

# PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

bible  
..

## NEW TESTAMENT.

1249. Authorized.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS SCOTT,

RECTOR OF ASTON SANDFORD, BUCKS.

ARRANGED FOR FAMILY WORSHIP.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION,

BY A. ALEXANDER, D.D.,

PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, AT PRINCETON, N. J.



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## ADVERTISEMENT.

In presenting this volume to parents and heads of families, as peculiarly fitted for family use, it is only necessary for the publishers to set forth those particulars in which it differs from other copies of the New Testament.

The accuracy of the text may be relied upon. It has been carefully compared with the standard Oxford edition; and, whenever occasion has called for it, different editions or different copies of the same edition have been consulted, so as to secure an accurate conformity to the received text.

The "PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS" of Dr. Scott, which have been so generally and so highly approved for family use, are copied without abridgment or alteration. The ordinary editions of *Scott's Bible* are published in several volumes; every page is thickly crowded with notes, marginal readings and references, and the "Practical Observations" are so separated from the text, or so intermingled with other matter, that oftentimes it requires time and care to connect them.

In this volume we present a fair clean page, with each passage of the inspired text conspicuously printed in large type, and the Practical Observations upon each passage, in immediate conjunction with it. The cream of the large work is thus obtained, so far as families have occasion for it, in a cheap and convenient form.

☞ Should this volume be received with the favour which is anticipated for it, arrangements will be made, at once, for publishing the Old Testament in corresponding style.

PHILADELPHIA, *March*, 1842.

## INTRODUCTION.

If God, our Almighty Creator, had caused a book to be written in heaven, as Mohammed pretended the sheets of the Koran were, and had caused to be put into such a volume, every thing necessary to guide the faith and practice of men, in all matters relating to religion; and so set his seal upon the book, that no reasonable doubt could be entertained of its divine origin, would not every one admit, that it should be perused with the utmost reverence, humility, diligence, and thankfulness? Well, we are in possession of a volume, containing every thing necessary to be a rule of our faith and practice; which, though not written in heaven, was dictated by the Holy Spirit, and is not less infallible and authoritative, than if it had been written by the pen of Gabriel; and comes to us, attested, by such evidence of its divine authorship, that it would not be easy to say how the evidence could be augmented. For, although this volume was written by the hands of men; yet they did not undertake this work of their own will, but as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. It is true, that the peculiar talents and dispositions of each writer, are manifest in his work; yet the minds and thoughts of the writers were so under the direction of inspiration, that all which they have written, is truly infallible. The objections which skeptical men may make against this being a revelation from God, are no greater than might be made against this material universe being the work of God. Such objections, when weighed against strong positive evidence, ought to have no more weight than the small dust of the balance; they owe their origin to our ignorance. That any should be dis-

posed to reject the claims of a volume so fully authenticated, is greatly to be lamented, for in so doing, they reject the counsel of God against their own souls; but the conduct of those who acknowledge the divine origin of the Bible, and yet utterly neglect to peruse and study it, is still more inconsistent and inexcusable; and yet, how many nominal Christians are guilty of this very conduct. They may have copies enough of the Sacred Scriptures, in their houses, but they seldom spend an hour in examining the oracles of God. They will pore over a newspaper, a novel, or even an almanac, while they neglect the sacred treasure of divine truth, which God has put into their hands. To such, the multiplication of Bibles, and of commentaries on the same, are unprofitable, through their own negligence. Such persons seem to be implicated in the condemnation to which our Lord refers, when he says, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." How many families are there, in which the word of God is not read, as a daily practice! How many children are growing up to maturity, who scarcely know any thing of the contents of the Bible! O that men were aware of the rich treasure of divine truth which is contained in this sacred volume! And O! that they all had a taste for those spiritual provisions, which are there so richly provided, and so freely offered to all who are willing to partake of them!

As calculated to suggest the value of divine truth, I will bring into view, that expression in which the gospel is represented as "THE WORD OF LIFE." Phil. ii. 16.

