

**LECTURES ON  
PREACHING, DELIVERED  
TO THE STUDENTS OF  
YALE COLLEGE, IN 1879**

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Lectures on Preaching, Delivered to the Students of Yale College, in 1879 by Matthew Simpson

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**MATTHEW SIMPSON**

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# LECTURES ON PREACHING.

DELIVERED TO THE

STUDENTS OF YALE COLLEGE, IN 1879.

BY

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BISHOP OF METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, NEW YORK.



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"Voted, To accept the offer of Mr. HENRY N. SAGE, of Brooklyn, of the sum of ten thousand dollars, for the founding of a Lectureship in the Theological Department, in 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 the Corporation, by a minister of the Gospel, of any evangelical denomination, who has been markedly successful in the special work of the Christian ministry."

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I.

*THE PREACHER'S WORK.*

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DR. LEONARD BACON opened the course by the following remarks :

"It is understood, of course, that these Lyman Beecher Lectures are for and to students of theology—the students of this school. They are not addressed to the public at large. They are not of the nature of an amusement for the public. They mean *business*; and we have invited for this year a distinguished preacher to give the results of his long experience in the form of counsels to these students. Well, there are a great many ministers here who are, I trust, themselves students even yet; and it won't hurt them to hear it. And they are welcome; and others are welcome. Our friends who are present here are welcome to the privilege and enjoyment, and profit—as, I trust, they will find—of hearing the lectures which begin to-day. And now I have the pleasure of introducing to you the Rev. Dr. Simpson, one of the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church."

BISHOP SIMPSON: *Young Gentlemen*: How natural is it for a speaker to wish to say something before he begins! Hence I may indulge in a few preliminary remarks. And first of all I wish to express my high esteem of the practical wisdom and catholic spirit which influenced the founder of this lectureship. So far as I know, this is the first endowment of a lectureship devoted specially to preaching. Homiletics and the pastoral office, including preaching, have long been in the curriculum of the theological seminary; but this chair is devoted specially to the subject of preaching. It is an agency by which God has promised to save them that believe; and, if so, it is the most important that was ever committed to human hands, and surely

it is worthy of a higher place than that of being simply a department of sacred rhetoric. And, notwithstanding this chair may be sometimes imperfectly filled; notwithstanding I may be able to say nothing which shall add to the stores of knowledge or prove stronger motives to young men pursuing the ministry; yet I have no doubt that from this chair, from time to time, suggestions and thoughts will be uttered which shall add increasing interest to the subject of preaching, and claim more generally the attention of the people. The catholic spirit, too, which made the platform so broad that a minister of any Evangelical school might stand upon it, will command the approbation of the Christian world. The Corporation of Yale College and the theological faculty have manifested the same unchanged and liberal views in selecting ministers of various churches, and have drawn on the Old World, as well as on the New. The utterances which have been made from this desk by distinguished and talented speakers have not only reached the hearts of all classes, but have gone forth from the press, and have influenced hundreds of candidates to higher aspirations and to more thorough consecration. I desire also to acknowledge specially the courtesy of the Corporation and theological faculty in inviting me to occupy this chair for the present term. Yet I do not understand this to be so much a compliment to myself as an expression of their continued purpose to invite ministers from various denominations and from different sections of the country. Had this invitation been one of ordinary character, I should have promptly declined. My ecclesiastical duties are so constant and so pressing as to allow me but little time for preparing lectures; and my labours are so numerous and so varied that they tax my strength to the uttermost. I wished, however, to respond to this manifestation of courtesy, and to aid in showing to the world that Protestant Christendom is essentially *one*; that, though we do not wholly agree, we at the same time know how to differ and how to love. Besides, I found my Methodism at stake. One of your professors, whom I profoundly honour, suggested that, though busily occupied, I could still find time to tell my experience. And so I, who am of Western birth and education, and a minister in the

Methodist Episcopal Church, am here to address you, who are chiefly sons of New England, and who are Congregationalists in creed and church polity. Verily, the world moves! A hundred years ago this would have been an impossibility.

A few years ago a distinguished journalist published a book entitled "What I Know about Farming." I am not sure that his success in that line would lead many to follow his example. And yet I have thought that the lecturer in this chair might not inaptly term his utterances, "What I Know about Preaching." But he is not to lecture systematically on homiletics and the pastoral charge (a work well performed by your regular professors); but to supplement their teaching by his own experience, and by gleanings from every side. Thus I meet you to-day in the chapel of one of the oldest and noblest institutions of the land, and in the presence of men of mind and might. But let us forget for a time the presence of these sages, as well as the smiles of beauty around us, and let you and me address ourselves simply to the lesson of this hour as fellow-students, for such we are; differing a little in age, but of one aim and of one heart. You have pursued your academic and collegiate training. You are now interested in the theological investigation. Your earnest thought is turned towards the future, and the inquiry is how you can most successfully preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How rapidly the years pass away! It seems scarcely more than yesterday that, as a young man, I was asking myself the same question. I remember how the future opened before me, and what a responsibility pressed upon my heart, as I thought of standing in the sacred desk to preach to my fellow-men.

Vast as the work seemed to me then, it has grown upon me in magnitude. Each succeeding year I behold in a clearer light the importance and responsibility of the sacred office. I recognize to-day the immense vastness of the work, and my own inadequacy to treat its important demands, or even to picture before you that ideal which for years has beckoned me onward, and which I have never been able to attain. I am consoled, however, by the thought that you have other instructors at whose feet you reverently sit, and who will say to you in fitting language that which