

Israel And Britain. A Note of Warning

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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"But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him."—[John 12:37-41](#).

THE BLINDNESS of Israel concerning our Lord was sadly remarkable. It was a blindness of the eyes, for they saw his many miracles, and yet believed not: their ears also seemed to be stopped, for they heard his words and did not understand them; and their hearts also were heavy, for they did not relent under the plaintive admonitions of a Saviour's love. Their hearts were cruel towards the Messiah; they hated him without a cause. No door was open to the heart of Israel; they had hardened their heart, they had shut their eyes, they had stopped their ears, and even he that spake as never man spake gained no access to their souls. They went so far as to crucify him, and cried as they did so, "His blood be on us, and our children,"—words so sadly verified when Jerusalem was destroyed, and her children slaughtered, sold as slaves, or scattered to the four corners of the earth. It was indeed, a terrible blindness which happened unto Israel.

Her rejection of the Lord Jesus is the more amazing because Isaiah gave so clear an account of the Messiah, and so clearly pictured Jesus of Nazareth. Descriptions of him could not have been more explicit than were the prophecies of Isaiah. It would be very easy to construct an entire life of Christ out of the book of Isaiah, beginning with "a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," and ending with "he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death." Isaiah spake of John the Baptist as the "voice crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God," and he foretold our Lord's ministry by the way of the sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the Gentiles, where the people who sat in darkness saw great light. The prophecy portrayed his Lord as "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Clearest of all is he upon his vicarious sufferings, concerning which he uses a variety of most definite expressions, such as,— "The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Isaiah saw so clearly the day of our Lord Jesus

that he spake rather as an evangelist than as a prophet; as an eyewitness, rather than as one foretelling a far-off event. Yet all this clearness was lost upon the men of his generation, and upon those who followed after. The nation had so long been fickle towards God, and had trifled so long with God's truth, that it was at length given up to a judicial hardness of heart, so that it could not understand or perceive. They refused the plainest messages of grace, and were so confirmed in unbelief that all their prophets cried with one plaintive voice, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

Nor was it alone grievous that Israel sinned against the light which shone in Isaiah's testimony; but, alas, she closed her eyes against the meridian splendour of our Lord's own life. Jesus bore his own witness in his person, teachings, works, and gifts. A sad wonder lies in the fact, that they did not know the Lord of glory although they saw his miracles, which were sure witnesses to his claims. He wrought among them works which none other man did. There is about our Lord a likeness to God: in all that he does the Godhead shines forth. He is so pure that he can say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" How like to him who is saluted as "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts!" His teaching is so full of tenderness and gentleness that since God is love, we conclude that Christ is God. His many miracles touch upon every point in the great circle of omnipotence. What is there that God can do which the Christ did not do? Was he not multiform and multitudinous in his works of power and grace? Herein lay the wonder, that though he did so many miracles before them, not in secret but actually before their eyes; though he fed them with bread which they could see, and handle, and eat; though he healed the sick and raised the dead, they yet believed not on him. How sadly far can men go in unbelief, prejudice, and hardness of heart! How dim can human eyes become when men refuse to see! How darkened the understanding when men are unwilling to comprehend! Let us tremble at this, lest ourselves by imitating the chosen people in their unbelief should fall into like bondage to prejudice and ignorance, lest we by tampering with truth should come at last to be incapable of perceiving it, lest we also by rejecting the testimony of God should be given up to our own willfulness, to believe a lie and refuse the truth. Such, then, as Isaiah had foreseen, was the state of Israel in our Lord's day: never clearer evidence, and never more obstinate refusal to see it; never truth more plain, and never rejection so determined. Woe to those who close their ears; for the day cometh when they shall no longer hear! Woe to those who shut their eyes to the light, for they shall ere long be made blind! Isaiah was informed that such would be the outcome of his ministry: the Lord bade him say to the people, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not." This must have been a very sad business for so generous and tender-hearted a man of God. It was painful to him to be so clear and yet to be so little understood. He was the Paul of the Old Testament; to him belonged fulness of knowledge, clearness of vision, plainness of speech, and faithfulness of spirit, and yet none of these things could make the people understand his message and receive it into their hearts. He

was sublime in thought, attractive in word, and affectionate in spirit, and yet they did not believe his testimony; so that he must often have been astonished and heart-broken as he spake in vain to a people who were determined that they would not hear.

