

gressions. He could not say with the Psalmist, because he did not feel as that holy man felt—"Iniquities prevail against me,"—"I hate vain thoughts,"—"I hate and abhor lying,"—"I hate every false way"—"I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." No; he could not say this, because his frame of mind was quite of another sort, and his feelings had been cast in a very different mould. He was not yet taught to deplore the sinfulness of his own heart, or to understand that sin is the "abominable thing" which the Lord hateth. He was therefore far, very far from praising God for His infinite goodness and mercy, saying, "Thou deliverest my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." Nor did he feel disposed to address his soul, saying in the language of one who lived in the habitual contemplation of the Divine goodness, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." He thanked God that he himself was so good, that is, according to the sense in which he understood goodness—but not that God had made him good. And are there not many like him, whose religion is shallow—ill-defined—hollow—hypocritical? These religious services are all a show without reality—an empty form without any life. Religion, however, is not what such persons take it to be. Religion is more than profession. Prayer is more than mere words. Righteousness does not consist in fasting, or in penance, or in legal worship. Vital piety does not consist in crying with a show of emotion, "Lord, Lord." True religion fills the heart—affects the heart—and rules the heart, and where it does so its graces are seen to adorn the outer life of man. Take care therefore, friend, that you are not a Pharisee,—and you may be one of the strictest kind,—nay, one of the worst sort, though you may not think so, you may openly and professedly renounce self-righteousness as a most dangerous device, and as being antagonistic to the successful cultivation of vital religion and true godliness, and you may not be chargeable with holding the pernicious doctrine of human merit, or with resting your hope of salvation on your own works. You may even declaim against ostentation in religion, and you may thank God that you have not gone into those excesses and irregularities

of conduct from which you have seen others suffer so much misery. Nevertheless you may be a Pharisee. You may still have pride and selfishness in your bosom, and in your heart you may be thinking more of your own prayers and devotions than of the merits of Christ's death. You may be using religion as a mask beneath which lie concealed the most sinister motives, the most cunning schemes, and the most worldly purposes. Thousands have so used religion, and do so use it at this moment; and is it not quite possible that you are using it in the same way? For example, you may have had some sordid and selfish object in view in joining yourself to the Church of Christ. Your sole object may have been to obtain some influence and power among your neighbours. Business does not thrive the worse that in name you are a religious man; and it may thrive all the better that you be on good terms with religious people. Your business connection may be considerably extended in this way, that is, provided that you assume the Christian, call yourself one, and carefully impress on all religious people within the circle of your acquaintance, that you are one—a good Christian—the true friend of all good men. If, however, you use religion in this way, as a means of furthering your worldly prospects, and of improving your temporal condition merely, then you are most decidedly a Pharisee. You seek to gain the confidence of the public through your religious profession, in the same way as did the Pharisee of old. So also are you a Pharisee if you care nothing more for religion than simply in so far as an open profession of it may enable you to obtain an office in the Church. On the one hand you may be a Pharisee through self-righteousness, and on the other, you may be a Pharisee through hypocrisy. Both kinds of Pharisaism are most objectionable—highly sinful, and you must be careful to avoid them. If you wish to be accepted of God you must give up your foolish notions about your own goodness, and penitently look to Jesus whose blood is able to cleanse you "from all unrighteousness;" and until you make up your mind to do this, you never can become practically acquainted with "the way of life," or feel your need of sanctification through the Spirit of God.