

A little observation will probably soon conduct him to the conclusion that his is by no means an isolated case, but that too many are standing upon a similar sandy foundation. What is his next step? Doubt whether any others may be in a better position: then distrust of all religious profession and religious men: then confirmed infidelity. If he is of a worldly avaricious disposition he soon regards religion as an agency to work upon the credulity of the ignorant in order to draw money from the people to support the priesthood. If he is immersed in politics he may regard it as an engine with which to work out deep political plots and secure rich offices for designing men. Thus each viewing the matter from his own personal standpoint will interpret all religious movements in the light of his own whims, and colour them to suit his own fancy. No inducements can lead such to reconsider the matter. They have already, in their own estimation, made trial of religion and it has failed them. It has not proved to them what it was represented to be. It did not make them unselfish, nor harmless as doves, nor holy, nor happy, and they are too honest to hold on to the mere pretence, to the shadow, while the substance is wanting. How far may the church which encouraged and received into its communion these unregenerate members, be held responsible for the fearful consequences? And these consequences are not confined to the persons referred to. The influence spreads and many listen only too eagerly to whatever may be advanced derogatory to the cause of truth and righteousness. Doubt, unbelief, religious indifference are fearfully contagious. Once admit into church fellowship a strong minority even, of unconverted members, and a blight, a plague, a pestilence, has been let loose upon that religious community; the fearful effects may not be visible at once, but the heaven will work. The young, the weak, the unwary, will catch the spirit and imitate the example,—the religious tone is let down to a lower, and still lower, key, till the church becomes a mere name, a by-word, like Samson when his locks were shorn, something to be mocked at and derided, and the scoffer delights to inscribe on the door posts of the sanctuary "mene, mene, tekel upharsin."

This letting down of religion, in the world's estimation, is one of the fearful consequences of introducing unfit, that is unconverted, persons into the church, and the inconsistencies of professed christians is the strongest argument infidelity can employ against the doctrines of the Bible. To the same extent that these inconsistencies are frequent and open to the world, is the church stripped of its power and robbed of its glory. But a worse consequence, if that is possible, remains to be touched upon. Faith in God, and some faith in each other, are both essential in order to secure harmonious action, and the accomplishment of the glorious designs of the incarnation and death of the Son of God. Christian men, honest, honorable and true, may lose confidence in each other, and the very foundations appear to be sliding away. You may just as well let the wolves loose among the sheep, as to allow distrust, want of confidence to run rampant in a religious community, just as well cut away the roots from the tree as take away the trust which the christian reposes in his brother.

Now one source of a want of reliance of man upon man in the religious world is this, Too many profess the truth who do not live by the truth. Giddiness, levity and indifference are manifested by some; dishonesty and fraud practiced by others; gross immorality is charged upon and proved against those who have long been regarded as pillars in the faith; truth and righteousness are sacrificed, and the result of the whole is members of the same