



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

BISHOP WARNS OF THE FOLLY OF AN EMPTY CHRISTIAN PROFESSION

Speaking upon the text, "Let us hold fast our profession", Hebrews 4:14, Bishop J. C. Ryle, the first Bishop of Liverpool, had the following to say.

"When St. Paul uses this expression, there can be little doubt of his meaning. He meant the public profession of faith in Christ and obedience to Him, which every person made when they became a member of the Christian Church. In the days of the Apostle, when a man or woman left Judaism or heathenism, and received Christ as a Saviour, he declared himself a Christian by certain acts. He did it by being publicly baptised, by joining the company of those who had been baptised already, by publicly promising to give up idolatry and wickedness of all kinds and by habitually taking part with the followers of Jesus of Nazareth in all their religious assemblies, their ways, and their practices. This what Paul had in view when he wrote the words, Let us hold fast our profession.

serious matter

Profession in those days was a very serious matter, and entailed very serious consequences. It often brought on a man persecution, loss of property, imprisonment, and even death. There was a very deep meaning in Paul's words, Let us hold fast our profession. In the days in which we live, 'profession' is a very different thing. Millions of people profess and call themselves Christian, whom the Apostle would not have called Christian at all. Millions are annually baptised, and added to the rolls and registers of Churches, who have little or no religion. Many of them live and die without ever attending a place of worship, and live very ungodly lives. Most of these people are reckoned Christians while they live, and are buried with Christian burial when they die.

But what would Paul have said of them? I fear there can be no doubt of the answer. He would have said that they did not deserve to be reckoned members of any church at all! He would not have addressed them as 'saints and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus'. He would not have called upon them to 'hold fast their profession'. He would have told them they had no profession to hold fast, and they were yet 'dead in trespasses and sins', Ephesians 2:1. All this is sorrowful and painful, but it is only too true. LET THOSE DENY IT WHO DARE."