This morning I shall draw certain lessons for ourselves from the great evangelical prophet, his ministry, and the people to whom he ministered so vainly. Our first meditation shall be *concerning Isaiah and his ministry*: and our second shall be *concerning the people to whom he spake*. Alas! I fear that we who speak in the name of the Lord in these last days have also to deal with hearts that are gross, ears that are heavy, and eyes that are dimmed. Upon this generation also there is falling a measure of judicial withdrawal of light and discernment; and we also have to cry, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

I. First, then, let me speak with you CONCERNING ISAIAH AND HIS MINISTRY. Oh, that the Spirit of God may speak with power through me. Our text says two things of Isaiah: first, that "he *saw* his glory," and secondly, that "he *spake* of him."

The first statement is that Isaiah *saw*. Isaiah was a great seer: his prophesy begins thus,—*"The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem."* All prophets were more or less seers, and saw what they foretold; but Isaiah above others was endowed with the seeing and foreseeing faculty. He had the clearest sight, and for that reason he had the clearest speech. When a man speaks so that you cannot understand him, the usual reason is that he does not understand himself; and when a man speaks so as to be readily comprehended, it is because the thought in his own mind is well defined. He that would speak well must see well. Mark the two things in the text—"When Isaiah saw his glory, and spake of him."

In what sense is Isaiah said to have seen that which he spake? Does it not mean that he realized his thoughts? that they stood out vividly, so as to make a deep impression upon his own mind? Things to come were already come in his apprehension: he beheld what he believed, he felt what he foretold. He was not a dreamy person, maundering about half-fashioned, undeveloped thoughts; but he was a person who knew, and perceived, and felt what he preached. He saw with his soul what he set forth with his lips.

But what did he see? It is a most important thing that in these days you and I should see the same, for the same work lies before us among a people who are a repetition of that disobedient and gainsaying nation. Read, then, with care the sixth chapter of Isaiah. Open your Bibles and refer to the passage verse by verse.

First, what Isaiah saw was *the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up*. When the prophet went abroad among the people he heard them speaking against the Lord God; some contending for our deity and some for another; some leaning upon an arm of flesh, and others despising the promise of Jehovah the God of Israel. All this, I say, he saw out of doors, and he was troubled. But when he went into the sanctuary of God he saw the Lord sitting

upon a throne : still reigning, still glorious, undisturbed by opposition. He must then have felt like David when he said, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." As David saw Christ upon the throne amid the stirrings of the people, so did Isaiah see the Lord Jesus, not only upon the lowly mercy-seat, but upon a throne high and lifted up. I pray you, brethren, settle this in your hearts: our Lord is highly exalted as Lord of all. When you see evil occurrent, do not imagine that it defeats the eternal purposes of Jehovah: when you hear blasphemy and your blood runs cold, do not think that Christ has lost his glory: when men riot in sin, do not dream that the reins of affairs are out of Jesus' hands; for still he is "God over all, blessed for ever." My heart exalts this day, as, by undoubting faith, I am assured that he who died on Calvary is now exalted on high, far above all principalities and powers. "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ!" To thee our spirits ascribe infinite honour, world without end. Though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, yet the Lord reigneth. He that died upon the tree is crowned with majesty, and all the angels of God worship him. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Let us have no question about this; for if we have, we shall not be prepared to speak in the Lord's name with this evil generation. Amid the anarchy of the ages we see the glorious high throne of our redeeming Lord unmoved, unmovable: this is the rock of our refuge when the unsettled times rage about us like the waters of the troubled sea. We cannot be afraid, for Christ is on the throne.

