

WEB SITE REVIEW: *The Gifford Lectures: Over 100 Years of Renowned Lectures on Natural Theology* • <http://www.giffordlectures.org/>

One of the most prestigious lecture series in the world, the Gifford Lectures on Natural Theology were created through a bequest of the Scottish jurist Adam Lord Gifford (1820-1887). Lord Gifford's gift provided for the creation of a lectureship in each of the four major Scottish universities (Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrews, and Aberdeen) for a period of two years. The terms of the bequest defined the topic of the lecture series as treating natural theology, "the knowledge of God, the Infinite, the All," and lecturers were enjoined to "treat their subject as a strictly natural science."¹ Since the first series of lectures in 1888, the Gifford Lectures have been given by leading thinkers in a range of fields. Some of the most important theologians of the past 100 years have been lecturers, including Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, and, more recently, David Tracy, Stanley Hauerwas, and Alister McGrath. The ranks of lecturers have not been limited to theologians, however; notable philosophers (including Henri Bergson, Alfred North Whitehead, Hannah Arendt, and Paul Ricoeur), historians, anthropologists, and scientists (including those from the fields of physics, biology, and even computer science) have participated as lecturers. Even well-known atheists such as philosopher A.J. Ayers and evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins have taken part as lecturers.

Launched in 2005, the Gifford Lectures Series web site is hosted by the Templeton Foundation Press, with a grant from the John Templeton Foundation. The site provides a wealth of information about the lecture series, including a helpful history and profile of Lord Gifford, as well as the full text of Gifford's will establishing the lectureship. Navigation is excellent and includes a well-placed Google search engine available on every page, enabling searching of the site by author, keyword, or publication title. Tabbed navigation for the major sections is provided at the top of each page, and there is also a site map available. In terms of navigability, this is one of the better designed web sites.

However, even more impressive than the site design is the wealth of content available on the site. In addition to background on Lord Gifford, on the lecture series itself, and on the four participating universities, the site provides valuable biographical information on each lecturer, summaries of the lectures, and links to information on publications of the lectures. For many of the lectures the partial or entire text of the published form of the lecture is provided. Thus, for example, the entire text of the very first Gifford lecture, Friedrich Max Muller's *Anthropological Religion* (1888), is fully available from the site. There is also a section providing recent news, as well as a link to a Facebook page for the lectures.

There are some areas that could stand improvement. Many of the more recent lectures are still lacking summaries. One annoyance in the site is the presence of active links that connect the user to nonexistent content (for example, a link to a summary that does not yet exist); it would be more helpful to eliminate the link entirely if there is no real content yet available. It is also not always clear when a link to the publication is taking the user to the entire online text of the lecture or to just a portion of it.

Still, these are very minor quibbles. This is an excellent online resource that is both well organized and offers impressive content. Scholars and students will benefit enormously from having access to the important resources contained on this site.



¹ Gifford Lecture Series: Lord Adam Gifford's Will, <http://www.giffordlectures.org/will.asp>.