

It will also be found on examination that all these objections would prove too much. They *actually require the admission of the ungodly into the churches*. The openly immoral and profligate must be pressed into the company. A line of demarcation does not exist at all, according to these objections. But the objectors shrink from this issue. From strictly indiscriminate communion they revolt. There is a natural feeling of incongruity which no theory can suppress. This is discoverable in the spontaneous exclamation of worldly men, when a professor of religion falls into flagrant evil, that he ought not to be a member of a Christian Church. The need of some line is intuitively felt. It may be asked, what line can you have other than credible evidence of true discipleship? Unless this be adopted we are involved in endless inconsistencies and difficulties.

In our judgment there is vast importance attached to this matter. Promiscuous church membership is perhaps *the bane* of the visible kingdom of Christ at this present time; it mingles the church and the world in an unhallowed union, and confounds those eternal distinctions which the Head of the Church would have ever visibly set forth. It moreover deceives and ruins immortal souls. No one can calculate the wide waste of ruin produced by it. In most cases it acts as a triple shield against the arrows of conviction, when God's word is faithfully and searchingly preached. It induces, with lamentable frequency, the cry of peace, peace, where there is no peace. Under its soporific influences men and women live and die self-deceived; supposing that they are disciples when they have no part nor lot in the matter, and entering the fearful realities of eternity with a lie in their right hand.

At the same time it is of almost equal moment to avoid "breaking the bruised reed or quenching the smoking flax." There is a rigidness of requirement sometimes which is alike unscriptural and hurtful. We have no authority for demanding large and comprehensive views of divine truth, nor the indications of a full-aged christianity, in order to membership. The flock of the Lord hath many lambs as well as full-grown sheep, and the fold is equally for *them*. There are *babes* in Christ who are *in the Church* to be fed "with the sincere milk of the word," as well as men whose requirement is "strong meat." Nor have we warrant for demanding the statement of an experience that involves precise dates and means of conversion. It not unfrequently happens that such things, when given, are false imaginings.