

# **A HISTORY OF LAY PREACHING IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

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A history of lay preaching in the Christian church by John Telford

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**JOHN TELFORD**

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*Edited by the*  
REV. ARTHUR E. GREGORY

*A HISTORY OF LAY PREACHING*  
*IN*  
*THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH*

BY  
JOHN TELFORD, B.A.

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October 1896.

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JOHN TELFORD, B.A.

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF JOHN WESLEY," ETC.

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## INTRODUCTION

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SO far as can be discovered, this little volume is the first attempt to write a history of lay preaching. It is a fascinating subject. Some of the purest and most saintly Christian workers of both sexes have been lay preachers, and so have some of the wildest fanatics. The interest of the study, however, is not merely historical. It is a living subject full of suggestions for the Christian propaganda of our own times. Earnest men are anxiously inquiring how the multiplied calls for service are to be met. Village evangelism is the oldest and not the least fruitful field of labour for the lay preacher, but the masses of our great cities, and the multitudes who are in darkness in the heathen world, will not be reached without some vast extension of lay agency. This is an old problem, but its



greatness and its significance were never understood as they are understood to-day. The old Calvinism, though still so strong in many places, has generally given way to a noble zeal for evangelistic work. The Church seems to realise its responsibility. The gospel must be brought to every man's heart and conscience, so that all may claim its blessings for themselves.

The whole world is opening its doors to the Christian Church. Mr. Gladstone has recently shown that one-third of the population of the globe are professing Christians, and at every point of the circuit the question is not one of losing ground, but of gaining it. Nor does he take his stand on numbers merely. The material force, moral influence, art, literature, and civilisation of the world are almost wholly Christian.

The Churches are awake to the greatness of their opportunity. It is also generally recognised that no body of clerical workers can overtake the openings for service. Lay agency of all kinds, and especially lay preaching, is growing more essential every day. The moment, therefore, seems opportune for a study of the subject

dealt with in this short history. To trace the development of the movement from generation to generation, and study the lives of some of the prominent lay preachers of the past, cannot fail to supply counsels for the present. If this volume should direct more careful attention to one of the most hopeful aspects of present-day evangelism, and should lead the various Churches with wise sympathy to foster and guide the movement, it will not fail of its purpose.

The writer has availed himself of every means of information within reach, but the ground is new, and suggestions of any kind that may be made use of in a later edition will be welcomed.

JOHN TELFORD.

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