

evidence either of mental weakness or delusion. Men who make the speculative reason the test of all truth, hold in derision those who decide the most momentous interests of life on the sure testimony of God. Superficial moralists bar all inquiry as to what is profitable in doctrine and reproof by affirming that a good, moral life, as the world understands this, is all that God demands of men. Others deny the need of any profit from Scripture in the way of teaching and warning by advocating that "the one thing needful" in all religions is that men be sincere in what they either think or do. Is it necessary even to say that men's lives must be affected by the ideas they entertain of the objects they worship? "Do men gather grapes of thorns," or hope to find refreshing, grateful waters, flowing from impure and bitter fountains? Will honesty be found in a *sincere worshipper* of Mercury, the god of thieving? Would you expect to find in a *devotee* of Mars, the God of war, a valuable accession to a society for the promotion of peace among the nations of the earth? Would you be hopeful regarding any reformation that a house of refuge might effect in the morals of one who is *by conviction* a priestess of Venus? How could you by any possibility manage to make a genuine believer in the cruel Moloch apprehend as true the doctrine—"Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy"? A truce then to this empty talk about sincerity being the essence of religion. It depends upon what men are sincere about, whether their sincerity be an evil or a blessing.

Nay, further, this unthinking plea that sincerity is all in all in religion, and in consequence that doctrine is nothing, and that reproof of error has no meaning or place, would compel us to regard Isaiah, and Paul, and John, aye, and our Lord also, as persons of contracted minds, who made "mountains of mole hills," and also, whilst aiming to win men's ears in order to guide and cheer them by heavenly harmonies, spread among them "jarring dissonances," and who whilst affecting to promote unity among men have sown plentifully in the world what has brought forth the fruit of "dividing asperities." Verily all these have sent not peace but a sword into the earth.

Unlike the character of man, and alas! the tragic history of our species, are melancholy demonstrations of the necessity to men of God-inspired writings, "profitable for doctrine and reproof," especially when we consider that they are the message to us regarding the person and salvation of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures are "the testimony of Christ." "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." Who by any skill or hardihood of mere human searching could have found out this indispensable doctrine? In the Scriptures alone is "the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." Without it we would perish for *lack of knowledge*.

And the first effect of such a knowledge upon all minds who receive it is to beget *godly sorrow* for sin, is to convince us that our ways are far other than God's ways, that even our righteousness are but "filthy rags," and that when we have done our best it becometh us to say, "We are unprofitable servants." All true teaching, that is all true widening of their horizon, humbles men. The history of all true discovery in the sphere of mind or matter demonstrates this. Men deepen in humility as they rise in knowledge. And humility in spiritual things does not consist merely in the consciousness of littleness and finitude, but also of guilt. It is not the feeling of mere creatureliness, but that I ought to have done what I have not, and ought not to have done what I have—the sense that God has given us the awful liberty of obeying or disobeying Him. So that spiritual teaching yields its first dividend in the way of spiritual profit in the shape of reproof, in convincing the sinner of the error of his way.

3. Scripture, however, reveals to us our undoneness, not that we may sink into despair, far less rest satisfied with a surface healing of our spiritual sores. That which is lame is not to be turned out of the way. Rather is it