh year it will lie fallow. Six days are work days. The seventh is rest day. The first of the fruits of labor are to be brought as an offering to God. Work and worship are part of the covenant partnership God has with man. Property rights and work rights are to be respected.

With the Ritual Decalogue (Exodus 34:10-26) we see that the energy of God which produces works will serve the Hebrew people according to the Covenant made between them and God. People shall also work. But on the seventh day a halt is called. The people shall rest whether it be the busy time of plowing, harvest or any time. This rest includes animals as well. (Exodus 23:12) Other passages where the Ten Commandments appear include similar ideas in this respect. God rests from this creative work on the Sabbath and so shall man.

**The S Redactor**

In these revisions, note how work activity still form the pattern of the Old Testament story. Observe also the variety of work outlets and how most of them directly involve God.
Genesis 3:20
God makes Adam and Eve skin garments and clothes them.

Genesis 5:29
Noah will bring relief from work and the toil of their hands. The Lord has cursed the ground. Elsewhere it is said Noah (9:20) is the first tiller of the soil. He plants a vineyard.

Genesis 10:9
"He (Nimrod) is a mighty hunter before the Lord." Hunting is a work activity provided by God.

Genesis 11:3
They make bricks and mortar. Work is of a nature that leads to the manufacture of products.

Summary of the Hexateuch
We see that amply existing throughout the Hexateuch are instances dealing with the problem of work.

We can conclude that work is a sacred thing. It is an honorable activity instituted by God early in Scripture so we can deem it very important. It is a relationship not to be entered into lightly but with full cognizance that God has definite expectations and demands in so far as this area of human affairs is concerned. It is an activity both human and divine that is kept under close scrutiny by God. It is the general view of the Hexateuch that God established early in His dealings with men that He objects to unfair labor conditions. Holding of jobs bring with them rights as well as duties. The worker has title to his job. Though oftentimes shared, it is his possession.
B. The Former Prophets

1. The Book of Joshua

Our survey follows the outline of the Hebrew Scriptures with the exception that we have already involved our Joshua study with the five so-called Books of Moses or the Pentateuch. The Priestly Code (P) runs through the Pentateuch and into Joshua so we have made a departure from the Hebrew Canon and investigated the first six books as a whole. (Hexateuch) The Hexateuch comes to a close with the account of the partition of Canaan.

One is struck by the intent of orderliness and plan with the divisions and assignment of the land. No laissez-faire system is present here. Even cities of refuge are laid out to accommodate those who run afoul of the rules elsewhere that respite and full justice may be accorded them. Economic and social planning dominate the narrative.

They do not succeed alone. The record clearly shows God's help and occasionally His outright generosity. In either case He is present in the picture. To illustrate the latter we note:

And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the men of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I gave them into your hand. And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow. I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you dwelt therein; you eat the fruit of vineyards and oliveyards which you did not plant. (Joshua 24:11-13)

These are fruits of labor unearned and bestowed because God loves His fellow-workers.
Yet are not unearned riches so pleasantly attributed to God’s generous love actually the spoils of cruel and selfish conquest?

Yes! Literally all external evidence would agree. But the text does not say it. It says, "it was not by your sword or by your bow."

We know it was the spoils of cruel and selfish conquest. But the writer of these lines thinks otherwise and gives us the interpretation we must work with to determine what the Old Testament states. Even though the actual historical event would not be consistent with what the people thought happened at the time or later writers interpreted it, we are bound not to be overly concerned with the literal history but more with the evaluation the Biblical account places upon it. Our study is primarily concerned with a documentation and ethical judgement of the Scriptural report more than with the actual events themselves. We are more impressed by what the writers thought about the happening than about the happening itself.

2. The Book of Judges

Tales of conquest and quelling of the inhabitants of the land comprise almost the sum total of this book. Nevertheless, one campaign under Abimelech (9:46-49) discloses that their ability to work enables them to win the day. The leader and his men alike wield axes with their hands and cut brush wood into bundles. They take their bundles upon their shoulders and make a great pile. Setting it on fire they smoke and burn out their enemies. Their military skill requires the doing of menial work which fortunately is not foreign to them.
3. The Books of Samuel

Hannah's famous prayer enlarges the concept of the part that God plays in man's work destiny. (2:7-3) "The Lord makes poor and makes rich... He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor." The work of the poor may merit renown or honor "for the Lord is a God of knowledge and by Him actions are weighed." (2:3a) In other words, man may labor and sweat but God does not leave him alone. Man is very much on his own in making his livelihood, but God exerts a place and a part in the pattern. Optimum work conditions must prevail. Man is not a beast. He is only a little lower than God. It is possible through work, with God's help, for the poor and common workers to rise. Shirkers and the wicked may fall and fall. The strength of God's help is withheld from them.

With the case of David, hard working herdsman and musician, we see the use to which man and God puts good labor. David has the calmness and serenity music can give to get along with Saul and to impart to the former some substantial psychiatric treatment. David works when necessary. He can lead others in their work. There is evidence that the great Temple of Solomon is planned and started under David. He is a man whose work God can bless and cause to be king.

Even the energy of leaping and dancing evidently is approved if done "before the Lord" and is a kind of work God can accept. Michal, the daughter of Saul and wife of David, does not approve. She lives
her years as a childless woman. David lives many years as a fruitful monarch.

One of the most telling criticisms we find of David in the account significantly is based on work and property rights. Even the great King David must not violate a subject's title to property his labor earns for him. Women are chattel. Bathsheba belongs to Uriah. David connives to get her for his own. Nathan's reproof is scorching. The Prophet makes no exception for David. Order and regulation must not succumb to chaos and lawlessness. The king is under the restrictive customs of work and wealth.

1. The Books of Kings

Hiram, king of Tyre and Solomon make an agreement that the Sidonians shall supply cedar and cypress timber for Solomon's building program. Very soon the narrative discloses violations of work mores and folkways according to Hebrew thought. King Solomon puts his own people into forced labor. He requires them to go to Lebanon. He put officers over the work and in charge of the people. Stone work, bronze work, and wood work are mastered. Artistically it is wonderful work. For Solomon it is a great achievement. But after the celebrations and flattery to Solomon of the Temple's completion are finished, the Lord appears again. Solomon is reminded of the rules. The matter of forced labor is alluded to. Amusingly, with great pains, the story points out, no Israelites are forced. They are not slaves. They are the soldiers, officials, commanders, captains, chariot commanders and his herdsmen. (I Kings 9:22) Within the Old Testament Scriptures themselves
other renditions say differently. Sterner critics had other ideas than tribute to Solomon's glory on this score. David and Solomon are ever favorites in Old Testament thought but the Hebrew love of democratic institutions does not honor their memory when their social ethics of work are suspect.

