

Time will not admit of calling special attention to the lessons of our subject ; but we cannot close without pointing out that it was among the religious people of the day that those evils arose. Almost all the religion of the Jews was among the Pharisees—they were the equivalent of our “professing christians.” Imagine the effect when Christ throws among them shell after shell of condemnation. But the point I wish to press home is this : That there is real danger of us getting into an unreal and hollow religious profession, and that without deliberate hypocrisy.

The mode of Church life and teaching may develop the external, the ostentatious and noisy elements of our nature, till the inner reality ceases to operate, or is shrivelled up, and men’s religion becomes as it were, a department run without much relation to practice. We must guard against that.

Our personal religion also may gradually slip into a formalism of outward act, and what might be called outer thinking and feeling, till even real Christian people sometimes lose the deeper, truer, virtues of humanity to a degree that allows them to be rebuked by the manlier, if less pretentious, virtues of men of the world.