Observe that in Isaiah's vision he not only saw the Lord "upon a throne high and lifted up," but he saw that *"his train filled the temple."* so that in that temple there was room for no one else. The robes of this great King filled all the holy place; and neither priests nor offerers could there find standing room. It is a great thing to see how Jesus fills the heavenly places; in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead. Let it be acknowledged to be so in heaven, for the glory of our Redeemer fills every street of the upper city, every mansion of the Father's house. In the church below, which is also his temple, among his spiritual people, the glory of the Lord Jesus engages and occupies every heart. They feel that there is none other in whom they can trust, none other whose words they will receive, none other in whom they glory; the Lord Christ is all in all to us, and we know no other Master or Saviour. His train fills the temple. I trust it is so among us. From Sabbath to Sabbath the one glory of this Tabernacle is the person and work of Jesus. What a glory hath God put upon the Only Begotten Son, whom he hath raised from the dead that he should be head over all things to his church, which he fills with his life, light, and love. Nor may we forget that all the things that exist are in a sense his temple, and the whole universe is filled with his train;

for "he hath ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things." Glory be unto our ascended and reigning Lord.

In this vision Isaiah saw *the flaming spirits that wait upon Christ of God*. He calls them "seraphims." The best interpretation we can give is "burning ones:" they burn in the sense of consuming. They burn up that which ought to be consumed, namely, all kinds of evil. There are powers around our Lord which will destroy evil. You ask me to tell you something about these seraphim; how can I? They have covered their faces, and covered their feet. Since nothing is to be seen, what can I tell you? Neither would it be right for us to speak concerning them, for manifestly it is their desire to be hidden. Who will violate their wish to be concealed? They covered their faces, they covered their feet, and therein they did as good as they say, "Look not on us, but look on him who sits upon the throne, whose attendants we are." This much is all we know,—exalted intelligences are in waiting upon our Lord, and are able to fly swiftly at his bidding. Tremble not concerning this error, or that, it shall be burnt up by those agencies which are at the command of our exalted Lord. Spirits from God shall run to and fro, and smite, as with the fire of God, those powers of darkness which now oppress our race. God himself is a consuming fire: who can dwell with him but those that are like him? He maketh his ministers a flame of fire. Around our Lord are the chariots of God, which are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. His power knows no limit. His word runneth very swiftly; he speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast. Glory be unto thee, O Christ! We will not fear nor be discouraged, since these thy servants are ready to flame forth at thy bidding. Truly thou art Jehovah of hosts.

This vision of the body-guard of the Prince of peace was enough to strengthen Isaiah: thus comforted, he would calmly confront that rebellious generation. If the prophet, when he opened the young man's eyes strengthened his heart by making him see horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha, shall not we be comforted as we behold legions of burning ones surrounding our King, and standing ready to fulfil his decrees?

Further, we find that Isaiah saw in that vision *the perpetual adoration which is rendered unto Christ concerning his holiness*. Those bright spirits had never tasted of his mercy, for they had never sinned: they understood nothing of his grace, for they had not been guilty; but being pure in heart they gazed on the Lord with opened eye and adored his holiness. Their whole souls were filled with the contemplation of that one all-embracing attribute; and in responsive song they said each one to his fellow, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." They emphasized their words by repeating them three times; and perhaps they alluded also to the Trinity in Unity as they cried, "Holy, holy, holy." This is the supreme glory of Christ, that in him is seen the holiness of God. Oh my friends, let us be like these seraphim, ravished with the holiness of the atonement, awe-struck with the justice of God in the great sacrifice. Reflect with reverence that God when he willed to save his elect would not commit a breach upon his laws; though he would redeem them from going down into the pit, yet

he would not violate his word, nor change that most righteous penalty of death, which is the due desert of sin. Rather than stain his holiness he spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all. Consider the great love of holiness which must have been in the heart of the Father, that he would give up his Son to bleed sooner than his law should be dishonoured; and think of the great holiness of Christ, that he would rather give his back to the smiters and his cheeks to them that pluck off the hair, yea, rather stretch out his hands to the nails and expire forsaken of his God, than suffer sin to go unpunished. God would not even for mercy's sake issue an unjust pardon to the souls he loved.