Ship building is not unknown to the Old Testament people. (I Kings 9:26) A lively trade of imports and exports is a feature of Solomon's times. More noteworthy, the accounts enlighten us in recounting the rule of Rehoboam and evaluating the rule of Solomon that their yoke is heavy and they punish the people without right. Here is where the break occurs with the House of David. Work and living conditions are intolerable so Israel rebels. The famous group of prophets whose work and teachings make the Old Testament sublime begin to appear. The "Troubler of Israel" (Elijah) voices the righteousness and indignation of the people against vested interests. Elijah challenges Ahab on his handling of Naboth and his vineyard. Naboth's father has worked and earned the vineyard. The fruit of their hands now rightfully belongs to Naboth. The king (Ahab) has no title to appropriate or give money for the land if Naboth does not consent. What he and his family have worked for is his. Ahab is ethically in error.

These times of the kings see the heavy encroachment of outside cultures on Israel and later on both Israel and Judah. Often the worst part of the surrounding cultures affects the Hebrew kingdoms and they depart from the high ethical social practices which the ideology of
their leaders and religion advocate. These fallings away are corruptions in the ruling and favored groups. It is not likely that the plain working people initiate existing abuses. They are handed from the top down.

A summary of the Former Prophets bears out the ethic we find in the Hexateuch showing that the Old Testament has a conscience regarding man and his work. Here again the different writers come to grips with the problem. God is involved in the matter. Deity does not ignore nor is in ignorance of the problem. Commandments and preaches positively relate His wishes regarding working persons and working conditions. God wills man to work. He favors them and desires their well being as workers. With God they are at labor in the common enterprise of bringing His rule and ways of living to pass. Working conditions when observed as intended are more democratic than autocratic.

C. The Latter Prophets

1. The Book of Isaiah

(a) Isaiah 1-39

The times of King Uzziah of Jerusalem are full, happy years for the workers. Husbandman and reapers (2 Chronicles 26:6-15) sing at their work. With his death comes the end of a prosperous and secure era for Judah. Isaiah sees that material prosperity is soon to be finished before rising Assyria. Elders and princes of Judah, with their corrupt, grafting leadership, are mainly responsible for the imminence of national collapse before foreign threats. The Jewish nation is likened to a vineyard of God whose stewards had plundered the people.
"It is you who have devoured the vineyard,
The spoil of the poor is in your house.
What do you mean by crushing my people,
By grinding the face of the poor?" (Isaiah 3:14b-15)

Condemnation is made of land grabbing by the greedy from small property owners concentrating the riches of their work into the hands of the few who have not worked for it.

The everyday rights and considerations are not lost sight of even in days when a great prophet like Isaiah must give most of his thought and energy to the international intrigues and dangers to the state from without made acute by the moral and spiritual deprivations from within. The march and conflicts of great and little nations make for mighty drama. Yet the little man is not left out in a day when big things occupy the center of the stage.

(b) Isaiah 50-66

The Isaiah of the Exile brings words of tenderness and comfort to the captives. God's people, His sons and daughters, are recipients of His guidance, blessings, and promises. Jerusalem and the cities of Judah shall be rebuilt. God's workers will do the building. Labor that brings the most satisfaction to the laborer (55:2) is that which is done under God. It is that which is accomplished in keeping with His ways which brings real salvation and happiness. It is group work performed in the unison of united human purpose under God equated with His will for persons.

"They have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain" (56:11b). Here, according to Isaiah, is a state of folly and anarchy. We are now in third Isaiah (56-66). He seeks to interpret second Isaiah
for a later generation. The consistency of teaching that work is of God is one of the strongest threads of likeness between these different accounts. Both in the Old Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem proper work is worthy.

2. The Book of Jeremiah

The ideals of his people motivate Jeremiah. Building and planting again and working anew is a wistful hope in his makeup and message. Productive land laid waste by the terror and disorder of war shocks him into speaking to people of God's protest against the imminence of this state of affairs. King Josiah has some of his workers repair the Temple. In the process Hilkiah, the high priest, finds the law book and revives the law of Moses. Experience with it teaches Jeremiah and he teaches us that following and practicing God's way for men is dependent upon that way being understood by us within and not imposed on us from without.

He gets more revelation from an experience of seeing a common man at work than he does from the excitement and preaching of the revived law. He goes to the shop of a potter and sees him fashion vessels of pottery on his wheel. (18:1ff) It is natural for this prophet of God to get a message from observing persons at work. From boyhood he has admired and watched the reverent activity of the worker at his work. The men of God we call prophets, even an aristocrat like Jerusalem Isaiah, views the people at work. Now Jeremiah gets one of the greatest inspirations of his life. Reveling in watching the beautiful
forms of the vessels the potter loved to shape, Jeremiah sees the workman molding and the product become spoiled in his hands. He will throw it away and with new clay begin again. But, no! The potter's wheel continues to turn and the potter changes his purpose. The marred vessel becomes shaped in another vessel as free from flaw and beautiful and useful as the first would have been. In this way, Jeremiah thinks, God has given him hope to feature as a new part of his message to mankind. He changes from a prophet of doom to a prophet of hope and one who feels that a future can be built. Great men, it seems, do acquire learning from the value they place on life's work scenes. From seeing life in its essential manifestation or microcosm they gain insights and meanings to interpret the whole of life. God is a worker in His relationships with men and He loves His work.

It is no wonder then that we discover Jeremiah cannot respect King Jehoiakim. In Jeremiah 22:13-19 we are told the king requires forced labor and is indifferent to the payment of his workmen. Once again the Old Testament Scriptures protest at this prostituted treatment of men by man.

A lowly Negro slave kindly rescues Jeremiah from the miry awful dungeon hole where his own people have thrown him. Old Testament people living up to their best ever have respect for the toil and personality even of a slave. In touching experiences like this one, concerning Jeremiah and Ebed Melech and thirty other slaves, we see the fruition of this typical affection and respect. Man is not
caste bound by his work station in life. Deeper considerations are involved we learn as the prophets tell their story.

Following Jeremiah into exile we determine his attitude toward work among the exiles. He enjoins them to work and rebuild and is instrumental in planning the reorganization after Jerusalem’s fall, along with Gedaliah, from the village of Mizpah. This settlement is a foreshadowing of the Zionist movement. Even so we see that Jeremiah advises cooperation with foreign nations and captors. His appeal is to considerations higher than the nation of Judah. As God uses other nations, in addition to Judah, to work His will; Jeremiah encourages work cooperation and loyalty to the larger and greater Covenant.

Those who hear him before going into Babylonian exile carry his message with them in their thinking. They can worship and work for God anywhere. The book of Jeremiah (29:5) shows the prophet telling the exiles that they are well off and he advises them to settle down to business and grow rich even if they cannot return to Palestine.

