

**THE SOCIAL TEACHING
OF JESUS: AN ESSAY IN
CHRISTIAN SOCIOLOGY**

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The social teaching of Jesus: an essay in Christian sociology by Shailer Mathews

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SHAILER MATHEWS

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OF JESUS: AN ESSAY IN
CHRISTIAN SOCIOLOGY**

THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF
JESUS

An Essay in Christian Sociology

BY

SHAILER MATHEWS, A.M.

PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY AND INTERPRETATION
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



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NOTE

THE following chapters appeared originally as a series of essays in the *American Journal of Sociology*. They have, however, been to a considerable extent rewritten, and are published in their present form with the consent of the editor of that journal.



THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF JESUS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE term Christian Sociology may be used both incorrectly and unfortunately. The names of many sciences are used in two ways: they may indicate the method by which results are obtained, and they may indicate the formulation of such results. Thus history may be a method science or it may be a descriptive science. In the former case it would be absurd to unite with it any word having a moral content. A method of investigation may be ill or well fitted to produce the best results, but ethically it can be neither good nor bad. The same is perhaps even clearer of such objective sciences as chemistry and geology. To speak of a Christian method of sociological investigation is quite as impossible. The process of investigating social forces and results, the discovery of the true nature of society, can no more have an ethical —

still less religious — character than the study of a crystal or a chemical compound.

In the other sense in which the name of a science is used such criticism is less appropriate. The moment an investigator attempts to formulate his results in propositions, that moment he injects into them his own predilections. While the method of investigation may be morally neutral, the statement and the application of its results may be largely tinged with ethics. This is less obvious in the case of physical sciences, but admittedly true of the social. Thus in a true sense there may be a Christian view of history, and, so to speak, a Christian science of history. This is even more evident in the case of philosophy. In the sense, therefore, of the formulation and application of results derived by Christian students, a sociology may be said to be Christian.

It is, however, not altogether clear that such a terminology though permissible is advisable. Historically, at any rate, the term is at a disadvantage. The champions of some so-called Christian sociology are dangerously open to criticism similar to that which Voltaire passed upon the Holy Roman Empire — it is neither scientific nor Christian. It certainly is desirable that an