

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS  
ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE.

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## PREFACE.

IN sending forth the first volume of a new Expository work upon the Gospels, I feel it necessary, in order to prevent misapprehension, to offer some explanation of the character and design of the work.

The “EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS,” which are now before the reader, are not a learned, critical commentary. I do not profess to expound every verse of the Gospels, to grapple with every difficulty, to attempt the solution of every hard text, and to examine every disputed reading or translation.

The “EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS” are not a continuous and homiletic exposition, containing practical remarks on every verse, like the commentaries of Brentius and Gualter.

The plan I have adopted in drawing up the “Expository Thoughts” is as follows: I have divided the sacred text into sections or passages, averaging about twelve verses in each. I have then supplied a continuous series of short, plain “Expositions” of each of these passages. In each Exposition I have generally begun by stating as briefly as possible the main scope and purpose of the passage under consideration. I have then selected two, three, or four prominent points in the passage, singled them out from the rest, dwelt exclusively on them, and endeavoured to enforce them plainly and vigorously on the reader’s attention. The points selected will be found to be sometimes doctrinal, and sometimes practical. The only rule in selection has been to seize on the really leading points of the passage.

In style and composition I frankly avow that I have studied, as far as possible, to be plain and pointed, and to choose what an old divine calls “picked and packed” words. I have tried to place myself in the position of one who is reading aloud to others, and must arrest their attention, if he can. I have said to myself in writing each Exposition, “I am addressing a mixed company, and I have but a short time.”—Keeping this in view, I have constantly left unsaid many things that might have been said, and have endeavoured to dwell chiefly on the things needful to salvation. I have deliberately passed over many subjects of secondary importance, in order to say something that might strike and stick in consciences. I have felt that a few points, well remembered and fastened down, are better than a quantity of truth lying loosely and thinly scattered over the mind.

A few footnotes, explaining difficult passages, have occasionally been added to the Exposition. I have thought it good to add these notes for the information of readers who may feel a wish to know what can be said about the “deep things” of Scripture, and may have no commentary of their own.

I cannot, of course, expect that the opinions expressed in these Expositions, whether about doctrine, practice, or prophecy, will be satisfactory and acceptable to every one. I can only say, I have spoken out freely, and kept back nothing that seemed to me true. I have set down nothing but what I conscientiously believe to be the real meaning of the inspired writer, and the mind of the Spirit. I have always held that truth is most likely to be reached, when men on all sides conceal nothing, but tell out all their minds. Right or wrong, I have endeavoured to tell out my own mind. It is my firm conviction that I have said nothing in these Expositions which is not in perfect harmony with the thirty-nine Articles of my own Church, and does not agree in the main with all the Protestant Confessions of Faith. The words of an old divine will explain the kind of theology to which I ever desire to adhere and conform: "I know no true religion but Christianity; no true Christianity but the Doctrine of Christ; of His divine person (Col. i. 15), of His divine office (1 Tim. ii. 5), of His divine righteousness (Jer. xxiii. 6), and of His divine Spirit, which all that are His receive (Rom. viii. 9). I know no true ministers of Christ but such as make it their business, in their calling, to commend Jesus Christ, in His saving fulness of grace and glory, to the faith and love of men. I know no true Christian but one united to Christ by faith, and abiding in Him by faith and love, to the glorifying of the name of Jesus Christ, in the beauties of Gospel holiness. Ministers and Christians of this spirit have for many years been my brethren and companions, and I hope ever shall be, whithersoever the hand of the Lord may lead me." (Trail's Preface to "Throne of Grace.")

I am deeply sensible of the many imperfections and defects of the volume which is now sent forth. No one perhaps will see them more clearly than I do myself. At the same time, I think it only fair to say, that no Exposition in this volume has been composed without deliberate reflection, and laborious examination of other men's opinions. There are very few passages handled in these Expositions, concerning which I have not at least looked at the views of the following writers: Chrysostom, Augustine, Theophylact, Euthymius, Calvin, Brentius, Bucer, Musculus, Gualter, Beza, Bullinger, Pellican, Ferus, Calovius, Cocceius, Baxter, Poole, Hammond, Lightfoot, Hall, Du Veil, Piscator, Paræus, Jansenius, Leigh, Ness, Mayer, Trapp, Henry, Whitby, Gill, Doddridge, Burkitt, Quesnel, Bengel, Scott, A. Clarke, Pearce, Adams, Watson, Olshausen, Alford, Barnes, Stier. I can truly say, that I have spent hours, days, and weeks in examining the opinions of these writers, and that when I differ from them it is not because I do not know their views.

Commentaries and Expositions of Scripture are so numerous in the present day, that I feel it necessary to say something about the class of readers whom I have specially had in view in putting forth these EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS.

In the first place, I indulge the hope that the work may be found suitable for use at family prayers. The supply of works adapted for this purpose has never yet been equal to the demand.

In the next place, I cannot help hoping that the work may prove an aid to those who visit the sick and the poor. The number of persons who visit hospitals, sick-rooms, and cottages, with an earnest desire to do spiritual good, is now very great. There is reason to believe that proper books for reading on such occasions are much wanted.

Last, but not least, I trust that the work may not be found unprofitable for private reading, as a companion to the Gospels. There are not a few whose callings and engagements make it impossible for them to read large commentaries and expositions of God's Word. I have thought that such may find it helpful to their memories to have a few leading points set before their minds, in connection with what they read.

I now send forth the volume, with an earnest prayer that it may tend to the promotion of pure and undefiled religion, help to extend the knowledge of Christ, and be a humble instrument in aid of the glorious work of converting and edifying immortal souls.

J. C. RYLE.

*Helmingham Rectory,  
December, 1856.*