

**GOD'S WORD THROUGH PREACHING:
THE LYMAN BEECHER LECTURES
BEFORE THE THEOLOGICAL
DEPARTMENT OF YALE COLLEGE.
(FOURTH SERIES), PP. 7-273**

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JOHN HALL

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THE THEOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT
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BY
JOHN HALL, D.D.

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FROM THE RECORDS OF THE CORPORATION OF YALE COLLEGE,
APRIL 12, 1871.

"Voted to accept the offer of Mr. Henry W. Sage, of New York City, of the sum of ten thousand dollars for the founding of a lectureship in the Theological Department, on a branch of Pastoral Theology, to be designated 'The Lyman Beecher Lectureship on Preaching,' to be filled from time to time, upon the appointment of this Corporation, by a minister of the gospel, of any evangelical denomination, who has been markedly successful in the special work of the Christian ministry."

YALE COLLEGE, THEOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT,
March 11, 1875.

REV. JOHN HALL, D.D.:

Dear Sir:—Allow us to thank you in our own behalf, and in behalf of the Theological Seminary under our care, for the course of lectures which you have just completed. The Lyman-Beecher Lectureship on Preaching will be of incalculable value to the churches, if, year after year, it shall continue to bear such fruit.

You have seen the close and delighted attention with which our students, and not a few others—most of them working ministers of the Gospel—have listened to these lectures. You have been giving—in your own style, simple, lucid, and forcible

—not a theory or science of Homiletics deduced from your study of great preachers, ancient and modern, but (in accordance with the intention of the generous founder) practical counsels, drawn from your own experience through a long and eminently successful ministry begun in your native country, and continued with undiminished fidelity in ours which has adopted you. We are sure that these young men, dispersed as they will soon be over the breadth of the continent, and some of them into other lands, will be better ministers, both in the pulpit and out of it, for what they have heard from you—better in the highest sense, for what we have valued most of all in these lectures is the deep and healthy religious impression which they have left upon the hearers.

We are happy to learn that the lectures are soon to be published, and we are confident that the ministry generally, of all denominations, and especially young ministers, will thank God for the grace that has been given to you for this good work.

We are, with much respect and affection, your brethren in the Gospel,

LEONARD BACON,
GEORGE E. DAY,
SAMUEL HARRIS,
JAMES M. HOPPIN,
GEORGE P. FISHER,
TIMOTHY DWIGHT.

LECTURE I.

IN entering on this course of lectures, Gentlemen, I feel bound to declare to you that my own judgment has been overruled, and that no one can have so strong a conviction of my inadequacy to this task at the close, as I have at the commencement. Nor did I labor to persuade myself of my unfitness in order to evade some labor, and, least of all, in order to escape an undesirable association. On the contrary, I was much touched by the practical catholicity of the Faculty of this Seminary in seeking out a comparative stranger, and one outside of that honored band whose education, intelligence, courage, and Christian worth, have made New England what it is, and stamped a New England impress on so much of America. But no eagerness to respond to this attractive overture blinded me to the truth, that all I know on this matter of preaching could be put into one lecture. Certain brethren, however, to whose views I could not

but attach weight, assured me that the general subject of pulpit ministrations fairly came within the scope of the foundation, and that I was not expected to revolve in the same orbit, nor to shine with the same brilliancy as my predecessor ; that, in fact—though they did not so phrase it—one like myself, a long way on this side of the extraordinary, might be an encouraging teacher and example to ordinary men, and, in detailing how commonplace qualities could be turned, by God's blessing on ordinary industry, to fair account, might guide, stimulate, and help students in theology. This last consideration, I confess, had the most weight with me. No talent is too great, no genius is too brilliant, no attainments are too rich, for the work of preaching ; but, thank God, average capacity can be trained into such an instrument as God the Holy Ghost will employ for the "work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." *

Preaching is not to be regarded and studied by itself, but in its relation to the whole work of the ministry. Nor is the ministry to be judged of as a detached piece of machinery, but in its place in the Church ; and, once more, our notions of the ministry

* Eph. iv. 12.

and of preaching will be much modified by our conception of the Church's history, nature, objects, and powers. To offer a concise statement of these will occupy this opening hour, and it is hoped usefully introduce what is to be further presented.

The Church of God—in whose ministry, Gentlemen, you hope to serve—may be regarded in one of two aspects, when we speak of its history. We may think of it as one continuous body from the first family down to our own time, and to the end of the world, the same in substance throughout, though under diverse forms and dispensations. In this sense the Christian Church is not a new thing, but a development of what went before, the growth of a tree planted in Paradise. Israel was at one time “the Church in the Wilderness.”* If we wished to furnish a history of the American nation, we might properly begin, like Bancroft, with Colonization, and different forms of administration and possession, entire or partial, by Dutch, French, English, until there came to be an independent people—yokes of bondage and elements of restriction being thrown off—and the community entered on an era of equal rela-

* Acts vii. 38.