Jeremiah (31:30f) points out that Israel is a covenantal people. She has broken her covenant with God but He is willing to write in their hearts a new compact which would be universally available. What role does the idea of Israel as the covenantal people play in the teaching about work?

It is to be expected that the Hebrews, as the covenantal people, travel—mentally and spiritually—at a pace that leads onward in harmony with the rise and extent of universalism.
At first there is the idea that God's covenant with them is limited to them alone. Those outside the covenant are without hope or consequence. Centuries later comes the thought that God intends that the role of the Hebrews is that of leader and teacher of God's plan to others. Israel is favored as the teacher-nation to the rest. More modern is the thought that the covenant is purely spiritual and is inclusive of all true believers regardless of racial or national affiliations.

"Chosen people" of the covenant feel a sense of vocation and that their work has cosmic significance. It is their duty and responsibility to work. It is their part of the agreement God makes with them. He feels responsible and it is expected that they will feel their responsibility. Being people of the call, the Hebrews have the privilege of being God's people so they feel their work to be a national vocation. In effect this put them under obligation to their work role as a national group and to their individual work as well.

It is specifically because the Hebrews consider themselves a thoroughgoing covenantal people that their main ideas and attitudes making up their teachings on work are possible.

3. The Book of Ezekiel

Though mainly preoccupied with ritual transgressions, Ezekiel does list acts of sin. God deals justly with the individual. God cares for His people. Persons and groups have social responsibility. He traces the situation of the Hebrews in exile to earlier Judean rulers' greed and oppression.
Ezekiel has elaborate and detailed plans to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple of worship. All the work of the highest to the humblest persons on these projects is consecrated as worship of God. No longer able to manifest their work as a group, called the state, their holy work would survive as a religious edifice. Work has its basis in social responsibility. Group life involves a person's work as part of the whole. It is holy work because it is done for God and God's community. As God deals justly, thoughtfully and affectionately with His people, so the people are to deal with Him and with one another.

4. The Book of the Twelve
(a) Hosea

Plumbing the depths of human and divine nature, Hosea discovers love as the true nature of God and basis of human relationships.

The Hebrews have ceased to be merely a nation of shepherds and farmers. Commerce flourishes. Cities replace villages. The economy favors the rich and ruling classes. The middle class has been killed off in wars before the peace of Hosea's day. Those remaining are reduced to serfdom because of high interest rates and heavy taxation. Unjust court decisions presided over by their exploiters make the masses virtually slaves. Greed and legalized injustice make the majority of the citizens poor.

Hosea and Amos tell us these things thus revealing that, contrary to external appearances, social injustice prevailed. During the first half of the eighth century their own people are the Hebrew's worst enemies. Beneath seeming prosperity, exploitation characterizes the times.
Hosea indirectly, yet basically and profoundly, gets at the root of the matter. This preacher of social righteousness is a giant in insight and moral power. The only corrective for the crime of violating the work rights of our fellow man is love. It is a principle of action showing itself, among other ways, in righteousness and justice toward fellow workers. It attacks caste and all selfish individualism. It negates vested privilege.

(b) Joel

It is a dreadful day when men are cut off from their sustenance. This prophet's cry is against drought and plague. However, he calls it the "day of the Lord" and it results because men have departed from God. God sits in judgement of the wicked with the advent of this day. In this crisis work is impossible because God's punishment has contaminated the land. It is no longer workable. Work is regarded so highly that one of the greatest punishments God can bring is to deprive people of it. In crying for food, men cry for work. They know they cannot expect the former without the latter.

(c) Amos

Shepherd by occupation and a worker who sometimes was a herdsman of larger cattle; Amos also tends sycamore trees. He shares the feelings and woes of the rank and file of his people. He constantly broods over the living conditions of the people. The "Indian Summer" of outward prosperity in Judah and Israel nauseates him as well as Hosea. Hebrew society—beneath the surface—is corrupt and superficial. Amos sees things in symbols common to a workingman's mind.
He is one of them and has their philosophy in his thoughts. Therefore, he speaks in terms of mowed fields, blight, drought, harvest, plumblines, and crops. Reluctantly he leaves his full time work among his sheep, cattle, and sycamores, where he has been content. In the name of social justice he speaks critically, against ethical wrongs, for God. Greed, selling the poor into slavery for debt by the rich and powerful and exorbitant grain taxes on the peasants arouse Amos' indignation. The common people, incapable of defending their rights, are overworked. They are denied the just rewards of their labor. Their work opportunities are limited or confiscated.

Religion has no meaning or legitimacy for Amos unless it sanctions the protection of the righteous poor, honors common labor, and exalts the divine identity of honest work.

(d) Obadiah

This oracle of hate against Edom is largely historical and nationalistic. We need not expect to find prophetic quality in its pages. We read, "As you have done, it shall be done to you." (1:15b) This implies an ethic manifesting itself in a "Day of the Lord" when punishments occur for not treating neighbors justly. Violations of the rights of others does not mean that the violators are to be joined by others seeking to share the loot and satisfaction of another's downfall.

(e) Jonah

The universal scope of ethical concern for others is the real motif of this little book. In this story about Jonah it is pointed out that Jonah is inconsistent in being sorry for the famous gourd for
which he had not labored and not wishing mercy shown to people and things which are the fruit of the labor of God and man. ("and also much cattle" h:9-11)

(f) Micah

This peasant farmer believes, like Amos, Hosea, and others, that the common people of the countryside, the shepherds and farmers, are the backbone of the nation. He and his forebears know from first hand experience what exploitation of their land and labor by wealthy land owners can do to human dignity and social welfare. An admirer of Amos and Isaiah, he knows their messages. He remembers Isaiah’s condemnation of the leaders ravishing the "vineyard." The city prophet Isaiah used this country-worker term to describe the people of the nation.

Strong words are uttered by Micah in horror of the disregard of human rights by the commercial interests. In behalf of the peasantry of Judah he strikes out at the landlords who, with little pretext, take land even from peasants who had it in their families for years. To Micah God’s people are the oppressed poor. Evicting women and children from their homes shows that these wicked men value money over honor and humanity. These charges he enlarges to include all the ruling classes.

God requires that men do justice. He has shown man what is good. It is amazing that when most of these great prophets think of justice and love they immediately relate it to the work of man.
(g) **Nahum**

This liturgy on the wondrous fall of Nineveh expresses the faith of God at work in the world keeping the moral order functioning. God is in history. Even mighty Nineveh, oppressor of all people, cannot get away with its violations of human rights. Corruption causes inward rot. Initiative and labor become dulled. "Woe to you, your shepherds were drowsy." (3:13) Though preoccupied with rejoicing over Nineveh's plight, Nahum of Elkosh discloses that being impervious to the rights of others brings in its wake destruction to one's own vitality and virility, thus rendering one susceptible to destruction by outside pressures. A low evaluation of others' work helps you to under evaluate your own and to become lazy and weak. Then it is too late to toil. Suicide has already been committed and there is no defense toward death blows dealt by our enemies.