The life here spoken of is, doubtless, **ETERNAL LIFE**. This is the highest and purest state, to which any creature can aspire, or at which any creature can arrive. Revealed truth is the word of life, because it brings us the only certain information which we possess respecting a future life of blessedness. Human reason cannot even demonstrate the immortality of the soul; but if the arguments suggested by reason, were ever so conclusive, as to the certainty of a future existence; yet they could prove nothing as to the felicity of that state. Judging merely from analogy, we would conjecture, that if there should be a future state, it would be something like the present; or if we should derive our argument from our moral feelings, a sense of ill-desert would lead us to expect condign punishment for our sins, in the world to come. It is by divine revelation, alone, that the future destination of man is fully disclosed. It is by the gospel, that "life and immortality are brought to light." The gospel is, therefore, **THE WORD OF LIFE**, because it gives us certain information that eternal life is attainable; and this is the most interesting and important information which could be communicated. But this is not all; the gospel is properly called "the word of life," not only because it gives us information of the attainableness of eternal life; but because it contains a sentence of life, or justification, to every one who truly believes the testimony which God has given of his Son. Men, by nature, are all children of wrath; justly condemned for their sins; the gospel contains a proclamation of free pardon to every one who accepts the gracious offer. If any person were condemned to death, by the laws of the country, for such an one to be assured that there was a possibility of obtaining a pardon, would, indeed, be very good news; but to have a paper put into his hands, containing a free and full pardon, from the chief magistrate, attested by his own signature and great seal, would be intelligence of a very different kind. Such a communication would

deserve, in the highest sense, to be denominated, **A MESSAGE OF LIFE**; for by it the condemned person would be freed, in a moment, from the condemnation of death, and have his life given to him. Just in the same manner, the gospel brings from the King of kings, a message of pardon and justification. The act has passed the high court of heaven, granting pardon and life to every one who believes. All that is wanting to give validity to this act of grace, is the cordial acceptance of the condemned sinner. Surely, then, this is properly called "**THE WORD OF LIFE**."

Again, men are not only dead in law, but "dead in trespasses and sins." It is as necessary to be delivered from this death, as from the former; the word is here also the word of life; for it is the instrument of regeneration, or the communication of spiritual life, to a soul dead in sin. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." The word is the precious seed, which, being sown in the soul, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, is made to vegetate, to spring up, and to bring forth fruit to the glory of God.

As, moreover, this new life requires nutriment, the word is the proper food of the spiritual man. "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." This is the hidden manna, on which the spiritual Israel feed, and by means of which they are strengthened, and grow up, by degrees, to the stature of perfect men. Christ calls himself "the bread that came down from heaven;" and says, unless we "eat his flesh and drink his blood," we have no life in us. But how can we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, but by faith in his word? Christ is in the word; and we have no need to say, "Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)"

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach."

And, finally, "the word of life" will serve as a source of light and comfort to the Christian pilgrim, during his whole journey through the wilderness; and in the valley and shadow of death, it will be the rod and staff which the great Shepherd will use to repel every foe, and to afford support and comfort, in the conflict with the last enemy. Like the pillar of cloud and of fire to Israel, of old, will this divine light be to the pilgrims to Mount Zion on high. It will never cease to shine upon them, until they stand upon the peaceful shores of the heavenly Canaan; and then, it will only cease to give light, because it will be absorbed in the bright blaze of divine glory, by which the temple of God in the heavens, is for ever illumined. How excellent, then, is the word of God! How precious should it be to every Christian, and to every sinner also, for his only hope is in the illuminating and converting influence of the word, rendered efficacious by the Holy Spirit. The value and efficacy of the word of life are not appreciated, as they should be: no, not by Christians themselves. But if the word of God be so powerful to convince, to convert, to support, and to comfort, why do we not witness more of its effects, since copies of it have, of late years, been multiplied? The obvious and proper answer to this question, is, that it is not read and understood. It is evident, that the letters of the Sacred Scriptures can enlighten or edify no one, while they continue shut up within the lids of the book; and it is equally evident, that if the sacred pages are read and not considered, nor their true meaning apprehended, there can be no good effect produced. There are two things wanting, therefore, to render the Holy Scriptures efficacious, in enlightening and reforming men. The first is, some plan by which the daily and serious reading of the Scriptures may be promoted, in families, and by individuals; and the second, some me-

thod of fixing the attention of the reader on the meaning of the sacred text, and some method of impressing what is read, on the heart and conscience. It is true, that those truths of Holy Writ, which are most fundamental, are most easily apprehended, and occur most frequently on the sacred page; but in most, there is wanting the practical skill to make the proper application of what is intellectually clear. Few persons have the habit of personally applying the truth to themselves; and many are too diffident of their own judgment, to proceed with any confidence in this business. They need some one to go before them, and teach them the lessons of improvement suggested by each passage. Without this aid, much of the benefit of reading the Scriptures will be lost to the unlearned; and even persons capable of making as sound remarks, as those found in authors, will often find themselves benefited by the pious and practical observations of another.

