

SCRIPTURAL COMMENTARY OF THE REV. WILLIAM LEVERICH

Background

Riker, James Jr.; Annals of Newtown; New York: D. Fanshaw, 1852.

An interesting relic of Mr. Leverich exists in the town clerk's office. It is a volume of between six and seven hundred pages, about one hundred of which are occupied by a running commentary on the first fourteen books of the Old Testament, written by his hand, but in part copied from the commentary of the learned Piscator. The book seems to have been originally intended by Mr. Leverich as an index to subjects he should meet within the course of his study, the pages being numbered and headed with a great variety of subjects, written in Latin, and arranged alphabetically. But the design was not carried out, and after the decease of Mr. Leverich, the book was given to the town for public records.

Davidson, Rev. Robert; Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church; Historical Discourse on the Bi-Centennial Commemoration of the Founding of the First Christian Church in the Town of Huntington, L.I.; November 19, 1865; Huntington, NY: George H. Shepard, Printer, Long-Islander Office, 1866.

About 1865 this document was examined by Dr. John P. Knox, then pastor of the Newtown Presbyterian Church, at the request of Rev. Robert Davidson, then pastor of the First Presbyterian Church at Huntington. In a letter to Rev. Davidson, Dr. Knox makes the following observations:

It is an old folio volume. The covers are off, and a number of leaves both at the beginning and end are gone. The commentary as far as the record remains, begins with Deuteronomy and closes with 2 Chronicles. There is no name attached. We must take Mr. Riker's authority that it was written by Mr. Leverich. The writing is cramped, small, and much abbreviated; signs also are used for small familiar words; so much so that I could not define entirely a single line. The whole consists of one or two remarks or observations upon each verse, chapter by chapter; each remark comprehended in four or five words. For instance: "God's hatred of Idolatry." "Example of veracity in Eli admitting defense of Hannah." "Example of Humility". Occasionally I see a reference to the New Testament, and also to other parts of the Old. With some study, the whole could easily be made out, after the signs and abbreviations were mastered. I suppose the author was simply jotting down his thoughts on each verse as he read, for matter and illustration in sermonizing. After his death the book was used as a volume of town records, with which its remaining pages, several hundred in all, are filled.

“James Riker Papers”, Memoria, Volume 31 (Old Volume 9), New York Public Library [microfilm reel 8][c 1840-1850]

“Rev. Wm Leverich’s Commentary (in vol 2d of Newtown records)”

His commentary covers 96 pages and is written in a very small hand. It begins with the first of Genesis and closes with the 12th chapter of 2d Chronicles. Although some of the leaves are loose, it is yet complete. It furnishes evidence of Mr. Leverich’s acquaintance with the learned languages and with biblical literature. He makes quotations in Hebrew and Latin and Greek.

It is probable that a leaf with some prefatory remarks is missing, for the first page opens with the following written close at the top:

“Piscator’s observations generally some few excepted w^c I transcribed for my use & of mine, not having his commentaryes by me , but as I borrowed them.”

Throughout the commentary (which in the main consists of a brief remark upon each verse of the scripture treated of, expressive of the leading truth set forth or inculcated; & usually [**? written ?**] along it) Mr. L. speaks of Piscator’s opinions, Pareus upon the Romans, & Mr. Cotton.

And Mr L often distinguishes his own remarks by annexing the words de meo in parentheses. The following are quotations from this Commentary.

Gen 3.12. “When ye devill hath once brought a man into his snare, he plunges him further, soe as **to [ad...]** to sin. Adam comes from unbelife to disobedience thence to dissimulatore, excusatio & defence of sin, thence to blaspheme & accuse God himselfe as **[???**] God.”

Gen 18.5. “Hospitality lookes at this one thing especially to doe good to such wee entertaine.”

Gen 27.32. “ God orders tymes **[? ofemaus ?]** actioⁿs to serve ye Executo ofe his decrees”

Gen 29.6. “God governes actioⁿs ofe men to bring his holy purposes about.”.

At the close of the book of Genesis Leverich remarks: “Gratius deo **[??]** luce verbi sui & laborib servovu sour doctor/ & prior/. Abeant in **[????? ???]** qui artes & lingua cotemunt.”

