

THE STRANGERS IN ZION.

The idea which has become general among Christians, that it is a very easy thing to be a Christian, a life free from trouble, very respectable, containing all the pleasures of natural conditions without any of its evils, is one of the great evils of the present system of evangelization. The Evangelist says come, leave off liquor, profanity, lying and all great presumptuous sins, join our church, attend its meetings, give to its support regularly and believe, that you may go to heaven and you are one of the best of Christians. You will find through the church the passage way to wealth, to social standing and the most advantageous matrimony, and if you desire a valuable aid to political ambitions. Thus you will have the most pleasant and happy time of any people living on earth: come, then, with us.

In this way Zion is full of "strangers" – they are in her – her children, but not of God's begetting. They are tares sown by the wicked one; begotten of evil desire – desires of the flesh. The desire that she might be great, and her outward appearance and prosperity such as would commend her to the world and cause her to be admired; that by the numbers and wealth of these strange children she might build grander and costlier edifices with higher steeples; that her ministers should be noble men of titles and large revenues – the language artists of earth; that her music should be the most refined and artistic.

Thus she draws nigh to the Lord with her lips, and honors Him with her mouth, while her heart is far from Him, courting the world and its vanities and pleasures. She has ceased to know as of yore that "the love of God constraineth," and "the goodness of God leadeth to repentance," and now she knows Him only to fear, and God says: "Their fear toward me is taught by the precepts of men. Because of her love of the world, (which is enmity against God,) therefore has He

permitted blindness to come upon her, and her teachers hath He covered.

The prophecies and visions of God's word are become unto her "as the [R213 : page 6] words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned [a Doctor of Divinity,] saying: Read this I pray thee: and he saith I can not, for it is sealed; and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying: Read this I pray thee – and he saith I cannot, I am unlearned.... Therefore behold I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." Isa. 29:10-14.

Oh Zion how hast thou defiled thyself! how hast thou become Babylon! how hast thou multiplied thy riches but not thy joy! how hast thou increased thy children but not of God – for the multitude of thy strangers is as the dust.

How is the mustard seed become a great tree, spreading itself in all the earth for the wicked, yea the fowls of the earth find a home in thy branches. Thou art become the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. How art thou become Babylon and confusion? it is even the voice of thy confused company of strange children.

Woe unto thee O Zion, how art thou become Babylon and confusion: it is woe unto thee, for thine anguish and travail cometh: for the Lord shall take from thee His children, and in the multitude of the strangers thou shalt not have consolation. With anguish, and through great tribulation shall his children come out of thee. For the Lord shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. But who may abide the day of His coming, (presence,) and who shall stand when he appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers soap."

But Zion saith: "I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing," and knoweth not that she is poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked. Thus saith the Lord: "I counsel thee, buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed...and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see. So, then, because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues." (Rev. 18:4.)

Would that God's children might all realize that their joy should come from their faith in His promises, and not from the world's smiles; that their pleasure should consist in self denial and crucifixion of the fleshly nature, and not from its gratification. Then could they indeed count present afflictions a joy, and "rejoice to be accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Christ." They would think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which shall try them, as though some strange thing happened unto them: remember that when men shall revile you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name's sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad." Yea, and whosoever will live Godly shall suffer persecution, and persecution has always come from some religious class in power.
