

**SERMONS TO YOUNG
MEN: A NEW AND
ENLARGED EDITION OF
"STRAIGHT SERMONS"**

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Sermons to young men: a new and enlarged edition of "Straight sermons" by Henry Van Dyke

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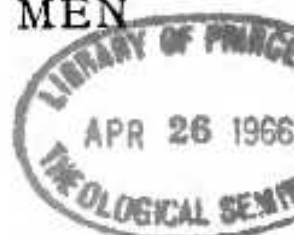
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HENRY VAN DYKE

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SERMONS TO YOUNG MEN



A New and Enlarged Edition of
"Straight Sermons"

BY

HENRY VAN DYKE

D. D. (PRINCETON, HARVARD, YALE)

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1913

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TO THE MEMORY OF
PHILLIPS BROOKS
A NOBLE MAN AMONG MEN
A FAITHFUL PREACHER OF CHRIST
AND A TRUE SHEPHERD OF SOULS
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED



THE call for a new edition of this little book affords an opportunity to change the title (which must have been somewhat misleading, since it was sometimes misapprehended) and to add another chapter on a truth which is taken for granted through the whole volume, and underlies all its teaching, — the truth that the person of Christ is the foundation of Christianity.

The sermons here printed were written for a church in which there are a great many young men, and afterwards preached in college chapels at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and elsewhere. This fact is mentioned merely to account for their practical tendency, and to explain, or excuse, the circumstance that there is nothing peculiar in their religious teaching.

This singularity arises from the conviction, which I cherish, that young men are

really human beings. They are not a distinct species. They belong to the human race and are entitled to be humanly treated. The best life for them is not separate and artificial, but natural, simple, active, full of vigorous exercise for mind and body. The right education for them is not that of the cloister, in which they are divided from the world, but that of the home, the school, the university, the camp, the workshop, the athletic field, the market-place, where liberty is joined to responsibility, and where they are taught to feel that they belong to the world and trained to play a noble, manly part in it. The true religion to guide them in this education, and fit them for this life, is not something novel and peculiar, specially devised for young men, but simply the plain religion of Christ, which is good for everybody, of every age and condition, and for all alike.

It is good for all of us human beings to know that we are not creatures of chance or

fate, but children of God, capable of fellowship with Him, and heirs of immortality if we will only hold fast to our birthright. It is good for us all to have firm faith and true courage; to pray for power from above; and to live as those who have been redeemed by Christ from the bondage of sin and selfishness and moral death. It is good for us all to take warning and encouragement from the mistakes and adventures of other men, and to bring the life-histories of the Bible home to our own business and bosoms. It is good for us all to refrain from harsh and hasty judgment of our fellow-men, and to imitate what Francis of Assisi calls "the great Courtesy of God, who maketh his sun to shine and his rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust." It is good for us all not to waste our time in speculating about those mysteries of theology which lie beyond the horizon, but rather to content ourselves with proving the value of a short creed, honestly believed and thoroughly applied. This, in

outline, is the kind of religion which my father (of blessed memory) taught to me, and which I have tried to teach in these sermons.

But there is one thing in which they have been distinctly influenced by the character of the congregations to whom they were preached. No thinking minister can stand up before a company largely composed of young men without a strong wish to be plain-spoken and to come straight to the point. They have a fine impatience of all mere formalities and roundabout modes of speech, which acts as a moral tonic to brace the mind from vagueness and cleanse the tongue of cant. They want a man to say what he means and to mean what he says. The influence of this unspoken demand is wholesome and inspiring, and the preacher ought to show his gratitude for it by honestly endeavouring to meet it.

For this reason I have tried to write these sermons, not in a theological dialect, but in the English language.