

Jesus makes a claim not only on respect, but also on obedience, which no honest man can escape by citing her failures and disgraces. Let it be laid to heart that it is not religion that creates rotten and loathsome character, but the want of religion. Has any more faultless picture of high living ever been painted than the sermon on the mount? Has anyone ever rated wilful evil-doers with more scathing contempt than Jesus? And if Jesus had singled out one class and put them in the pillory unto all time, it is the swarm of religionists whom He used to call whited sepulchres. It is not enough, therefore, to say that Jesus was not like these men, nor to frankly admit that He is in no way responsible for them. Our neutral must go farther and do honour to Jesus, because He openly washed His hands of the very kind of people which this objector now makes an excuse for not being a Christian.

One point ought at once to be granted without any rebate or grudging, and that is that religion must be judged not by faith, but by works. What a man believes or feels is between him and God. What he does is before man. If Christians do not as a rule live on a higher level than their fellow-men, then it may be fairly contended that their religion fails of its purpose. If on the whole they are slightly purer, kinder straighter, holier, then one is bound to acknowledge an unseen source, as he believes in a bulb when the scent of the hyacinth fills the room. Jesus was not afraid of this test, and did not concede it with qualifications. He boldly proposed it again and again, and insisted on its application. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Christianity ought to produce her credentials without pressure, and ought to be ashamed of any attempt to avoid the moral judgment of the

world. It was a poor business to say, "Here is a perfectly designed and finished engine, but we distinctly decline trial trips." Within the Gospels and Epistles Christianity is a nobly conceived religion; outside amid the billows and currents of life, Christianity demands yet greater admiration. The dangers of the trial have been much exaggerated. Is it really the case that religion has such a strong claim in the shape of authority, and makes such a poor show in practice? Are Christians as a body a down draught on Christianity? If this were really the case, and for nineteen centuries Christians has been more or less disreputable people, then it may be taken for granted that there would have been at least one religion less in the world. Indeed, it is not an extravagance to say that if any impartial person made a careful observation of one hundred Christians in the spirit of religious science, he would be astonished not at their utter unlikeness, but at their distinct likeness to Christ. Were I, however, at the ear of our friend when he is selecting his specimens, I would make a suggestion. Do not, if you really wish to get a reliable result, include among your hundred or your ten a certain portion of obvious hypocrites. Any shrewd person can distinguish between this kind of a man and a true Christian as easily as between silver and silver plate. It is bare justice to exclude such characters from this trial, since religion is no more responsible for them than a manufacturer for the adulterated goods which are sold under his name, but which he has never produced. Religion has been badly treated in this affair, for she has been held responsible both for her own prodigals, whom she must not disown, and then for other peoples prodigals she did not rear and heartily dislikes. You may