

am sure of God's favour both here and hereafter, is one of those wide-spreading trees which many a modern Zaccheus, acting from a far worse motive than curiosity, and being of short stature in the practical knowledge and true principles of Christianity has climbed, not indeed to obtain a clearer view of Jesus as the way to heaven, but to attempt to get to heaven without Him. What was thought and said by the Pharisee in the temple, is thought and said now by not a few within the pale of the visible church who, alas! have the "form of godliness" without its "power." We need not therefore travel back to the remote ages of ecclesiastical antiquity, to blame self-deluded men for that of which we ourselves are daily guilty; for who is there that does not believe himself sure of heaven, because he is not outwardly as bad as other men? There never was a more dangerous fallacy than this false belief. It is certainly not the "faith which worketh by love," nor is it "the victory that overcometh the world." No man, it must be remembered, can enter heaven on the plea that he is not a great and notorious sinner, or that in part he conforms to the law of God, but on the ground of his faith in Christ, through whom alone he can obtain forgiveness of sin, acceptance with God, and grace to prepare him for death, judgment, and eternity. And yet, like the haughty Pharisee, multitudes deceive themselves by holding the very same kind of belief as that on which he rested his hope of salvation. They look around them, and think uncharitably of their neighbours instead of being anxious about their own souls. They severely criticise the doings, suspect the motives, and diligently scrutinize the secrets of other people; but they never humbly examine themselves whether they "be in the faith;" and much less do they conceive it to be possible that they can "be reprobates." They are so keen-sighted as to be able to see a "mote" in a "brother's eye," but at the same time so utterly blind that they cannot "behold" the "beam" which is in their "own eye." And this is truly a most extraordinary paradox. But we find the key to this monstrous evil admirably explained in the sermon on the mount, and we constantly see the most appalling illustrations of it on every side. Can anything, however, be more absurd than to imagine that we are worthy of God's favour and love, and qualified for the enjoyment of his presence in glory, merely because we abstain from the commission of sins which one is

ashamed even to name, and because on this account we fancy ourselves much better than others? But it is assuredly a most dangerous experiment to suspend our salvation on the foolish supposition that we are more righteous, more pious, and more godly than other men. Even granting that, in some respects, we are not so bad as our neighbours, it is quite possible that in many other points we may be more wicked than they. Any superiority, therefore, which we may have over them, in the outward aspect of our moral character, never can be accepted, and ought never to be put forward, as the standard of fitness for the kingdom of heaven. "I am not as other men are," will never save. I am as good as you are—I am as holy as he is—has not a particle of Gospel in it, but is, on the contrary, opposed to all Divine truth and wisdom, and is a destructive snare and a gross delusion. There certainly can be no merit, in the sight of God, in doing more than is commanded, nor have we any reason to boast of our obedience to the divine law, seeing that we constantly fail and come short in far less than what is actually enjoined on us. How foolish and vain it is for any man to trust in his own works, is clearly enough expressed by Him who has said, "when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." But the Pharisee of yore did not contemplate the matter in this light; and this too is not the view which nominal christians of the present day take of their religious duty. They think that they can do more than their duty, and that consequently they excel other men and please God better. Hence, I am not "even as this publican," is constantly on the lips of thousands of formal worshippers: their meaning, is very plain. They mean to say, I am much holier than my neighbour; and under this false notion—that is, that their own holiness can save them—they challenge God by a bold—we might say, an impious appeal to their own goodness. But such systematic theology is worthless, and those who are content with its doctrines, shall one day discover to their loss and utter dismay, that "the hope of the hypocrite shall perish." The important question, therefore, which concerns all men is: Have I in me "this mind, which was also in Christ Jesus?" And if we have not this mind, it is vain to talk about our not being as other men are—that is, according to the Pharisaical opi-