

God Is Not Idle

SOME of us may perhaps be inclined to think that religion has very little to do with the matter at all. Work is such a very mundane affair, it seems to lie in a different sphere altogether...

Yet even here, in the noble religious thought which is enshrined in the Old Testament, there is the closest connection between the thought of God and of work; religion furnishes an ideal which can be brought to bear on common things because the Eternal God Himself is revered as a worker.

The Bible opens with a description of the six days' work of the Creator,—successive visions of divine activity in calling into being all that is; and the belief that His over ruling hand continues to govern the world He has made, comes out in every page of the Old Testament. The activities of nature are portrayed as the works of God's Providence. The omnipotent God is revealed to us in these pages as not merely the creator at the beginning, but as a sustainer from day to day and hour to hour... wherefore He is not an idle God.

It was recognised by the Jewish theologians that though rest has been enjoined for men on one day in seven there is no cessation of divine activity on the Sabbath Day,—that the sun rises and sets, and that the growth of vegetable and animal life continues unchecked. And this unceasing activity, as they conceived it, was directed by the highest wisdom.

There may be exuberance of life that takes pleasure in the mere display of power, like the play of a child, or is even ruthless and destructive. But the Israelite in ascribing Wisdom and Righteousness to God recognised that the power which rules the Universe is neither unthinking nor capricious. And the condition thus attained by the Israelites has never lost its hold on the Christian consciousness.

(The Gospel of Work: Four Lectures on Christian Ethics by William Cunningham, Cambridge: At the University Press, 1902, 7, 10-11, 13, e-book, Text, and paragraph structure modified)