As I stand here this morning I also have visions of God, and the cross seems to me transformed into a burning throne, whereon justice is high and lifted up to the uttermost, as I see God himself in Christ Jesus bowing his head to death, that he might be just, and yet the Justifier of him that believeth. Around that cross I see troops of angels gathering, and I hear one crying unto another and saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah Jesus, the great sacrifice for sin." Do you not unite in their reverent homage? If you do you will go forth and tell of pardon bought with blood, and of the atonement finished once for all. With hallowed confidence you will tell it out among the people that the holy Lord reigneth from the tree, until all creatures fall down and worship him that was slain, because his holiness was thereby revealed in noonday splendour.

This was not all that was revealed to the prophet; for he heard the seraphim say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; *the whole earth is full of his glory.*" Even when men rejected Christ, even when hearts were fat, and eyes were dim, and ears were heavy, even then the whole earth was full of the glory of Christ. When scientists tell us that they cannot see God, I am amazed. To me it is impossible not to see him. Though I cannot pry with the scalpel into the anatomy of the human frame, yet when I look upon the mere skin of the human countenance I see the handiwork of God. Though I cannot dig into the lower strata of the earth and disentomb the fossil and decipher its stone preserved memorial, yet to me rock, and clay, and sand, and relic of the past, bear the sure hieroglyph of God. Though I cannot inform you of all the interesting details of insect life, or descant upon the secrets of botany, yet to me bees bring honeyed thoughts of God, and flowers breathe the perfume of his love. Where is God? Say rather, Where is he not? Not with these grosser senses, but by higher faculties I see and hear my God; yea, he doth surround me, and my faith embraceth him. I am no fool for this; the best authority declares that he is the fool who saith in his heart "There is no God." Yes, the whole earth is full of the glory of Christ, and above the earth in every cloud it is seen, and above the cloud every star shines out concerning him. Alas, for the blind-eyes that cannot see that which is evidently set forth in every place. Alas for the ears which cannot hear when earth, and sea, and heaven, and hell, are all echoing to the tread of the Omnipotent Christ of God. Oh brethren, have you ever seen this vision, have you ever seen God's glory filling the whole earth? If so, you are prepared for the times that are and

are to be times of gloom, and darkness, and sin, and blasphemy—and yet your heart does not tremble for the ark of the Lord.

When all this was seen of the prophet, he noted that *the posts of the doors moved*. If I am rightly informed, there were two huge columns before the temple called Jachin and Boaz. These were made with singular skill, and were the wonder of the age. They were of brass, cast by Solomon; but in the course of ages they had no doubt mellowed into bronze, and there they stood, two tremendous erections, upbearing massive doors. We are told, I know not whether it be correct, that the gates that swung upon these columns required at least twenty men either to open or to shut them; but as the prophet saw that vision he noticed that these massive columns trembled, and thus did obeisance to the God who was within their gates. Our Revised Version reads it, "The foundations of the thresholds were moved." Even to its foundations the house trembled with solemn awe of the divine presence. Brethren, heaven, and earth, and hell, and all created things reflect the glory of the Lord, and thus adore him. Oh Lord Jesus, thou art worthy of all honour. "All the earth doth worship thee." If it was so with posts and doors, shall not our hearts rejoice with trembling? shall not our souls be moved in the presence of the Most High? and will we not fall down before the glorified Christ, as John did, who wrote, "When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead?" Everything is filled with awe in his majestic presence, save only man, the impious rebel who dares defy his God.

Then came the best part of the vision for Isaiah. At the glorious sight, he felt, "Woe is me, for I am undone, I am stricken dumb. I can never speak again, for my lips are unclean, and I dwell among an unclean people." Then, swift as lightning flew a seraph, bringing a coal more burning than himself from off the altar of sacrifice, wherewith he touched the prophet's lip. Beloved, this is what *we* need. We need to feel the atonement laid home to us, to feel the power of the great sacrifice of Christ, to hear a voice saying within our spirit, "Thine iniquity is put away, and thy sin is purged." Though that live coal must have blistered the lip which it covered, yet it made it eloquent. Common fire would destroy the organs of speech, but the fire of sacrifice does not so, but it unlooses a grateful tongue, and helps a grateful heart to tell the love immense, unsearchable, which offered itself upon the altar of sacrifice, that holiness and love might save the sinner. Our peace comes from the Holy, Holy, Holy One, who is just, and yet forgives his people's sin. Brother, if you are to proclaim the glory of your Lord, you must feel the sacrificial coal applied to the place where your impurity is most seen, even to your lips; you must know that you are forgiven; for your conviction that you are clean before God will give you confidence in telling out to others the story of the cross. This is what Isaiah saw.

