

of a christian's life marked out in our guide book? The answer will readily occur. This is scarcely to be expected, when it is remembered that there was a Judas even among our Lord's disciples. But where twelve have been admitted to church fellowship, will the history of our churches in these provinces warrant the expectation that in a majority of instances eleven of the twelve will prove to be genuine disciples of Christ? Why is it that the proportion of active, zealous members is so small, compared with the names on the church lists? In a church of 200 members how few will be found ready to co-operate with the pastor in every good word and work! How few are prepared to lead the devotions in social exercises! In the absence of a pastor, how few are fitted to visit the house of mourning and utter words of soothing and comfort to the afflicted. But, not to mention mere lack of religious fervor and zeal, is there not great reason to fear that many are to be found in all our churches who do not even pretend to live what can, from a scripture standard, be called a christian life? Honest, honorable, truthful, moral, they may be, but prayer in public, in the family, and in private has been long abandoned. The word of God is an uninteresting book to them. Growth in grace, advance in holiness, increase in the knowledge and love of God, are neither by them desired nor sought for. The world fills all their thoughts, engrosses all their attention, and fully taxes every power of both body and mind. They are religious only in this sense, they became members, in the usual way, of a christian church, and no formal action of the church has erased their names. That a too hurried admission into church fellowship is the sole cause of this state of things, no one probably would maintain; but that it has greatly aided in bringing about such an undesirable condition can hardly be denied, while the neglect of careful training may perform no small part of the same result. Again some good may be secured by noticing occasionally even an enemy's estimation; and, in this connection we will venture to state what the foes of religion sometimes affirm. They do affirm that a profession of religion and admission into a church, and long continuance in this position, are no guarantee of good moral conduct,—that truthfulness and common honesty in the practical business of life, are as frequently found in the world as in the church,—that even those who pray and commune together on the Lord's day feel the necessity of strict vigilance of each other in the work of the week,—that gross immorality and licentiousness are frequently indulged in by those who profess great zeal for truth and righteousness. These affirmations are often mere slanders or suspicions without foundation or reason; but are not instances, which furnish our enemies with weapons to assault us, too frequently occurring? While absolute purity in church membership, is not in this sinful state to be hoped for, may it not be safely affirmed that the proportion of unreliable or doubtful members is much too large? To be a member of a christian church should be a guarantee of truth, honesty and honor. The simple word of such a one should be equal to another's oath; nay to his own declaration in a court of law,—his verbal promise equal to his signature on a legal document. A certificate of church membership should be all the reference he would require as to general deportment and faithful performance of any duty assigned him. There may be error, or difference of opinion, as to how far this could be brought about by the adoption of more caution and delay in admitting members to church fellowship; but that there might be some approximation towards it by this means can scarcely be questioned.

Let us next notice some of the evil consequences resulting when unconverted persons are admitted into church fellowship.