(h) **Habakkuk**

This Judean prophet amid political and social chaos sees other nations punishing his country and people for their social wrongs. Thus God often uses other countries. God can only accept a righteous nation. Any may be His instruments but only those who practice His teachings can survive and be productive. But over all material misfortune or loss God still is. Even though the crops are not heavy or the flocks numerous still we must have faith and trust in God. In the long run those who have faith and do their work will be certain of God's presence.

(i) **Zephaniah**

A religious purist in reaction to pagan cults and foreign ways can, nevertheless, detect indifference to ethical ideals. Zephaniah
includes disapproval of commercial dishonesty and trickery in his protests. God has interest in everyday work affairs. God singles out corrupt business men one by one for their selfish disregard of the rights of others in amassing their own material wealth. "Seek righteousness, seek humility" (2:3a) The lowly and poor working people grasp the prophet's message. Socially of little importance, but spiritually great these humble and poor people shall remain when God has struck down the doers of iniquity.

(j) Haggai

God brings about crop failure and drought because the Jews build themselves paneled houses but neglect to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem. This charge by Haggai encourages the start of rebuilding the temple edifice. According to his presentation, work on property bringing glory and worship to God ranks highest. Unlike the great Hebrew prophets of the preceding centuries, Haggai has little moral and religious insight and maturity. He puts too much emphasis on rebuilding the Temple and seems to imply that material and spiritual progress depends on the completion of God's project, the Temple. Though his views on work are one-sided and warped, he does relate God and work together. In this sense, at least, he does not depart from the Old Testament pattern.

(k) Zechariah

With much apocalyptic material this spokesman reaffirms the great teachings of earlier prophets. Justice, mercy, and honesty are
demands of God. People do not obey so God scatters them and ruins their land. Economic prosperity comes when people are upright in word and deed. Although this ancient concept is different from our own, there is truth that permanent economic prosperity can only endure among people who are upright in word and deed.

(1) Malachi

The Jewish community is in economic and spiritual misery. Malachi believes this condition exists because of the poor quality of ritual and worship. This book, like Haggai, is of little religious and literary worth being more valuable as a historical source of the Persian period before Nehemiah. We can observe, nevertheless, that ritual and worship is work and must be done honestly and sincerely to meet God’s approval.

As a summary of the Latter Prophets we note that the above findings disclose wonderful concepts of social justice bearing on work. Everyday rights and considerations must not be ignored. Group work and united human purpose are the ideal. Respect for toil and personality is motivated by social responsibility and deep respect. It is present for Israel and in certain cases is universalized.

D. The Writings, or Hagiographa

1. The Psalms

This religious anthology is the expression of the "Pious" with their ideal of a life close to God in harmony with His will. Good conduct is essential. In these 150 compositions, giving a variety of thoughts and emotions which are the warp and woof of Judaism; it is not
surprising to observe work themes. These are helpful to us in formulating the existence of Biblical views of the social ethics of work as found in the Old Testament.

"Unless the Lord builds the house,
Those who build it labor in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city,
The watchman stays awake in vain."
Ps. 127:1

In the above psalm and others, Paul S. Minear does not observe the Psalmist presenting a general doctrine of work per se. Attention is focused upon persons who work. This accent upon the person who labors we have discovered among other Biblical writers. Beyond its social utility and job status work is established as important only because man or individual man addresses himself to it.

There is the responsibility to relate the work to God's purpose. Thus work is not a value of itself. God and man are supreme. Work is instrumental.

God in the Psalms, as elsewhere in Scripture, is pre-eminent a worker. "Our first glimpse of man is as a farmer, cultivating and conserving the ground. (Gen. 2:15)

Likewise, the idiom of the Psalms shows God as builder and guardian. God is at work everywhere. God brings "forth food from the earth." (Ps. 104:14). Work derives its importance because it is activity of the Divine and human. "When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established"
(Ps. 8:3) "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament

proclaims his handiwork." (Ps. 19:1) "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth."
(Ps. 33:6) "There is none like thee among the Gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like thine. All the nations thou hast made shall come and bow down before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name. For Thou art great and doest wondrous things, thou alone art God." (Ps. 86:8-10)
"Thou didst set the earth on its foundations . . . " (Ps. 104:5a) "Thou dost cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth." (Ps. 104:14)
"Thou hast made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. Thou makest darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep forth. The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. When the sun rises, they get them away and lie down in their dens. Man goes forth to his work and to his labor until the evening. (Ps. 104:19-23) "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy creatures."
(Ps. 104:24) "You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; . . . "

From the above samples and comments on this section of the Old Testament, we discover the testimony and amplification of a doctrine of work sketched throughout the pages of the Old Testament. "A book by workers, about workers, for workers—that is the Bible."¹ Cogently and beautifully the Psalms tell their story. They are gems of exquisite

¹. Ibid. p.33
expression that deepen and intensify the reality of the picture of unity our look at these books affords. Students realize there are areas of disagreement of belief and outlook within Old Testament Scripture. But, Scripture discloses, this is not the case as concerns the treatment of work.

The reader will find the Psalms tuneful, inspiring, and moving. Concerning work their message will be consistent with plain speech and prosaic fact elsewhere given.

2. The Book of Proverbs

Even more far-reaching than in the Psalter is the greater variety of topics treated and the radical differences in viewpoint. However, success is attained through diligence in work. The sluggard should consider the ways of the ant (6:16) and work lest poverty and want be his portion.

"The Lord created me at the beginning of his work." (8:22)
"I was beside him like a master workman." (8:30) If the reading "Master workman" be correct, the implications are that man's origin was an early act of creation and that he shares fellowship with God as a fellow worker.

Praise of a worthy woman (31:10-31) stresses the centrality of her energies as worker in the role of housekeeper, wife, and mother. "She . . . works with willing hands" (31:13b). Action and activity is the motif that dominates the rendition.

3. The Book of Job

Satan says, "Thou hast blessed the work of his (Job's) hands and his possessions have increased in the land." (1:10b)
This book raises problems in philosophy and ethics beyond the scope and purpose of our study. It seems evident that Job's affluence, from which he tumbles, was due to his diligence and integrity as a worker. Good work is based on good character. At least the area of character involved in work carried out must be of good quality if the work is to measure up to standards deserving of the name. Job recognizes that God's approval has been an aid to his building his fortune. He sticks to that thought though he cannot understand why everything crumbles.