It has always appeared to the writer, that the "Practical Remarks" of the late Dr. Thomas Scott, were the most valuable part of his exposition. But as they are arranged, it is an awkward business to read them, in proper connexion with the text, on which they are founded. It does, therefore, appear to be a judicious plan to connect these "Remarks" with the sacred text, in such a way, that it will be convenient, immediately after reading the latter, to have the former come in order. Upon this plan, no confusion or mistake can occur, in reading the "Practical Remarks," as is common, in attempting to use Scott's Bible as a book of instruction at family worship. Besides, the exposition with the "Remarks," renders this exercise too tedious. Accordingly, I have seldom known Scott's Bible to be long used, with comfort and edification, as an aid to the conductor of family worship. But, in the volume which is here presented to the public, all these inconveniences are removed. In one portable and handsome volume, you have the whole New Testament, in a plain type, of

good size, and in immediate connexion with each passage, "Scott's Practical Remarks," in a type but little smaller than the text; and the portions of Scripture, intended for one reading, are of a very proper length, so as to comprehend, generally, what relates to one subject: and yet so brief, that they can be read without consuming more time than is usually employed in reading a chapter of the Bible. My only regret is, that the enterprising publishers have not ventured on the same arrangement, with the Old Testament, as this in which they have so happily succeeded in the New. But if this publication should meet with due encouragement, I have no doubt but that they will continue their laudable exertions, until they have presented to the public the whole Bible, in the same form in which the New Testament is arranged, in the present volume.

Several persons, of late, have spoken to me, of the want of a suitable commentary, to be used in the daily worship of the household; and this comes nearer to the thing desiderated, than any publication which I have seen; and at such a time, what we want is not criticism on the nice points of construction, nor a discussion of doctrinal difficulties, but those pious inferences and practical precepts which may be fairly drawn from the text. We need such views of evangelical truth, as will most tend to impress the heart, to increase the faith, to enkindle devotion, to present to the mind the strongest and best motives, and to guide the practice. Just such views of divine truth, we have in Dr. Scott's "Practical Remarks." I cannot but think, therefore, that the simple but ingenious plan of this work, supplies a *desideratum* in our books for family use; and I cannot but hope, that the publication of this volume will be found to increase the profitable reading of the Holy Scriptures, in the families of the pious. And here, I would remark, that there are many conscientious heads of families, who not being in full communion with the church, nor considering themselves to be of the

number of the regenerate, do not think it expedient for them to set up the worship of God in their houses, because this, it appears to them, would be like making a profession of religion; and they are determined, whatever else they may be, not to expose themselves to the charge of hypocrisy. Now, without stopping to reason with such persons about the point of duty, I would respectfully but earnestly entreat every one, male or female, who has the charge of children or domestics, to adopt the plan of reading one of the short sections or paragraphs of this volume, with the practical remarks founded on the same, every morning and evening. If you are willing to do no more, I entreat you to do this; and if, in the space of one year, you are not convinced of the benefit of the practice, both to yourself and family, I will agree that you then leave it off. I have such an opinion of the power of the Holy Scriptures over the hearts and consciences of men, that I entertain a firm persuasion, that the best method of converting an infidel, or even an atheist, would be to get him to listen seriously to the reading of the Scriptures. The best way to reclaim persons addicted to some particular sin, would be to persuade them to attend to the divine testimonies. The most effectual method of growing in grace, and avoiding backsliding, would be to be constant and serious in the perusal of the Scriptures; and in all our tribulations they contain the true and only effectual sources of consolation. Let the reading of the Scriptures, then, form a part of every religious exercise, in private or in public. There are professors who dare not entirely neglect the worship of God in their houses, but to save time, they omit, usually, the reading of the word of God. O what a piece of injustice to their own souls! For the sake of earning a few more pence in the day, they are willing to deprive themselves and families of that spiritual food, without which it is impossible that their souls should prosper. I have no more idea, that a Christian can be in vigorous

