

find an unworthy medical practitioner in a great city, but you do not on that account condemn a noble profession. You may see the name of a merchant on the board of a bogus company, but you do not therefore conclude that every merchant is a swindler. It is not usual to judge any body by its camp followers except the Church of Christ, which toils under half the reprobrates in the country. It is preposterous to assign every cheat and vagabond to religion, and to assume that all irreligious people are high-minded and honourable. Your hundred may, of course include a Peter who will on occasion deny Christ, a John who on occasion will call down fire on a Samaritan villiage; those are imperfect Christians. They must be accepted but we firmly repudiate Judas.

Let our friend also remember that no one hates their faults so much as Christians do themselves. Here actually is a religious person, he says, who is cursed with a fiery temper; here is another who has a forbidding manner; here is a third who is not always straightforward. Amazing discovery! These people are not perfect, and yet dare to call themselves Christians. One would imagine that a sweet temper and gentle courtesy and perpetual candor were the rule over all the world. Worse failings than these may be admitted—that there are Christian men who by nature are revengeful, selfish, lustful. But all this is beside the question. Who ever said that Christians were perfect or expected to be very rapidly perfect? The Gospels make no such claim. What is contended is simply this, that every religious man is ashamed of his faults, and is fighting against their power with all his might and with the help of his Saviour. Have you been as quick to see the fight as you have been to see the fall? You

have seen him yeild; do you know how often he has resisted? You have not gone home with him and entered his room with him, and seen him on his knees and heard his cries for mercy and for deliverance. 'Tis the hard and strenuous struggle after better things which proves religion. It proves life. If you see a piece of wood carried down a stream, you think nothing of it; 'tis a log going down with the current. It would be strange if a log did otherwise. But if you saw a log making its way up stream, however slowly, you would take notice, and say, My eyes have deceived me; this is not a log. What goes against the current, patiently and perseveringly, is something else than a log; it must be a living thing. Going with the stream is nature. Going against the stream means grace. Take the most glaring and painful fault of any religious man in Bible history as an illustration—David's fall. You can look at this lamentable event from two sides. Condemn David for treachery and falsehood and impurity; you have simply said he was very like other kings of his day. But there is another chapter, and you must not close the case till it be read. It is the fifty-first Psalm. By universal consent there never was such a burst of repentance heard of in the world. Here is the peculiarity; other men have sinned as David sinned, but has every man repented like him? The fall is easily accounted for; it is human; but the repentance—can you account for this? It is divine.

Besides, let our friend not fall into another mistake in forming his judgment. Do not take an irreligious man at his best, and compare him with a religious man at his worst, and then say there is nothing in religion. This is a piece of shameful injustice. There are mean moments in every man's life, when the mercury goes