

**LECTURES TO
YOUNG
MEN. PP.1-185**

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Lectures to Young Men. pp.1-185 by William G. Eliot

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WILLIAM G. ELIOT

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LECTURES

TO

YOUNG MEN.

BY WILLIAM G. ELIOT, JR.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH, ST. LOUIS.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.	
AN APPEAL	5
LECTURE II.	
SELF-EDUCATION	30
LECTURE III.	
LEISURE TIME	57
LECTURE IV.	
TRANSGRESSION	86
LECTURE V.	
THE WAYS OF WISDOM	128
LECTURE VI.	
RELIGION	159

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.



AN APPEAL

"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." — 1 John ii. 14-17.

I PROPOSE, as already announced, to give several discourses to young men, addressed to them as a distinct class in the community and as individuals. For such an undertaking we have the authority and example of an Apostle, who, in the words of my text, addresses his exhortations to young men, with a degree of solemnity that shows the importance attached to this part of his preaching. He repeats the same words twice, and with increasing emphasis: "I write unto you, young men, be-

cause ye have overcome the wicked one"; and again, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."

This apostolical example we would follow; this Scriptural authority we would use. I desire to address the young men of this society, and all those who are willing to hear me, in the words of soberness and truth. Under different circumstances and with a feebler tongue; but with a purpose I trust equally true, and with a work to be accomplished, not less important than that which the Apostles themselves were sent to accomplish. For their work was to speak in Christ's stead, persuading men to be reconciled to God; and the same work is committed to every minister of Christ, at the present day. They may do it badly; they may work as hirelings, and not as faithful shepherds; but their work, whether done or neglected, is the same.

The circumstances, however, under which the Apostle spoke are very different from our

own. He addressed those only who were members of the Church of Christ, who had already made a good profession and proved their sincerity by lives of obedience. For he says, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong"; that is, strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, "and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." In that day there were very few nominal Christians. Those who bore the name of Christ were also compelled to bear his cross. They who came to hear Christian preaching carried their lives in their hands, and the young men of a Christian society were an army of self-devoted followers of Him, under whose standard they were enlisted. I wish that it were so now. The outward danger is past, but I wish that the self-devotion could continue.

Unhappily for the Christian cause, it is not so. Of all the young men in this city, who were educated by Christian parents, and who in common language would call themselves Christians, not one tenth have a full right to

that name; not one tenth have so much as professed their faith in Christ. How small a number can be said to have a well-founded hope in him! In this society, there are probably two or three hundred young men; I mean that there is at least that number who make this their usual place of worship, when they attend church at all. How small a part of them take their place at the communion-table of Christ! or, to apply a more general test, how small a part of them can be said to have had a personal religious experience!

The majority of young men are unfixed in their religious opinions, irresolute in their religious purposes, irregular in their religious duties. Many of them are unsettled in their principles of conduct and have no fixed plan of life. They are floating upon the surface of society, carried one way or the other by the currents of social influence, by the changing wind of good or ill success. They are not strong; the word of God does not yet abide in them; they have not overcome the wicked one. They are trusting, it would seem, to the

natural progress of things for their salvation, instead of working it out with fear and trembling.

Young men! I speak seriously and earnestly, but do I not speak truly? I would not bring an unjust charge, but I fear that there is something radically wrong, which needs to be corrected. The wrong may be in the speaker, more than the hearer; in the minister, more than in the people; for surely if religion were presented, as it ought to be, in its simplicity and power, there would not be so many of the young who turn away from it, with indifference or contempt. Our churches ought to be filled with young men. Our communion-table should be crowded with them; our Sunday school, our ministry to the poor, our Christian missions, and every religious enterprise, should be made prosperous by their coöperation; and this would be the case, if the Gospel of Christ were brought home to their hearts as it ought to be. That it is not done, is undoubtedly the fault of those to whom the dispensation of the Gospel is committed. If the truth could be