Listen for a minute to that further word that follows:—Isaiah when he saw his glory "*spake of him*." He that hath seen this sight must speak.

He spake in deep humility. Never braver man than Isaiah, but never one who walked in lowlier reverence before his God. He never forgot to his dying day that "woe is me! for I have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

Yet, observe that he spake with very willing obedience. "Here am I," he said, "send me." He offers himself to be God's mouth to the people, whatever the message may be. He seems to say, "Here am I in the entirety of my being, purchased to thee by thy great pardoning love; use me as thou wilt, and send me where thou wilt." He continued to report his Lord's message under constant rebuffs, and despite the ceaseless obduracy of Israel. Though he cried, "Who hath believed our report?" yet he continued that report. That chapter which begins with his complaint, has in it not only a continuation of the report, but a fuller version of it than he had ever given before. He was sad but resolute, grieved yet persevering, broken in heart, but not broken down in constancy. Brethren, it needs great grace to go upon a fruitless errand. One had need see the glory of the Lord to be enabled to fight a losing battle. I am sometimes afraid that I have to do this myself; but if it be so, it is not ours to bargain for success, but to yield implicit obedience. It is ours to abide faithful to our commission, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. Brethren, be it ours to serve the Lord gladly, and testify to what we have seen, even though no man should receive our witness.

But then it is said of Isaiah that he "spake of him," that is, of our Lord Jesus Christ. In all that Isaiah said he had an eye to Christ. It was all his business among men to speak of the glories of the coming Son of God. May the Lord give us such a sight of Christ in his glory that from this day forth we shall be absorbed in glorifying him. May our life be a perpetual ministry concerning Christ. Remember that word concerning John the Baptist, "John did no miracle, but all things that John spake of this man were true." If we can do no miracle and achieve no success, let us at least cry without ceasing. "Behold the Lamb of God." Though *we* decrease, it matters not so long as he doth increase; we are glad to disappear, as the morning star is lost at the rising of the sun. It is our delight to imitate the seraphim, and with veiled face and covered feet to attend about the throne of Jehovah Jesus our Lord.

II. I now ask your kind attention to the second part of my subject, which is a very painful one, CONCERNING THE NATION TO WHICH ISAIAH SPAKE. Their terrible sin lay in this, that they were willingly blinded by the light which ought to have been to them a help to see Christ, and they were hardened by those very truths which ought to have melted them. They became more and more adverse to Christ through beholding in him such a character as ought to have won their hearts. To the prophet's teaching they were entirely dead. A specimen of this we find in the succeeding chapters of Isaiah. Israel and Syria attacked Ahaz, whose reign followed those of Uzziah and Jotham. The prophet came and said to Ahaz, "Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands." Ahaz was assured that God would help him if he would but trust in him; but instead of doing so, the king determined to petition for the help of the great king

of Assyria, with the result in the long run that "the king of Assyria came unto him and distressed him, but helped him not." Isaiah, to confirm his message, bade the king choose any sign either in the depth or in the height above; but the infidel king replied, "I will not ask, neither will I test Jehovah." He had so defiantly cast off allegiance to the true God that he would not even accept a sign, though it was left to his own choice. Thus Isaiah's message was rejected though put in the most winning form, for the hearts of the people were blinded and hardened so as to choose the way of destruction. Ultimately, as you know, the Assyrians carried the whole people away; for they had rejected God's message willfully, and wrath came upon them. What a grievous task to be called to preach to such a people!

They went on from bad to worse as a nation; they turned aside grievously, but not in heart, so that when Christ came they were unable to discern him, for had they known him they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. This blindness was in part a punishment for their long rebellion. If men willfully shut their eyes, do you wonder that they become blind? If men will not hear, do you wonder that they grow deaf? He that perverts truth shall soon be incapable of knowing the true from the false. If you persist in wearing glasses that distort, everything will be distorted to you.

