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"**LET NOT THY RIGHT HAND FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM! LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET ITS CUNNING.**"—*Ps. 137, v. 5.*

SERMON,

By the Rev. Robert Murray M'Cheyne, late Minister of St. Peter's Church, Dundee.

"He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."—*Rom. ii. 28, 29.*

FORMALITY is, perhaps, the most besetting sin of the human mind. It is found in every bosom and in every clime; it reigns triumphant in every natural mind; and it constantly tries to re-usurp the throne in the heart of every child of God. If we were to seek for proof that fallen man is "without understanding"—that he hath altogether fallen from his primitive clearness and dignity of intelligence—that he hath utterly lost the image of God's knowledge, after which he was created—we would point to this one strange, irrational conceit by which more than one-half the world are befooled to their eternal undoing—that God may be pleased with mere bodily prostrations and services—that it is possible to worship God with the lips, when the heart is far from him. It is against this error—the besetting error of humanity, and pre-eminent-ly the besetting error of the Jewish mind—that Paul directs the words before us; and it is very noticeable, that he does not condescend to argue the matter. He speaks with all the decisiveness and with all the authority of one who was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles, and he lays it down as a kind of first principle to which every man of ordinary intelligence, provided only he will soberly consider the matter, must yield his immed-

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iate assent—that "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

In the following discourse I shall show very briefly, 1st: That external observances are of no avail to justify the sinner; and, 2d: That external observances can never stand in the stead of sanctification to the believer.

L. External observances are of no avail to justify the sinner.

In a former discourse I attempted to show several of the refuges of lies to which the awakened soul will run, before he can be persuaded to betake himself to the righteousness of God; and in every one of them we saw that he that compassed himself about with sparks of his own kindling received only this of God's hand to lie down in sorrow. First of all, the soul generally contents himself with slight views of the divine law, and says: "All these have I kept from my youth up;" then, when the spirituality of the law is revealed, he tries to escape by undermining the whole fabric of the law; when that will not do, he flies to his past virtues to balance accounts with his sins; and then, when that will not do either, he begins a work of self-reformation in order to buy off the follies of youth by the sobrieties of age. Alas! how vain are all such contrivances, invented by a blinded heart—urged on by the malignant enemy of souls.

But there is another refuge of lies which I have not yet described, and to which the awakened mind often betakes itself with avi-