

ness in all work you undertake—all very vital elements in worldly success. So marked is the bearing of religion upon secular well-being, that some have advocated its support and spread in the world on that ground merely. "It promotes," say they, "industry, and benevolence, and order in the world." It is clearly an article of their creed that "godliness is profitable for the life that now is." Any further assertion about godliness we cannot and should not expect an earthite to make. How can he make more? Regarding him the inquiry can pertinently be made which was groundlessly asked concerning Job—"Doth he serve God for nought?" Has not the Bible, also, been by some regarded as a function of the state like statutes and constables, and its support advocated solely on this ground. What a poor drill-book has the Bible been reduced to by the blindness and selfishness of state-craft and priest-craft.

The Scriptures exhibit to us an everlasting righteousness to be started here into life and action in the hearts and doings of men. It is this fact that makes life real and earnest. It has been said that "the central part of us is the sense of the Infinite Nature of Duty." This sense when it operates aright informs us that right-doing is high as heaven, and wrong-doing deep as hell; that even *now* the judgment is taking place in men. The judgment-day for each of us will simply manifest what is *being done in these our earthly days*. This truth believed in as it ought would be the death of all "greatest happiness" theories of virtue, and antinomian theories of grace; and the life to the declaration—"all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable"—"for discipline in righteousness."

Amid the many isms that hurt, and distract, and paralyze the Church, there is one of dire and deep prevalence in our time, that of *somnambulism*. The gulf fixed between right and wrong, the endeavour is made to bridge by plausible theories of morals, so that much darkness and deadness involve moral distinctions. Men too largely take to religion as a moral opiate or emotional stimulant as the need may dictate or the humour suggest.

Religion does not exist to furnish pleasure and soothing for men. The Church of God is neither a restaurant nor a literary club. The truths of the Bible are not to be ours by dreaming about them, neither are we in anywise to so relate ourselves to the ordinances and doctrines of the Bible as to imagine that, elevator-fashion, we are to attain to what is high in the sight of God without the use of our own feet. It is true the saints of God, whether Jew or Gentile, are made to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." It is, however, no less true, that the vantage ground given them in Christ is not intended to be a secure retreat for indolence to luxuriate in, but a superior position from which to work and fight for the Lord. There are high places in the spiritual realm to which we must *climb*, and never hope to be lifted. In Christ and for Christ we have a battle to fight and a race to run, and hence we are supplied with all that is requisite for our training in righteousness; for the principles of religious truth must be kneaded into our souls by constant and strenuous endeavours to do God's will in good and evil report, against the frowns or jeers of the world, the pleadings of our carnal nature, and the devices of Satan. The Bible sets before us the character of God to humble us, our heavenly Father's love and pity to cheer and help us, and the awfulness of human responsibility to sober us and render all we do genuine in God's sight. In these unspeakably important respects is the Bible useful to man. God has provided for men a literature sacred because inspired by Himself to give to all true men the light and strength which will fit them to fulfil their vocation.

II. This brings us to notice now the account the Bible gives in the text of its own purpose. Does God hear the ravens when they cry? Is there implanted in us by Himself the hungering after spiritual bread, and has He made no provision for us, or has this hungering no meaning but that he may tantalize us by offering us a stone instead of bread?

The man that makes God his portion and trust will not lack any good