

**THE LIBERTY OF PROPHESYING, WITH ITS  
JUST LIMITS AND TEMPER CONSIDERED  
WITH  
REFERENCE TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF  
THE MODERN CHURCH; LYMAN BEECHER  
LECTURES DELIVERED 1909**

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The Liberty of Propheying, with Its Just Limits and Temper Considered with Reference to the Circumstances of the Modern Church; Lyman Beecher Lectures Delivered 1909 by H. Hensley Henson

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CHURCH

*Lyman Beecher Lectures delivered 1909, before the Yale  
Divinity School, and Three Sermons*

By H. HENSLEY HENSON

B.D. (OXON), HON. D.D. (GLASGOW)

*Canon of Westminster and Rector of S. Margaret's, Westminster,  
Sometime Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford*



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ARTHUR TWINING HADLEY, LL.D.  
PRESIDENT OF YALE UNIVERSITY

AND

EDWARD LEWIS CURTIS, PH.D., D.D.  
ACTING DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

THIS VOLUME OF LECTURES  
DELIVERED WHILE THEY WERE IN OFFICE  
IS GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED

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## PREFACE

THE Lectures here published were delivered on the LYMAN BEECHER Foundation in Yale University in 1909. They are printed exactly as they were delivered. Three sermons have been added, all treating of the Christian ministry in one or other of its aspects. These will, perhaps, serve to develop some points too briefly touched on in the Lectures. The sermon entitled "Christian Teaching" was originally preached before the University of Cambridge on November 8, 1908, and repeated in substance before Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., on May 2, 1909.

There are two objections which appear to me so probable that I must needs think it well to anticipate them. These Lectures, it will be said, are unduly *controversial* and excessively *local*, and on both counts they are ill suited to serve the purposes of the LYMAN BEECHER Foundation. To the first of these objections I can but answer that, in the present circumstances of English-speaking Christendom, the Christian ministry is inevitably the subject of acute con-

troversy, and that, since preaching is the principal function of the Christian ministry, any effective discussion of it cannot avoid a controversial character. To the next, I must answer that, in allowing myself to give so large a place to those aspects of my subject which were mainly insular and Anglican, I was not only keeping within the sphere of my personal knowledge and experience, but also bringing before my hearers a point of view which was in their case relatively unfamiliar. It seemed to me that in adopting this course, I could best serve the purpose which must have originally suggested the invitation to lecture.

It must, of course, be frankly owned that I chose a subject which was apparently and acutely controversial. I did so with a very definite design of directing attention to the grave situation into which the Christian preacher has been brought by the circumstances of the time, and of emphasizing certain manifest but most difficult obligations which that situation imposes. Nor was I wholly without hope that my handling of a theme so perplexing, however inadequate and even unworthy in itself, might have the effect of inducing abler and better men on both sides of the Atlantic to address themselves to its frank and practical consideration.

In addressing the clergy I have never lost sight of the laity. The Liberty of Prophesying,



which I have claimed for the first, can only be refused to the injury of the last. I could wish that what I have written might fall under the eyes of the religious laymen of the churches. If I might succeed in arresting their attention, I should indeed have not written without effect. For the indifference of the Christian laity is the most favourable of all conditions for the development of "clericalism": and, as surely, the best of all securities against "obscurantism" is the active and intelligent interest in ecclesiastical politics of thoughtful, religious, and educated laymen. The degree to which the laity concern themselves in the affairs of the Church might well be accepted as a sound test of its intellectual and spiritual health.

In America I suppose that the worst dangers to the clergyman's liberty are those which arise from the ignorance of congregations, the vagaries of religious individualism, and the "intolerable strain" of the denominational "struggle for existence." In England these dangers are certainly not absent, but, at least within the National Church, they are for the present dwarfed by a domestic peril, which has no exact counterpart within the other Protestant churches. The Tractarian revival of mediævalism has proceeded to great lengths, and its effects are not limited to the puerile craze for "pageants" in and out of the churches. In the now fashion-

able repudiation of the name and character of a Protestant church; in the arbitrary and profoundly irrational emphasis laid on the letter of the ancient creeds; in the growing isolation of the Anglican Church under the withering influence of the sacerdotalist dogma; in the substitution of the personal authority of bishops for the impersonal authority of law; in the exaltation even by the bishops themselves of episcopal authority above the Law, are enshrined the gravest menace to the intellectual liberty of the Anglican preacher.

It is indeed certain that a large proportion of the English clergy, and the immense majority of English laymen, have no sympathy with the tendencies now prevailing in the hierarchy; but an episcopal church perforce utters itself through its bishops, and the episcopal bench in England is at the present time strongly Tractarian. In these circumstances the discontent, which undoubtedly exists, can hardly take definite shape or find effective expression. The situation is assuredly very perplexing. New interests are crowding on to the arena of public life, and the older interests are being thrust into the background. The sudden emergence of Socialism is diverting men's minds from spiritual issues; and the most materialistic version of Christianity naturally finds it easiest to effect a concordat with the new secularism. Explain it how you

will, the public takes but a languid interest in the fortunes of the clergy. From every point of view the outlook for an honest English preacher is not very encouraging.

If this were the place, I should like to say much of the extraordinary kindness with which I was received in Yale, and, indeed, everywhere in America. How can I ever forget the unwearying solicitude, and considerate hospitality, which filled the time spent in that wonderful country with the pleasantest memories. It must suffice by this single reference to indicate to my American friends the deep sense which I have of their goodness, and to assure them that the recollections of my first visit to the New World (which they induced me to undertake) are in the fullest sense delightful.

H. H. H.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY,  
August 10, 1909.