

**LECTURES ON  
ECCLESIASTES. DELIVERED  
IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY**

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Lectures on Ecclesiastes. Delivered in Westminster Abbey by George Granville Bradley

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**GEORGE GRANVILLE BRADLEY**

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LECTURES ON ECCLESIASTES

*BRADLEY*

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LECTURES  
ON  
ECCLESIASTES

*DELIVERED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY*

BY THE VERY REV.

GEORGE GRANVILLE BRADLEY, D.D.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

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THE following Lectures were delivered in Westminster Abbey on Saturday afternoons during three months of the winter of 1884-5. They form one of several courses of weekly addresses on portions of, or subjects connected with, Holy Scripture, which have been given in the same Church by Canons of Westminster, or by the Dean, during the last four years. The experiment of inviting the public to meet in the Abbey on week-days for such a purpose was first tried by the late Dean Stanley, who in the very month in which he died was devoting a portion of every Saturday afternoon to a Lecture on the Beatitudes. Of the aim and purpose of those who have followed his example enough has been said in the opening words of the first of the following Lectures. The publication however of the present course may require a word of explanation, or even of apology.

Its author can make no claim to have enlarged by independent researches of his own the field of knowledge accessible to the theologian or the student. He is no

Hebraist, and his acquaintance with Talmudic and Rabbinical literature is necessarily derived from such English, French, or German sources as are open to any educated reader. Nor have his own studies been such as to have enabled him to throw any fresh light on the patristic exegesis of the book of Ecclesiastes. He has read much and thought much on every line of that book; but he cannot venture to look on the present volume as a contribution to exegetical or theological literature properly so called. It has no such pretensions.

But the obvious interest taken in these lectures during their delivery encouraged him to believe that the large number of singularly patient and attentive listeners whom week after week he saw before him in the Abbey might represent others, who would attach some value to a popular and continuous exposition of the contents of a book which has by turns attracted, perplexed, and repelled readers through many centuries, and the study of which has been prosecuted with renewed activity both in England and on the Continent during the last few years. Nearly a quarter of a century has passed since Dr. Ginsburg's valuable edition placed in the hands of the ordinary English reader, not only an excellent commentary on the book itself, but also an exceedingly interesting sketch of earlier and more recent Jewish and Christian commentators, as well as of the ancient versions. Since that time such works as, among others, those of Dr. Samuel Cox<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Wright<sup>2</sup>, and, above

<sup>1</sup> 'The Quest of the Chief Good.'

<sup>2</sup> 'The Book of Kobleth,' 1883.

all, the scholarly and instructive volume of Dean Plumptre<sup>1</sup>, have testified to the general interest felt in the history and contents of this portion of the Old Testament by the English public. On the other hand, the recent volume of M. Renan, and the elaborate work of Graetz, are sufficient evidence that the question of the authorship and design of a book which deals with problems of such wide and enduring interest has not lost its hold on readers in France and Germany.

In preparing himself for the writing and delivery of his own lectures the writer has freely availed himself of the labours of these and many other authorities, both English and foreign; among the latter he is especially indebted to Ewald, Hitzig and Reuss. He has rarely attempted to acknowledge his special obligations to any single writer or commentator, nor indeed would he find it easy to do so. Nor had he any wish to load his pages with footnotes and references. He must be content with thankfully acknowledging the aid which he has received from many sources, and in expressing the hope that he has done something towards facilitating for the general reader, and for those who have little leisure or taste for more methodical study, the acquisition of some acquaintance with the contents and general teaching of one of the most interesting and instructive, yet most obscure of the writers of the Old Testament. His own views of the contents and history of the book he has embodied in the pages that follow. Those who care to read them will remember that they were delivered at intervals of a week to a mixed congregation, necessarily

<sup>1</sup> 'Ecclesiastes or the Preacher,' 1881.