The conditions of the test used to try Job are above and beyond normal human events which are the primary focus of this investigation. When God and the devil together conspire to put an individual through ordeals; only they are capable of concocting, routine scholarship is defied. The student seems justified in passing along to other considerations in the human problem of work which is before us.

4. The Song of Solomon

"If a man offered for love
all the wealth of his house,
it would be utterly scorned."

(8:7b)

If the above statement is true; it would seem that, amid the raptures of love, mundane considerations, as involved in our pursuit of ideas concerning work in Old Testament Scripture, have no place. Yet the object of love is likened to a vineyard and we are told what we have had reason to suspect all along; namely, that Solomon let out his vineyard (literal) to keepers.
The Old Testament does not neglect the worthy subject of love but even love is not utterly divorced from the vital matter of work. However, this is probably the closest call we will have in dealing with all the Scripture under consideration.

5. The Book of Ruth

When the Old Testament writer wished to present woman at her best so she could catch the eye of an Old Testament husband-prospect; Boaz is made to first notice Ruth at work, gleaning in his fields. Working in the fields is not confined to men. The Bible does not confine work participation to either sex.

These lovely pastoral scenes are staged almost exclusively among work settings indicative of the earthy, laborious character of Old Testament life.

6. The Book of Lamentations

Israel's ruin is likened to that of a run-down garden. (2:6a) The project is without its worker. Hebrew society languishes and sorrows and has been left to degenerate to ruin. This suggests in word-picture the plight of that which is in need of labor when the laborer has forsaken his work. When God's people are the field of work and He is the Worker who has been made indifferent, the thought is a terrifying one.

7. The Book of Ecclesiastes

What does man gain by toil? The physical world goes on heedlessly. Pessimistically and fatalistically, we are advised, men and beast both die. What is the difference? Only human vanity! Yet,
"Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much; but the surfeit of the rich will not let him sleep." (5:12) Enjoy toil while you can for tomorrow you may be dead.

We are reminded of a philosophy of a similar type of pessimism and determinism we found in our investigation of the S document.

Even if all be vanity, as Ecclesiastes teaches; we must work if only to eat, drink, and be merry.

8. The Book of Esther

This is a tale of glorious deliverance when human rights are violated by a tyrannical decree. Work, freedom, and home life are in jeopardy. There is a happy ending and the daily round of work and liberty is resumed.

9. The Book of Daniel

"... the book of Daniel is a noble book, inspired by the faith that the God of Israel is the king of the universe, and that he will soon vindicate his people and usher in the new age when the Kingdom of Heaven will belong to the poor, and the meek will inherit the earth."  

The apocalyptic dream of this book is that the God of Daniel:  

"... is the living God  
enduring for ever;  
his kingdom shall never be  
destroyed,  
and his dominion shall be to  
the end.

1. Introduction To The Old Testament, by Robert H. Pfeiffer, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1911
He delivers and rescues,  
he works signs and wonders  
in heaven and on earth,  
he who has saved Daniel  
from the power of the lions."
(6:26b-27)

This God who delivers and rescues works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth is interested in people. He works for them and does not abide in disinterest or idleness in His relationships to them and the rest of His creation.

Daniel went about the king's business (8:27) amid his experiences with visions. Even in the maze of the book's symbolism and imagery God and man are clearly seen as workers.

10. The Books of Chronicles

Though not a writer of history the Chronicler furnishes us with some extremely interesting insights into work philosophy as he interprets the past.

"The Chronicler champions the cause of the "hewers of wood and drawers of water" in the Temple no less aggressively than does the leader of a modern labor union."¹ It is indicated that temple menials could strike. Levites could walk out again as Dr. Pfeiffer thinks they once did by implication in the returns from exile under Zerubbabel and Ezra. Only when some of their demands had been met does it appear that they followed these leaders.

Temple workers in Chronicles are a group of workers especially revered. Even so it does present the case that if one group of workers

1. Ibid., p. 795
can exert pressure and demand rights the possibility exists that the
way is open for other groups to do likewise. Either a precedent is
set or a custom already established is followed. Workers do have
prominent rights in Hebrew life.

Another group of workers, the priests, have rank, prestige,
and rights. Evidently in later times they are well established.

Gatekeepers, servants and attendants of the Temple engaged
in daily work are sacconsanct in the eyes of the Chronicler.

"... guilds of singers and gatekeepers, organized sometime
between 400 and 250 B.C. are still struggling for recognition and
higher rank in the Chronicler's time, and ... he champions their
cause by attributing to them, as early as the time of David, a higher
status than they actually enjoyed. At least the singers eventually
succeed in realizing some of their aspirations. Not long before
70 A.D. Agrippa II, with the consent of the Sanhedrin, grants them
the right to wear linen garments like the priests (Josephus, Antiqui-
ties 20:9b). 1

I would rather not lay any particular emphasis on detailed
work instances in the books of Chronicles because of their predominant
fictional make-up. Furthermore, as they are a sequel and supplement
to the Priestly Code which the Chronicler uses as a model, it will be
recalled that we have already described P. Where the degree of
historicity is so doubtful we can be satisfied with some general

1. Ibid., p. 301
characterizations because the events involved are paralleled elsewhere in the Old Testament record.

In David's charge to Solomon we read: "You have an abundance of workmen: stonecutters, masons, carpenters, and all kinds of craftsmen without number, skilled in working gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Arise and be doing! The Lord be with you." (I Chronicles 22:15, 16)

This variety of workmen are to work on the Temple. The Lord be with you (Solomon) as you set yourself to your tasks and deal with them. Solomon, the workers, and God are to go at the thing together. Even a King must work.

Temple work is holy work. Doesn't Hebrew thought also contribute the concept that all God's work is holy work? Isn't all work God's work?

Chronicle writings are late documents. They give us the feeling that Hebrew life does not take work for granted nor is it indifferent to it. God and man and work are inter-related.

11. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

The rally cry of these books is "to work!" Actually the work motif is the rebuilding of the walls and Temple of Jerusalem. The motivation for the work is religious and patriotic. Maybe these motives are good ones for any kind of work endeavor.

It is said that Nehemiah sought to improve the lot of the economically distressed classes in the hapless Jewish community in Jerusalem. His work program built morale so the men could work and also created the work for the men to do. This emphasis is on man and
the work. It is known to all of us that the creation of this program of
good work well inspired and well done eventually led to the restoration
of Jerusalem to power before the days of the might of Rome.

In the Hagiographa God is shown often as builder and guardian.
Good work is based on good conduct in several of the writings. Rewards
accrue to those who work faithfully and well.

Work should build morale. It should give man dignity. Work-
men are championed. Human rights must not be violated. The daily
round of work must afford liberty. Neglected work breeds disunity and
neglect.

