

## PROFESSION INSUFFICIENT.

Profession of religion and union with some branch of the visible church are somewhat popular acts in these days. Time was when such was not the case; for instance, in the days of the apostles, during the years of ancient persecution, and in the earlier periods of Methodism. Then, as a general rule, profession was sincere and vital religion was enjoyed. That some were deceived, others mistaken, and that a few even in those times, made a cloak of religion from sinister motives or to secure unworthy objects, I have no wish to deny. There is, however, sufficient reason to justify the belief that the vast majority of professors were real Christians, and who united with the church from a sense of obligation as well as of privilege. Their sincerity and their religious principles were alike subjected to a stern and painful test. They had to pass through a fiery ordeal, to sustain which they required no ordinary degree of grace. In times of tribulation and peril, when spoiling of goods was to be endured and life itself was endangered, they who had not that grace easily renounced their profession and abjured confederacy with the followers of the despised Nazarene.

Times now are greatly changed, whether for the real advantage of Christianity every one must form his own opinion. The danger at the present day is that persons may content themselves with merely joining the church and making a religious profession, whilst destitute of a change of heart or a saving interest in Christ. The acts referred to are rather *fashionable* than otherwise. To belong to the church and avow oneself a Christian is not the way at least to sink in public estimation, but rather tends to secure a character. Christianity is so far respected by worldly men, that where a person is believed to be a sincere professor of it, they are disposed to regard him favorably,—to hold him in estimation as one actuated by the purest and most benevolent principles.

This circumstance, doubtless, has led some, I will not say many, to assume the *name* while devoid of the genuine *character* of christian; and as ministers cannot read the heart, they have admitted such, on application, to the privileges of the church in good faith, charitably believing them to be all their profession implies. A sifting time, however, is yet to come. They will eventually have to deal with one whose eyes like flames of fire penetrate the heart, and who cannot be deceived.

Members of the church should judge themselves lest they be judged by the Omniscient One. There is a great necessity for every professor of religion to “examine” himself, whether he be in the faith. Let no one deceive himself, or allow himself to be deceived. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Reader, how is it with *thee*? Hast thou the “root of the matter” in thy heart, or hast thou a “name to live whilst thou art dead?” Hast thou now faith in Christ? Hast thou grace in thy soul? Art thou happy in God, the Spirit testifying to thy spirit that thou art his child? Art thou sure thou hast passed from death unto life, and that now, at this moment,