

depend on his conception of the nature of the Kingdom which he sought to establish.

Now, the Kingdom of God which Jesus had in view may be proved to be radically different from the Kingdom of current Jewish expectation. The natural hope of Israel in the days of our Lord was the restored Theocracy. The Ideal Commonwealth, or kingdom, or society, which they believed had been realized at one time in the past history of the nation—the laws of which they found in the Mosaic writings—they expected the Messiah to re-establish. We need not now pause to ask whether or not this Ideal Commonwealth ever had been actually realized in the history of Israel. The general opinion among biblical scholars seems to be that the Old Testament picture of the Theocracy was largely a Hebrew social ideal on paper, which the actual life of the nation never perfectly realized. As Plato's "Republic" presents an ideal state from an ancient Greek point of view, as More's "Utopia" sets forth a sixteenth century English ideal of society, or as Bellamy's "Looking Backward" pictures the social ideal of many Americans of to-day, so the Theocracy, outlined in the "Books of Moses," is a social dream of the Hebrew Prophets, differing radically, however, from the ideals of other nations by virtue of that religious quality which the Hebrew imparted to whatever he touched. This question, however, does not now directly concern us. All we need to remember is that the Jews of our Lord's day believed that this Ideal Commonwealth was historic, and they expected the Messiah to revive it. They spoke of it as "The Kingdom of God." They looked forward to an external organization—a political kingdom—with Jehovah as its sole Sovereign, represented on earth by the Messiah, and his chosen people as its members, and all outside races and nations as its subjects. A visible Theocracy—this was their quite definite conception of the "Kingdom of God." Whatever it may have meant to himself, we know the hope which was stirred in Jewish breasts by the message of the Baptist: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand"; and