

must be kept, not by a holy resting all that day, but so rigidly that a man though he were starving durst not pluck an ear of corn, and though he saw a fellow being prostrated with sickness durst do nothing to relieve him. They must wash always before they ate bread. They must bathe every day upon their return from the market. Their ideas of righteousness were wholly external, however. They did not touch the heart and the life. They were more concerned about the "outside of the cup and platter than the inside." While fleeing as they would pestilence anything whose contact would defile according to their exaggerated notions of ceremonial purity, they were in no wise alarmed at the corruption within their bosoms. It never dawned on them that "nothing from without" can defile a man but "that which cometh from within."

What a lamentable figure they cut from a moral point of view? They seemed to make a clean divorce between religion and morality. Here they are "making long prayers" and at the same time "devouring widows' homes." See them in the case of the trial and crucifixion of Christ zealous for their religion, scrupulously observant of its forms, yet ready to violate every principle of right, ready to commit murder itself in order to rid them of the object of their hate. The same features characterized the Jews at many periods of their history. Isaiah describes them at his time offering sacrifices, meeting for public worship, keeping holidays and holy days, fasts and feasts and evidently imagining themselves very religious, yet all the while utterly regardless of moral principle. Of what value is a religion of that kind? a dead cold mechanical thing. What pleasure can God find in a round of external observances, wholly separate from morality and life? He himself supplies the answer: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new weeks and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity even the solemn meeting." "Your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Our text is, as I take it, a protest against a mere outward religion. There is decided tendency in all religious systems to degenerate into such. Strictly speaking, the difficulty is not in the systems, but in those who profess them. Most great religious movements are at their inception characterized by intense earnestness. Spiritual life is deep and strong, and, as a rule, the weightier