"Hear the just law, the judgment of the skies!

He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies."

But although this blindness was a punishment for former sin, it was itself a sin. They willfully rejected the testimony of God against themselves; they refused the self-evident Christ who would so greatly have blessed them. This wilful rejection was carried out so effectually that it became impossible to convert and heal them; they could not be instructed, or reformed, and therefore they were given over to destruction. Nothing remained but to allow the Romans to burn the temple and plough the site of the city. It was a dreadful thing that they should deliberately choose destruction, and obstinately involve themselves in the most tremendous of woes. Poor Israel, we pity thee! It was sad indeed to fall from so great a height! Yet we are bound to admit that God dealt with thee justly, for thou didst choose thine own delusions. The Lord cries, "Oh that my people had harkened unto me." Our Saviour weeps and cries, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

What I have to say this morning is this—that I am growingly fearful lest our own country should furnish a parallel to all this. Read the story of England, beginning where you will, and see how gracious God has been to us. Note well our great deliverances, from the destruction of the Spanish Armada to the overthrow of Napoleon. Do not forget how often this little country has been made victorious in wars against great peoples, who thought to swallow her up. Then reflect how God sent the light to us; how the gospel spread all over England, and how it has in many ways been rejected. How often since the days of Cromwell

Rome has been allowed to dim the light of our Protestantism, and how it labours to do so still! See how this people have received the truth of heaven, but again and again have proved false to it, turning at one time to superstition and at another time to infidelity. At this moment we are rich, and despite depression in business, we are less tried by it than any other nation. And what comes of all this mercy but increased sin? Why, at this moment we have sin rampant among us almost beyond precedent. Think how the poor are oppressed and ground down with awful poverty in many parts of this great city. Shall not God avenge the cry of starving women? Worse still, if worse can be: those who dare walk our streets after sundown tell us that Sodom, in its most putrid days, could scarce exceed this metropolis for open vice. To our infinite disgust and horror, the names of certain of the greatest in the land are at this hour openly mentioned in connection with the filthiest debauchery. This is not the place for details, nor can I mention the matter, or even think of it without feeling my very soul on fire. Faithfulness requires plain speech; but it is a hideous evil that the dregs of vice should be the chosen luxury of certain of our hereditary legislators and rulers. Woe unto thee, Oh land, when thy great ones love the harlot's house! Deep is our shame when we know that our judges are not clear in this matter, but social purity has been put to the blush by magistrates of no mean degree; yea, it is said that the courts of justice have lent themselves to the covering and hushing up of the iniquities of the great. Shall not God be grieved by such a nation as this? He who has read a certain story, which is but too-well known, must have felt his ears tingle and his heart tremble. What is coming over us? What horrible clouds are darkening our skies? There were judges once who would not have suffered the laws to be trampled on by the great, but would have dealt out equal justice to rich and poor: I cannot persuade myself that it will be otherwise now, and yet I fear the worst. O God, have mercy upon the land whose judgment-seats and palaces are defiled with vice.

This is not all: a general indifference to all religion is creeping over the country; at least over this vast metropolis. Ask those who visit from door to door among our crowded populations, and they will tell you that never before in their life-time were there so few persons attendant upon the means of grace. Street after street of this city scarcely possesses more than one regular attendant upon the preaching of the word. The Sabbath is no longer a day of worship with millions. What continual efforts are made to rob us of the Sabbath-day; to degrade it into a common work-day, and to make a slave of the working-man. To-day the revelation of God is treated with indifference, or talked of as if it deserved no reverence or credit. Unbelief has sapped the foundations of the social fabric. Worst of all,—I must not hold back the charge, many of the avowed ministers of Christ are no ministers of faith at all, but promoters of unbelief. The modern pulpit has taught men to be infidels. What truth is there which has not been doubted by divines, questioned by doctors of divinity, and at length been denounced by the priests of "modern thought?" Nothing remains upon which a certain school of preachers have not spit their scepticism. The experience of the unbelief

