

YOUR SAFETY IN THE COMING TROUBLE.

'The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?'

'He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil: he shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.'—Isa. 33:14-16.

THE fear here spoken of by the prophet is the fear that is now beginning to be experienced throughout the lengths and breadths of nominal Zion—Christendom (Christ's kingdom), so called. The Prophet, as he frequently did (e.g., Isa. 55:3-9), took the standpoint of the future,—of our day,—and thus speaks for the Lord of the work he is now about to do—'Now will I rise, saith the Lord: now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. [The appointed time to overthrow the present order of things and to establish the Kingdom of God having come] Ye [the same class referred to above—the sinners in Zion. See also verse 1] shall conceive chaff; ye shall bring forth stubble [Such will be the result of the great efforts to draw numbers into the membership of nominal Zion—the efforts to stamp all the world who will submit to it with the name Christian, as manifested in the recent movements toward so-called Christian Union, which would not only baptise the ignorant infants and count them as born into the Church, and recognise all the adherents of Apostate Christianity, but seeks also to gain by compromises and by flattery the adherents of Judaism, who totally repudiate Christ, as well as the blinded millions of heathenism that bow to idols of wood and stone and know not God nor his dear Son, our Lord and Redeemer]—Ye shall conceive chaff: ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath [your false doctrines of belief and policy] as fire shall devour you [Your unprincipled policy which would thus sell the Lord and the truth for gain—in numbers and prestige and power before the world—shall lead to dire results—to fearful trouble and destruction]. And the people [there assembled and compacted in a false Christian, or as some suggest, religious union.—See also Isa. 8:9-13] shall be as the burnings of lime [self-

consumed; the very nature of an organisation of such heterogeneous elements must of necessity be self-destructive, the process also being a painful one]; as thorns [Yes, it will be a union of thorns; each will be a thorn in the flesh to the other] cut up [made ready] shall they be burned in the fire.'

Observe, it is '*the sinners in Zion*', not the humble sincere people of God, that are afraid; and fearfulness hath surprised *the hypocrites*. To the former class, as in the end of the Jewish age also, belong those wilfully blind [R1874: page 230] leaders in Zion and all their wilfully blind followers, who refuse to see the truth when it is testified to them and who love and prefer the error and devote their energies to bolstering up and reinforcing the systems of error with which their temporal interests, social and financial, seem to be identified. And in doing this, ostensibly to promote the interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom, but really in opposition to its establishment, their course is surely hypocritical, as the Prophet declares.

While the great theologians, whose leisure and learning have afforded them special facilities for coming to a knowledge of the truth, have wasted their talents in building up and supporting with their influence great systems of error, and while it has been and still is their great ambition to draw into these systems great numbers, according to the Prophet, they have been only preparing stubble for the fire of this evil day. And already, as the Prophet declares, 'fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites.' Does it seem surprising to some that the Prophet should so irreverently handle some of the reverend gentlemen of today who so wisely (?) descant upon the credibility and authority of the sacred Scriptures, and who, while condemning them, with a great show

of learning and eloquence, offer in their stead the miserable substitute of their own false reasonings utterly regardless of the divine revelation? For the beautiful record of man's creation in the image of his Maker they substitute the ape origin, or, going back of that, they find him in the protoplasm. For the account of his fall and redemption they substitute the theory of his evolution by what they call a natural process, from lower to higher conditions. And for the clearly defined destiny of man revealed in the Scriptures they substitute the vain and idle speculation of endless progression.

While all of the leading or clerical class in nominal Zion have not yet fallen into this snare, the great ones have, and their ideas are fast taking possession of the theological seminaries, and their public teachings from the pulpit, the religious press and the professor's chair are fast moulding the thought of all 'Christendom'. And it is from this source, and as a result of the 'fears' of this very class, whose learning and positions of influence enable them to see, as people in the humbler walks of life have been less able to see, the trend of events toward disaster and ruin—the great time of trouble foretold. And instead of using their powerful influence for truth and righteousness, which would of course necessitate the repudiation of their own past erroneous teachings, and humbly endeavouring to lead the people back to the old paths pointed out by the Lord and the apostles, in their pride of heart and consequent blindness they are leading them further into the labyrinths of error; and, according to the Word of the Lord (Luke 6:39), both leaders and people shall fall into the ditch.