III. Conclusions

At this place where the total development of our study breaks
off we can claim conclusions that lend themselves to a definition of a
consistent Old Testament work philosophy.

Work is a gift of God, not a curse of God. It is not especi-
ally troublesome that scattered portions of the Old Testament raise the
contrary view. (Ecclesiastes, Wisdom Literature) The former position
is the consistent one. God gave man the power and ability to work as a
means toward human survival. Work is a normal part of everyday living.

Work is a universal characteristic of creation. All objects
of creation fulfill a work role. The Hebrews were also taught that even
God, the Creator, works. Therefore, a human being should be proud that
he is a worker. The first fruit of his labor should be dedicated to God
signifying the high status of work and the stewardship of man.
Work that gives man dignity glorifies the man and the work. They are handmaids to enlightenment and progress.

But though work is important, it is not as important as God or man. It has no absolute value in itself. Work problems are social and moral and are not peculiar to work itself. This is because work is a means to ends, not an end in itself. The person is more important than the work. Work is an instrument serving the purposes of persons. It must be related to God's purpose. Out of this context it has no meaning. In context it unites human purpose into community and is a practical means whereby human and divine community blend and become one.

This interpretation sees work as a purposeful expenditure of energy. Herein is the intrinsic value of work. It is holy. It is "vocation" because in one sense or another, God calls man to do it.

It cannot be discounted that work in Old Testament parlance has instrumental or utilitarian worth. Paradise does not exist. To provide food for his hunger and shelter for his body a man must work. The Hebrew nomadic society saw this clearly and insisted that individuals must cooperate in the work so that the group could survive. They felt that the condition of their life was such that unless the group survived the individual would starve and perish. Work was personal but it was not private.

These ideas were not lost sight of in the commercialistic eras of the Hebrews. They continued to be spiritualized and material practices toward individualism or class were resisted. Regarding work and
Hebrew personality as anything but God given was not a completely lost view even when opposite ideas were in their ascendancy.

A man is obliged to work. His religion, his family, his social group expect it of him. Actually, it is characteristic of the Hebrew to regard these three factors interdependently. Work brings the social rewards of group approval and divine acceptance. There are those who say that the Hebrew seldom thinks of himself as an individual. His concept of Israel is schooled to take satisfaction in the plight of the whole. What benefits Israel satisfies him. He is careful lest any shortcomings of his or any wrongdoing bring grief to the people.

Evidences are ample in the Hexateuch, Prophets, and Writings to support this well established and accepted interpretation of Old Testament thinking.

For example, writings in Job and Habakkuk raise questions on certain related matters in connection with this theme. Such as why, in spite of fine cooperation and work well done and rendered, suffering and unhappiness still occurs to individuals and groups among the godly, whereas those who are thoughtless and without conscience often prosper. These are deep issues laid naked to the eye of the Old Testament reader. Positive answers are mostly always given even if a later editor had to write them into the account. Old Testament work views are theistic and positive. They are theologically and philosophically justifiable.

"Work in the Bible is not presented as a problem. It is taken for granted as a part of the order of the created world ... As the
result of the fall and of Man's sinfulness work ceases to be the free and joyous cooperation of man with God and bears the stamp of hard necessity and burdensome toil. 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.' (Genesis 3:19) But this does not alter the fact that work is a mode of man's earthly existence decreed by God."

Old Testament Scriptural philosophy consistently hangs together on a basic clan-equalitarianism. It is always expressive of the desert life and a balm through Hebrew history for the problems of the soul with regard to their doctrine of work.

Certainly no stigma is attached to work in the Old Testament. Until we get to post-exilic times we are not aware of any sharp lines of demarcation between different kinds of work. It is then that Temple and priestly work is made by some to appear to be on a higher plane. (See Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah). I do not believe that P draws such a definite emphasis or gives the same priority.

Everyone works. (Hexateuch, Former Prophets, etc.) The high born as well as the low born have work experience. All work appears to have equal value and status.

It is plain enough that class stratification existed in Hebrew society, particularly after the early period of nomadism, throughout the long period of commercialistic civilizations. However, the great minds


and the highest Old Testament religious thought, though at variance about the ideology of class, clearly held that fellow Hebrews share equal status before God. Differentiation is made among persons on the basis of land and other wealth. The constant objection to the enslavement of Hebrews by Hebrews shows that clear-cut, hard and fast lines of demarcation are not favored by acknowledged representatives of the Biblical thought in the Old Testament.

We must be realistic, of course, so we cannot maintain that substantial worldly opinion and day to day practice was other than on a close discrimination pattern. Otherwise the prophets would have had no message and indeed we would not have an Old Testament. It is what the Old Testament says that our study is most interested in not in the literal life history of the people. For example, thought and social philosophy of the United States is based on the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. A survey of our ideas would disclose these documents to be keystones of our ideology. The fact that we fail to practice what we preach and live below our ideals does not alter the state of our ideology.

In accordance with Old Testament leading thought, Hebrew workers as persons are not outcasts. Even among the many who hold to views contrary to Yahweh's, the recovery of property and wealth constitutes a recovery of class. Class status does not wholly affect the attitude toward Hebrew workers. The acquisition of wealth more than the work itself affects class standing. A person is no less a Hebrew or son of Israel, generally speaking, if he falls into the lower
level of the two class system. God values him as highly. Many of his fellow-Hebrews despise and reject him because he no longer is prosperous. But then their attitude is secular, not religious. Our study is meant to be held within the confines of the religious context.

Work as mostly sheer toil and chains is peculiar to the S document, Ecclesiastes, and Wisdom literature where instances of this thinking exist.

The best Old Testament thought and the main stream of it interestingly accounts for what we may call the New Testament foundation of work doctrines.

Work on a basis of every man doing what is right in his own eyes is anarchy in the Scriptural parlance of the Old Testament. Work is planned, orderly, and is controlled. There is responsibility to the group.

Work is an exalted thing because God does it and does not leave man alone in his labors. Condemnation results when man selfishly adopts work aims contrary to the wishes of the Almighty and the social group.

Although we can be in agreement with other writers that the Bible does not give explicit directions on the details of vocational guidance nor rules and regulations for proper work habits and labor-management relations, strong ethical views are clearly mentioned.

A. Economic and Religious Responsibility

There is no differentiation between economic and religious responsibility. Wealth has no value in itself whether it be private
or public. God gives the increase. Material possessions are not valuable apart from God. Responsibility for behavior and all other accountability is to the Divine Provider.

Work has economic implications and involvements. These are under judgement of the justice and communitarian ethical regulations of God. Obviously economic demands are secondary to the primary obligation that work be done for God and community. Confronted by contradictory claims from outside cultures and the deviating temptations of secularism from within; the spiritual leaders of the Hebrews contended and insisted that primacy be given to responsibilities imposed by the God of Israel.