of Germany is being repeated here. Among those who are ordained to be the preachers of the gospel of Christ, there are many who preach not faith but doubt, and hence they are servants of the devil rather than of the Lord. Think not that I am aiming at the Church of England. With all my objection to a state-church, I am not so unjust as to conceal my belief, that I see in the Episcopal Church at this time less of unbelief than among certain Dissenters: in fact, Nonconformity in certain quarters is eaten through and through with a covert Unitarianism, less tolerable than Unitarianism itself. So frequently are the fundamental doctrines of the gospel assailed, that it becomes needful, before you cross the threshold of many a chapel, to ask the question, "Shall I hear the gospel here to-day, or shall I come out hardly knowing whether the Bible is inspired or not? Shall I not be made to doubt the atonement, the work of the Holy Ghost, the immortality of the soul, the punishment of the wicked, or the deity of Christ?"

I know I shall stir a hornet's nest by these honest rebukes but I cannot help it. I am burdened and distressed with the state of religion; a pest is in the air; no truth is safe from its withering infection. No signs can be more alarming than the growing infidelity and worldliness which I see among those who call themselves Christians. Does this nation really intend to cast off the fear of God and the doctrines of Holy Scripture to follow the vain imaginings of the sophists and the fashionable follies of the great? Are we to see again unbelief and luxurious sin walking hand in hand? If so, there be some of us who mean to take up our sorrowful parable, and speak as plainly as we can for truth and holiness, whether we offend or please. Be it ours still to thunder out the law of God, and proclaim with trumpet clearness the gospel of Jesus, not bating one jot of firm belief in the revelation of God, nor winking at sin, nor toning down truth, even though we fear that the only result will be to make this people's hearts gross, and their ears heavy, and their eyes blind. If it must be so, my soul shall weep in secret; but still, Oh Lord, here am I, send me. Be of good courage, Oh my heart, for the faithful have not ceased from among men; other voices will cry aloud and spare not, if haply our land may be purged of its present defilement.

Hearken yet again while I press this subject personally home to you. Has not this word a personal bearing upon some of you? Certain of you have heard the gospel preached plainly and honestly, and yet you have never received it: is there not creeping over you a fatal indifference? Are not your hearts turning to stone? Possibly you are professors of religion, and yet you do not feel the power of it; what does this mean? If you are not a praying people, nor a holy people, and yet you are a professing people, what an awful doom awaits you! Shall my ministry be a savour of death unto you? It may be that my voice grows stale to you, and what I say seems common-place: but is this to be the reason for your refusing Christ and his salvation, refusing the power of his word, refusing holiness which we would work in you? Oh, shall it be so? Will you die? Dear hearers, I should not like to meet one of you at that day of judgment and have to feel that I preached you into a greater blindness than

you might have known. Oh, be converted! Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? May God in infinite mercy speak to you that you may believe in Jesus now, lest that should come upon you which is spoken of by the prophet, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!"

Ere I have done, hear the sweet whisper which closes the sixth of Isaiah. Notwithstanding all the terrible work that Isaiah had to do he was not left without comfort; the Lord said to him, "In it there shall be a tenth." You know how the prophet cried, "Except the Lord of hosts had left us a seed we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrah." The Lord has his sacred tithe and these he will not lose. The tree has lost its leaves, for it is winter time; but still it is alive, and the sap will flow again, for its substance is in it! The tree is leveled by the axe; but weep not despairing tears, for it shall sprout again, for life is still in it. Even so the Church must live; truth must be victorious; purity must conquer, the Christ must reign. Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him. Reject Christ if you will to-day, Oh ye who think yourselves so exceeding wise, but there is a people who love him, a secret people who cling to him; and when he comes, as come he must ere long, they will welcome him and partake in his glory. As for you that refuse him this day, how will you stand when he appeareth? Whither will you flee? You shall ask the hills to cover you, but they will refuse. You shall bid the mountains hide you, but they will not yield a cavern for your shelter. Be wise now, therefore, and no more resist your Lord. "Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!" May you and I and all of us be of that blessed number. Amen and Amen.

Portion of Scripture read before Sermon—John 12:37-50.

Hymns from "Our Own Hymn Book"—93, 12, 518.