spiritual health, without the constant and serious reading of the word of God, than that a labourer could maintain his vigour, and perform his work, if fed all the time on bread and water. Whence can we derive matter for profitable meditation, unless we are familiar with the treasury of divine truth? How can we resist the adversary successfully, if the sword of the Spirit is suffered to rust? How shall we be likely to decide aright the thousand cases of duty, which are constantly occurring, unless the word of God dwell in us richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding? And as to the loss of time, the idea of wasting time by reading the Scriptures, is preposterous. It is the very best way to redeem time. Did any man's conscience ever condemn him for spending a portion of every morning and evening, in the devout perusal of the Testament of his Lord? The old proverb is, "that prayer and food hinder no man," however great his hurry! But if, for the sake of doing a little more work, you neglect the Bible, be assured, that in the wise providence of God, you will be so perplexed, thwarted, and disappointed in your business, that you will lose much more than you gain, even as it relates to this world. But what is this world or its wealth? O how soon all these possessions and enjoyments will pass away! O man, look before you, look around you, and be convinced that this is not your home! Eternity draws nigh; the archangel's trump will soon be heard; the judgment will soon be here; the everlasting condition of every man will soon be immutably fixed. Our great duty and interest call upon us to awake; to flee from the coming wrath; to secure the friendship of our Judge; to obtain a meetness for the heavenly inheritance, and such an assured hope as will enable us to triumph even in the dying hour.

It would be a work of supererogation to descant on the excellence of the "Practical Remarks" of Dr. Scott, at this time of day. They are uniformly characterized by judiciousness. Seldom has any man written so

much, where nothing can be found which is weak, fanciful, or injudicious; and especially his Practical Observations are so wise and pertinent, and flow so obviously from the text, that they commend themselves to the good sense and to the moral feelings of every rightly constituted mind. It would be difficult, in the multitude and variety of these remarks, on every passage in the whole Bible, to find a single one from which we would wish to dissent; or which could be fairly charged with a want of pertinence, in connexion with the sacred text, on which it is founded.

Another characteristic of Scott's Practical Remarks is, their uniform evangelical spirit. There is such a thing as teaching a strict morality, and enforcing it by considerations and motives not consistent with the free grace of the gospel; as if men are exhorted to love God with all the heart, from the hope of meeting with a rich reward, without any respect to the acceptance of our obedience through Christ, and irrespective of aid to be derived from him as the Head of the church, and the only source of strength and holiness to his people. This preposterous method of inculcating duty, Dr. Scott entirely avoids; and while he maintains the claims of the law to their utmost extent, he teaches that our acceptance with God must not be attributed, in any degree, to our own obedience, but to the merits of our Saviour; and that our ability to perform good works is derived from Christ; that we are as dependent on him as the branch is on the vine; so that without his aid, "we can do nothing."

The only other thing which I shall mention, as characterizing these Remarks, is their wonderful variety. It might have been supposed, that a mind like Dr. Scott's, distinguished for strength, and in a very small degree imaginative, could not have avoided a very frequent sameness in its practical views. Perhaps, something of this kind may be discerned by a nice observer; as the passages of Scripture on which his remarks are made, are often the



same in substance; but, upon a cursory view of his remarks on the New Testament, included in this volume, I have been struck with their variety, indicating an extraordinary fertility of mind in the author.

The style of Dr. Scott, in these "Practical Remarks," is very happy. Without being diffuse, he is always perspicuous. In all his writings there is no instance of what is termed "ambition of style." His words are however well chosen, to express clearly and cogently the ideas which he wishes to communicate. His language, though never ornate, is uniformly chaste and vigorous. While it is level to the capacity of the plainest reader, it has nothing to offend the taste of the learned and refined.

The benefit which has been conferred on this country, by the wide circulation of Dr. Scott's Exposition of the Scriptures, cannot be estimated. The numerous editions of the work have met with a ready sale; and multitudes of families have been enriched and instructed by these volumes, who never before enjoyed the privilege of looking into any explanation of the Sacred Scriptures. It has become customary

with many to exalt the productions of former generations, as greatly superior to the theological, and especially the practical writings of our times. But, where among the writings of the seventeenth century, can we find a more useful writer than Dr. Scott? Where, in any of the writings of the Puritans, can we find such a body of practical remarks as those in his exposition?

Finally, I would remark, that it is not the design, as I trust it will not be the effect of this publication, to supersede the use of Dr. Scott's whole work. The end of the publishers is merely to prepare a volume which may render the remarks of Scott more useful as an aid in family worship and family instruction.

The writer of this "Introduction" begs leave to say to the public, that whatever benefit may accrue from the arrangement here pursued, the credit is not due to him, but entirely to the publishers. His office is merely to say something to recommend the work to public notice, so far as his name or his observations may have weight with any into whose hands this volume may come.