The author feels that New Testament and pre-reformation Christianity do not improve these Old Testament contributions. To substantiate this point will require the extension of this thesis into New Testament literature and Church History. It is beyond the intention of the present study to attempt such documentation. Others have done research on this subject beyond the Old Testament. More should be done, in order to formulate and publicize additional and more telling findings.

Religious norms in present day society can well accept the emphasis Old Testament thought places on work responsibility. Here is a mission for our churches and people. Work experience is religious activity. It is not irresponsible energy in God's sight. It is a matter of responsibility. In the Old Testament the only kind of responsibility is religious responsibility. That is the way we should see it, too.
Thus the Old Testament portion of the Bible informs present day Christians and the leadership of Christian institutions regarding economic and religious responsibility where work is concerned.

B. The Dignity of the Worker

A worker is a man and the Old Testament has a very high idea of man. He is but a little lower than the angels. Man is not to debase himself before any part of God's creation nor before God Himself.

Thomas Mann's picturization of Joseph in the well is recalled by this reader and brings to mind the depth of humiliation and loss of face the sensitive consciousness of that young man feels that he has been so thoroughly rejected. "The realization that he has been utterly obnoxious so smote him that he felt abandoned by God as well as his fellow men. In the darkness and filth of the cramped pit into which he had been callously thrown, he felt like an inferior and outcast. Crestfallen he seemed unclean to himself. Less like a man and more like an insignificant beast, he seemed to himself to be degraded. That condition was alien to his knowledge of his true status as a human being he had acquired from the teaching of his father and mother. The experience was to him a shock treatment and he came to his senses. He put aside his despair, gave up his conceited and boastful ways and became what God and his family had wanted him to be all along—a real man."

1. See my thesis prepared as a partial requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity from Andover Newton Theological School in 1944, "Thomas Mann's Treatment of the Joseph Stories," in the Andover Newton Library.
Such a high doctrine of human work is reflected through most of the Old Testament. The work of man's hands is to be valued because it is something a man does. This dignity of the worker was reflected as we looked into the J, E, P documents. A working man is using the opportunities God gives him to gain the necessities of life. (E) The worker is the owner of his job. The fact that God wills man to work in itself speaks for the holy thing a man does when he becomes a worker.

Almost all the prophets and other great Hebrew leaders are workers. No man in Old Testament thought need be ashamed of his work duties no matter of what they consist. The people are definitely instructed not to take that attitude and not to conceal the nature of their toil from others.

The worker has all the dignity of a human being. Scripture, we have studied, says that there is no higher status except that of God Himself and God, too, is a Worker.

C. Love and Service in the Community and in Israel

High points in the Old Testament transcend the provincialism of the community of Israel. This paper's concern at the moment is not with the extent of Hebrew thought with regard to its enlargement of community outreach growing into a doctrine of universalism. It is sufficient for our purposes that customs and laws existed that had strong social and ethical worth. These made Israel great as a community and were taken up wherever the idea of a community under God flowered and flourished,
Hosea's discovery of love as the best basis of human relationships, coupled with the idea of work as service, is an ideal that Jesus personified but could not develop any further.

The writer doubts if true communism widely existed in any stage of the community of Israel. But we have seen that work performed and the earnings thereof had far deeper and more widespread social implications and meaning than contemporary life here in the United States practices or admits. Through family and religious pressures the individual at work was under controls that strongly influenced his work habits.

It would be too much to say that love motivated the actions of the individual for the community. But certainly the obligation of service to the community of fellow-Hebrews and to duty existed from the earliest experience they had of realizing they were a people. Judaism, an ethnic religion, came to be in the people's struggle for survival before the thrust and competition of other cultures. Service, even only in local community, is commendable. Joseph or Esther could not forget their obligations to their own people even when they had made good elsewhere. Fear, respect, or reverence probably propelled them and others more than clear-cut love in the "agape" sense. If the latter two are not all of the strong constituents of love at least they have their place. The Hebrews certainly made a wonderful start even if we forget Hosea, Amos, Micah. But who could?

When we add to the above books the message of Jonah, Second Isaiah and the Psalms; it is then that we have manifold examples and
teachings from the Old Testament of the idea of service and love to community interpreted in the widest sense.

However, even in the narrower sense, the devotion and selfless work of men like Moses, certain prophets, Ruth, etc., are noteworthy. The condemnation of Achan (Joshua 7) who put personal greed before the good of the whole tribe, is an important negative example. Disregarding possible danger to herself and fearless of her own safety, Jael (Judges 4:17-22) disposes of Sisera for patriotic reasons. Heroic figures sacrificed and worked hard for other in their groups and for all of Israel. One suspects from the record that the tribes that settled in the west side of the Jordan acted in violation of community loyalty and solidarity. They were estranged, cut off, and assimilated by other cultures.

God was with the group and unless the work was done for the whole it missed being done for Him. (Ps. 127:1) Work must be related to God's purpose. God headed community. Work is an activity of the divine and human in cooperation. God works with mankind mostly in the generic way, it seems fair to point out. Although individuals in the Old Testament were singled out for special responsibilities for service to the whole because of their special capacities and altruism.

Men must work in unison because God made creation to be a universe and not a multiverse. When the people do not work and worship together, society crumbles and they are destroyed.

As both sexes must work and must cooperate with the community, the matter of extinction or survival applies equally.
Not only must the people work together and stick together but as a group they must work under God. Corporate effort to causes and projects of which God does not approve would be misplaced loyalty and fallacious. In the Old Testament, God often dealt with the people as a whole and meted out blessing or punishment in accordance with what the situations deserved. He dealt with individuals on a similar basis though not as frequently.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and a host of others inspired His followers to think in terms beyond themselves. They thought of their fellow-Hebrews and worked with them and for them. In the pre-Christian era, the Hebrew commonwealth materialized and zigzagged along the course of its colorful history. Its social ethic, particularly with regard to its work attitudes and practices, has shown and proved itself to be deserving of greater consideration than is normally accorded to it. Ideally, it was responsible and accountable. It fostered a high grade belief in human worth and dignity. It provided the inner strength for devotion and loyalty to the community of God and community of man and welded the two into a reasonable and sacred synthesis.
IV. Appendix

A. THE DOCUMENTS OF THE HEXATEUCH

(Chapter and verse references are to the English Bible)
(Secondary material is in parenthesis)

1. The J Document. Genesis 1:1-4a, 6-20; 13:1-2, 4-5, 7a, 8-10a (11a, 13-18); 16:1-2, 4-6, 7a (7b), 8, 11-14; 18:1-33; 19:27-28; 21:1a, 2a, 7, 33; 24:1-67; 25:21-26a, 27-34; (26-27, JE); 26:10, 13-16, 19a, 29:2-12, 26, 31-35; (30-32, JE); 33:1-37; 37 (JE); 39:1-23; 41:42 (JE); 43:1-13, 15-34; 44; 45 (JE); 46:1a, 26-34; 47:1-4, 5a, 6b, (12-27a), 29-31; 48:2b, 10, 13-14, 17-19; 50: (1-11), 14.

