

spirit of genuine Christianity is a spirit not only of power and of love, but of a sound mind.—*W. Cunningham.*

Nothing has any right to be in a sermon except what contributes to the clearness and effect of the message about Christ.

Nothing is absolutely excluded from the pulpit except what is false or vulgar, what serves pitiful personal ends, or what is hopelessly entangled in the merely secular and earthly life of men.—*J. O. Dykes.*

On the Range of Preaching, see—

W. M. Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word*, pp. 81-104.

W. E. Channing, *Works* (1884), pp. 256-8.

H. W. Beecher, *Sermons* (S. Low & Co., 1870), pp. 448, 475.

A. W. Momerie, *Preaching and Hearing*, pp. 15-26.

Joseph Parker, *The Christian Commonwealth*, Oct. 3, 1889.

The Politics of Isaiah and Jeremiah.

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AFTER the rise of the second Assyrian empire and the changed conditions it introduced into the politics of Western Asia, three parties formed themselves in Judah, each of which directed in succession the affairs of the kingdom. The pressure of the Syro-Ephraimitic war created the Assyrian party, and led to its predominance throughout the reign of Ahaz. The overthrow of Samaria, which brought Judah and Assyria into immediate contact, as well as the growing fear of the power of Nineveh, caused this party to fall with the death of the king. Hezekiah and his advisers now threw themselves into the hands of the Egyptian party, whose leader we may see in Shebna. Its influence was marked by revolt from Assyria, by alliance with Egypt, and by attempts to create a league against the Assyrians among the neighbouring states.

A third party, which we may call national, was headed by Isaiah. It drew its policy and its existence from the words of divine counsel which the prophet uttered, and the message he was commissioned to deliver. Its watchword was "quietness and rest"; "in returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. xxx. 15). It was a policy of non-intervention, that was opposed to an alliance with Assyria or Egypt; Judah had gained nothing but evil from intermeddling with the politics of its heathen neighbours, its religion and morality had been corrupted, and calamity after calamity had fallen on the nation. God had marked it out as "a peculiar people," and its safety lay in the national recognition of the fact. It was He who had permitted the Assyrian to be the rod of His anger, and had allowed him to chastise and chasten the sins of His people; but the chastisement was not to be utter destruction, and a bound had been set beyond which the violence of the invader was

not to go. A remnant was yet to escape from Zion, and the Assyrian should be beaten down "which smote with a rod" (Isa. x. 21, 24, 27).

The position occupied by Isaiah was necessitated by the age to which he belonged. The message he communicated was in accordance with the conditions of his time. Hence arises the striking contrast between the policy of which he was the mouthpiece, and that which Jeremiah was called upon to urge. While Isaiah advocated resistance to the invader, in confident security that God would defend His temple and city, Jeremiah declared that no buildings made with hands could save the people, and that submission to the Chaldean was their only hope of safety. Isaiah, in other words, was the prophet of national independence, Jeremiah of national subjection. But between the time of Isaiah and that of Jeremiah a total change had come over the face of the Eastern world. Nebuchadnezzar was a more dangerous enemy than Sennacherib; Egypt had risen afresh from its ashes, and was prepared to reassert its ancient rule over Palestine, and Judah itself had sunk into the deepest degradation and decay. Its princes were idolatrous and corrupt, and Nebuchadnezzar himself was a more reverent observer of the moral law than they. The measure of Judah's iniquities was full; the period of God's long-suffering had drawn to a close, and there was no king on the throne like Hezekiah to follow loyally the teachings of the prophet, no minister like Eliakim to carry them out. The Lord would fight no longer for His city and the earthly throne of David; His people were to be disciplined by suffering, and to be taught that the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, but requires truth and uprightness, not correctness of ritual or stately shrines.