

attention has been called? Is it any other thing than that they should give heed to the word of God, so as not to have it, as the sword of Christ's mouth, against them, either in their corporate or individual walk and ways? Has anything been urged, in spirit, beyond what is repeated at the close of the address of each epistle to the apocalyptic churches—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches?" If the church disregard, let, at least, the individual *hear*. Is not this right? Is not this a necessary condition of faithfulness to Christ?

If, as the Scripture shows, the Church itself would go wrong, as far as a faithful witness for Christ in the world is concerned, and the general body of christian profession be at last disowned of Christ, nothing can exceed the futility of pleading the sanction of any part, or of the whole even, of christian profession for what I do.

For if, by the light of the divine word, I am made to see how, on the right hand and on the left, the body of general profession has failed to pursue God's objects—has made way for worldly influences—has turned aside from the Spirit's guidance—has not "held the head," in the sense at least of the union of the believer with Christ the risen head of the body, which is the meaning of "not holding the head"—is not waiting for God's Son from heaven—how vain a thing is it to turn aside from that light, to seek a sanction for my position, or principles, or walk, or association as a Christian, from that which the light has already condemned. If Scripture tells me that the Church, in its profession, will fail, and be the subject of universal corruption at last, of what possible value can its sanction be to me in opposition to the light of the divine word?

But let the Christian, who sees how all things are gone wrong in the mass of profession around him, and yet hesitates to commit himself to a path of obedience which would strip him of every alliance and of every source of strength but that which springs from the presence of the Lord, take up the book of Ezra in connexion with the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, and let him see if he will not find there a sample of the Lord's ways with a poor, despised remnant in Israel which will encourage his heart to go forward, trusting only in the Lord, and looking only for His approval.

Here he will find the Lord's recognition of a remnant among the Jews who were delivered from the Babylonish captivity, and were engaged in the rebuilding of the temple, a work to which they seemed utterly unequal, and which they pursued amidst every outward discouragement, of poverty, and weakness, and the neglect of the mass of the Jews, and the utter hostility of their enemies: but the Lord was with them.

The decree of Cyrus, the Persian conqueror, gave occasion for this movement, and inasmuch as it proposed God's objects and not man's, it became a test of the moral condition of the people.

Deliverance was proclaimed to these captives that they might build the house of God. But in the prosecution of this object they must leave their secure asylum in Babylon, and the houses and vineyards they had planted there. Accordingly the majority of the people preferred their present ease at a distance from Jerusalem, and in ignoble bondage, to the task of building the house of God and of rearing again the ruined walls of Jerusalem. This honour they were willing to leave to other hands. "But a wall in Judah and Jerusalem" is in the estimation of Ezra a greater proof of God's mercy to His people than a palace in Babylon.

The first movements of this remnant, as is always the case when the hand of God is working, were in weakness and indistinctness of apprehension as to the