

ten a religion. Speak softly to him: he may be as good as you are. Deal tenderly with him: he may have the tongues of men and angels, and much of the wisdom of the great world. He can argue skillfully; can enunciate smoothly in responses of the liturgy. Perhaps he is eloquent at the prayer-meeting; is apt at Scripture, and can point a rebuke with a glittering citation. He can put a needle point on a witty epigram, or can delight many hearers as he leaps into a controversy about doctrine, like an athlete into the arena. Possibly he can soothe his victim into admiring the lance that transfixes him, and prove that his skill has been learned by study of the law of Moses—perhaps not the law of love. It is his religion that is made *vain*, and evaporates—vanishes. Therefore he has a religion.

The word religion—and it is a singular fact about it—is hardly ever used in the Bible. St. Paul spoke twice of *Joudismos*, that is, Judaism, or as the translators have it, the Jew's religion. We have in this passage the only other instance of its use. And again the Greek word in this case is a very peculiar one. It is *θρησκία*—the outward cult, the worship or visible part of religious service. It is that part which the aroma is to the rose, or the incense to the sacrificial worship; it is as David's subtle poetic thought of the lifting up of the hands being an evening sacrifice. It is the outward, visible sign, not merely as a sign for its form, but for the essence and life that is invisible, filling and producing it, and exhaling in it with fragrance. Thus we catch a profound law in the other side of this word, "pure religion and undefiled;" not the within and deep, invisible meditation of the soul, but "a clene religioun and unwemmed amentis god," as Wiclif has it. Pure and clean worship, what God sees, and yet what we see too—the smoke of the sacrifice, the outer, visible sign, is to visit the poor and to keep the life unspotted. It is no mere morality of charity, but all luminous with the inner

purity shown out in deeds. Properly, St. James puts it: If any one among you *seem* to be religious (not in a bad sense, as a hypocrite); but, if he is seen to be religious, then let him bridle his tongue, or he will lose it. He must fail.

There is hid in this same word another idea, which is worth remembering: The lexicons point out the fact about it that the word also signifies a leaning to excess of visible worship. It is a *warm profession*, a notable worship, with a mere fraction of superstition, if we give the latter word the best sense it can bear. Religion, as we use it, often effervesces in words, and loses its vital power in noise. Probably every one has had experience of instances of piety that will justify my remark, that the most subtle delusion, after all, that our weak human nature is liable to, is the form of religion in which the hearing and talking portions of it usurp the place of inward contemplation, and equality of active work. For our religious life has much to do with talking, much to do with hearing. Both are fascinating, especially when compared with that other important part of all manly religion, doing what is unpleasant—taking up the cross, and mortifying the lusts of the flesh. There is no industry so active as the feverish bustle of the man who ought to be doing something else. Many a child is betrayed to the watchful mother by its excessive industry in doing what is not required. Of all our unhappy signs of a low state of piety and lack of real wisdom, I am often tempted to put this, being busied about many things, to the detriment of the spirit that seeks the one thing needful, as the most alarming in our churches. It is said that a king of France was a most notable locksmith while the throne was crumbling beneath him, and of all possible occupations that of a locksmith was not his vocation. So find we a man with a certain keenness of conscience that does not suffer him to rest in sin, and which does suffice to keep him from shameful acts, but goes little farther, and you