But while the most intelligent and influential, who are thus misusing their talents and betraying their trusts as stewards of the Lord's goods, as did their prototypes in the Jewish age (Matt. 15:7-9, 14), are the greatest sinners in Zion, those also who blindly follow their leading become partakers of their sin (Rev. 18:4) and share the same penalty—both together 'fall into the ditch' and, as 'stubble', are prepared for the fire.

While in their fear of the fiery trouble which they now see coming upon the earth, they anxiously soliloquise (for they hesitate to express their fears openly)—'Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with the everlasting burnings [the consuming burnings, the

trouble threatening to last until the whole present order of things is consumed]?'

If these inquiries were made of the Lord, and with a disposition of heart to obey his voice, the fearful calamities now, alas! soon to be experienced, would be averted; but such is not the case. These are mere soliloquies, the underbreath expressions of their fears, the only result of which is the leaning still more to their own understandings, the compromise of truth and righteousness and a determination to band together for mutual protection and the resistance of the righteous judgments of God. As to the results of such a union, see Isa. 8:9, 10; 28:17, 18.

But hear the word of the Lord, ye who have no part nor lot with the workers of iniquity, and who would inquire of him upon what conditions any may stand in this evil day; for thus saith the Lord, 'He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from the holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from the hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil: he shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.' And if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

In these days when iniquity abounds and the love of the many who profess the name of Christ waxes cold, only those who have the stamina of character can fulfil these conditions. Those who reverence God more than men, however great may be their pretensions to wisdom, piety and learning; who rest their faith implicitly upon the inspired testimony of the Apostles and Prophets; and who exercise their own God-given right of private judgment and so *prove* all things by an appeal, not to human philosophies and idle speculations, but 'to the law and the testimony' (Isa. 8:20), and *hold fast* to that which is good—those only can fulfil these conditions.

To walk righteously means to walk contrary to the course of this present evil world. It means to take the unpopular side of the questions of the day in nearly every case, and thus to be misunderstood and misrepresented and have our names cast out as evil; in a word, it means to suffer for righteousness' sake.

To speak uprightly is to go a step further than to walk righteously: it implies not only personal effort to withstand evil and error in their effects upon one's own character, but [R1875; page 231] also the fortitude to withstand error with bold and fearless presentations

of the truth, regardless of the cost of such faithfulness, which we are assured not only by the Word of God, but by observation and experience as well, will be persecution in some or possibly in many forms. Such a course of righteousness in 'this present evil world', when the powers of darkness are in the ascendancy, inevitably leads to social ostracism and hatred, in proportion to the zeal for God that is manifested, and persecution in some form is sure to follow. But those of the class here described cannot be *bribed* by any of these considerations. If one has been a clergyman and his eyes have been opened to the truth, he cannot be bribed by any considerations of salary or prestige or fame to stifle his convictions—'he shaketh his hands from the holding of bribes'.

If he be a merchant or mechanic, and the multitudes say, Come, join our fraternity and band together with us to conserve our interests or to fight for our rights, he replies, No, 'They that are of a forward [Perverse; deceitful; false] heart are abomination to the Lord, but such as are upright in their way are his

delight. Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished'. (Prov. 11:20, 21) Let the rich consider the interests of the poor and needy, lest they fall under the fearful condemnation of the oppressor (James 5:1-5); and let the poor commit their cause unto the Lord, who has pledged himself on behalf of all those that trust in him.

To all thus minded, who unflinchingly stand for truth and righteousness in this evil day, is the blessed promise of God—'He shall dwell on high [above the fears, the unrest and the distress which will overwhelm the world]; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks [the Lord, the Rock of ages, the Most High shall be his hiding place]; bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure [he will be sustained with the bread of life and refreshed with the water of life both spiritually and physically]. Blessed are all they that put their trust in the Lord, for they shall never be confounded.

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