Exodus 1: 6, 8-10; 2:11-23a; 3:2-4e, 5, 7, 8a, (18?); 4:19-20a, 24-26; 5:1-2, 5-23; 7:14, 15a, 16 (17a), 18, 21a, 8-14, 8-15a, 20-24, 28-32; 9:1-7, 13, 17-18, 23b, 24b, 25b-29a, 33-34; 10:1a, (3-10), 13aB, 14aB, 15a, 16-19; 11:4-8; 12:29-35, 38; 13:21-22; 14: (5-6), 10aB, 11-12, 13-14, 19b, (20), 21a, 24, 25b, 27aBb, 28b, 30; 15:22-25a, 27; 16-18 (JE); (19-22b, 18, 20a, 21; 31aB, 2, 4, 26).

Numbers 10:29-32; 11:4-34 (JE); 12:17b, 19, 22a, 28, 30-31; (14-1b, 3-4, 31-32, 40-45); 20:1-13 (JE); (21-14); 32.

Deuteronomy 34:4 (?).


3. The E Document. Genesis 15:1-3, 5-6, 11, 12a, 13-14, 16 (the rest of the chapter is secondary); 20:1-17; 21:6a, (6b), 8-21, (25-32a, 34); 22:1-15, 19; (26-27, JE); 28:11-12, 17-18, 20-22; 29:1, 15-18, (19-23, 25, 27, 28a, 30); 30: 1-3, 4b-8, 17-20a, 21, 22b-23, 26, 28, (31-35, 38-40 JE); 31:2, 4-11, 13-17, 19, 24, 25a, 26, 28-31a, 32-35, 35b-37, 41-43; 32:15b-21, 23a, 24a, 25a, 26b, 27-28, 31-32; 33:5, 11a, 18aB, 19-20; (35-1-4, 6b-7); 35:14, 16-20; 37:5c, 6-11, (12-18, JE); 19-20, 22, 24, 26aB-30, 32-34a, 35b, 36, 40:2-3a, 4, 5a, 6-15a, 16-23; 41 (traces of J; 41:46a P); 42:1, 3, 4a, 8-26, 29-37 (traces of J); 43:12a, 13-14; 15aBb, 25b; 45:1b, 3, 5aBb, 7a, 8, 9a, 13, 15-18, 20, (21), 24b, 25-27; 46, 1b, 2-5a; 47:7; 48:1-2a, 9-12, 11-15, 16-20, 22-25; 50:15-26.

Exodus 1:11-12, 15-22; 2: (1), 2-10; 3: 1, 4b, 6, (9-22); 4:1-17, 18, 20b, (21-23), 27-31; 5:3-4, (traces in 5:6-19); 7:15aBb, 17b, 20b; 8:25-27; 9:22-23a, 25a, (35); 10:8-9, 11, (12-15), 20-27; 11:1-3; 12:35-36; 13:17-19; 14: (5-7), 15-16, 19a, 20a, 21a, 2a, (23), 25a, 31; 15:20-21; 16-18 (JE); 2b: 12-13, 18b; 31:18; 32:5b, 6, 15-19a, 25-29 (the rest of 32 is secondary); (33).


Deuteronomy 31:14-15, 23; 34:3, 5-6, 10 (in part).

Joshua 2-11, 14:6-14; 10:49-50; 24 (all edited by the JE and Deuteronomistic editors).

E. References of the Hexateuch Most Pertinent to this Thesis

The J Document


The S Document


The E Document

The interpretation of work in the E document is based on the following passages: Genesis 20:20-22, 29:15-18, 19-23; 43:12a; Exodus 3:1, 5:2-4, 6-19.

The Priestly Code (P)


Codes Of Law

Covenant Code

References used: Exodus 23:19

Ritual Decalogue

References used: Exodus 23:12

The Deuteronomistic Code

References used: Deuteronomy 2:1-14.
Original Poems

About 1250-1050 B.C.

References used: Genesis 2:25-27; Numbers 17-18

About 950-722 B.C.

References used: Deuteronomy 33:6-25

Redactors

JE Redactor

References used: Genesis 40:3b

S Redactor

References used: Genesis 10:9
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Abstract

The problem of the thesis, Old Testament Views Of The Social Ethics Of Work, is to determine what Old Testament Scripture teaches with regard to the social ethics of work. The thesis attempts to show a closer connection between interpretation and text than the usual general treatment has time or place to include. In other words, what are the specific Old Testament teachings on the subject of work?

The difficulty is to keep the study within bounds of context and not get prematurely involved in New Testament, Church History, or in the philosophy and ethics of later historical periods.

Following the Hebrew Canon it is learned that the documents of the Hexateuch, with the exception of one (S), accept work as a normal component of daily living. A person should be proud of his work role and the fruits of his labor. It is the way God gives him to earn a livelihood. Work serves the well-being of tribal society. It is not an end in itself. It is not confined to either sex. People of every status work. It is subject to higher value and outside controls. God works so it is honorable that all men join Him.

In the Former Prophets the record shows that God helps workers. Occasionally they are recipients of His outright generosity. Work often spells the difference between survival and extinction to the Hebrews. God plays a part in man's work destiny. Rules for right work relationships under God equally apply to men of high station or low station without discrimination. We see that the Old Testament has a conscience
regarding man and his work. Working conditions tend to be more democratic than autocratic.

With the Latter Prophets, wonderful concepts of social justice bear on work. Everyday rights and considerations must not be ignored. Group work and united human purpose are the ideal. Respect for toil and personality is motivated by social responsibility and deep respect. It is present for Israel and in certain cases is universalized.

Our conclusions note the existence of the New Testament foundation of work. Work is planned, orderly, and controlled. There is religious and economic responsibility to the group and to God. It is personal but not private. The person is more important than the work. Work must be related to God's purpose.

God gives the increase. Conflicting demands are secondary to the primary obligation that work be done for God and community.

The work of man's hands is to be valued because it is something a man does. If God gives the worker his job, he has rights to it. The fact that God wills man to work speaks for the holy thing a man does when he becomes a worker.

Work habits and customs are strongly controlled and influenced by the cultus.

When people do not work and worship together society crumbles and they are destroyed. Creation is a universe so people must work together and stick together under God. Corporate effort to causes and projects of which God does not approve is misplaced loyalty and a wrong. Ideally work provides the cooperation that welds the community of God and the community of man into a reasonable and sacred synthesis.