Deut 2&5. “God doth good to wicked posterity for ye sake ofe pius progenitores & forefathers.”

Deut 22.9.10&11. “Wee are to study simplicity in all things the God allowes not [??ext??ses] in religio.”

Deut 33.. 6 to 26. Long life, numerous ofespring, victory agst enemyes, ministry, publig worshippe, peace, abounding wth [? fonites ?] riches from cattell & merchandise, abundance of mettals as iron, brasse, are to be acknowledged ye gifts ofe God.

Joshua 3&11. “We should looke upoⁿ God as ye God ofe whole earth, when he undertakes great things for us in transplanting us in strange countryes etc de meo.

Josh 3..6.7.8.9.21. etc. Benefitts ofe God to be kept in fresh memory & to be propagated to posterity. [Riker uses quotation on Title page of Annals of Newtown, as does Freeman in his History of Cape Cod].

Josh from 13 cap 14 & 14.3. “Ministers not to be busied in the care ofe acquiring and encreasing their private estates, but to be literally [? Enayntayned ?] by ye church”.

Joshua 24.. 26&27. “Acts ofe great moment to be comitted to writing for perpetual memory.”

Josh 24.32. “The lawful oaths ofe Ancestors bynd posterity. De meo.”

Judges 4.18. “God useth weake instruments to doe great things.”

Judg 14.4&5: “Gods decrees sway mens wills though they be ignorant ofe y^m.”

1 Samuel 10..5. “Musicke great force to strive up ye mind & affections ofe it.”

1 Sam 10..25. “Publicke records to be studiously p served of things publige.”

1 Sam 16. 17&18. “Force of musicke in coⁿposing is [? Turbatos ?] ofe mynde.”

1 Sam 22:2. “Such as are called to pt ofe ye government of ye comon-wealth may defend y^mselves wth armes agst ye unjust force of Kings & princes.”

1 Sam 26: 23&24. “Good conscience breeds good hope.”

Note – The headings in the Leverich book were written before the Commentary. Some leaves are cut out of the book - & some are cut off at the end, originally the beginning for the book has been turned upside down, since the headings of subjects were entered, but before the commentary was written, which letter is at the beginning & right side up as the book now stands. The leaves were cut out of from inside the book before it was paged by the town clerk.

Examination of the Manuscript

In the late 1970's, at least a portion of the above referenced work was located in the Historical Documents Section of Queens College, City University of New York, and was examined by this writer. The library catalog describes the work as follows:

86 parchment pages, 34 cm x 20 cm, longhand, ink. Commentary on scriptural passages, organized by chapter and verse, in English, with Greek and Hebrew references, tentative dating from the 1640's.

In an October 2001 telephone conversation with Dr. Leo Hershkowitz of Queens College, the compiler learned that the college's historical documents collection was closed down in the mid 1980's, and the collection dispersed to various other archival repositories. In a subsequent telephone conversation with William Asadorian of the Queens Borough Public Library, it was learned that the above document had been transferred to the New York City Municipal Archives in Manhattan, since the document had been included as part of the Newtown Town Records.

The writer examined and photographed the document at the Municipal Archives on January 11, 2002 and again on August 16, 2004.

The work had apparently been bound by the Newtown Town Clerk in 1881. The binding contains the following reference.

"Remains of Ancient Newtown". Part of the Record Book presented by the Leverich Family, containing the scriptural notes and reading of the Rev. William Leverich. As these leaves had come apart from the old book, I thought it better to bind together under cover by themselves.

[signed] William O'Gorman, Town Clerk, Newtown, November 5, 1881

The descriptions of Mr. Riker and Dr. Knox are quite accurate (except for page count – see table below). The volume now consists of 84 pages (42 leaves written on both sides) and is designated on the accession record at the Municipal Archives as Book # 286A of the Newtown Town Records. It would then appear that 12 pages (6 leaves) disappeared some time between the 1840's and 1865. These 12 pages apparently included commentary on the Books of Joshua and Judges, and probably the Book of Ruth. Book # 286 of the Town Records appears to have been recorded on blank pages taken from William Leverich's manuscript, and the pages still show William's subjects, written upside down at the bottom of each page. A comparison of the handwriting between the scriptural commentary and Book #286 of the town records clearly demonstrates this unusual phenomenon. It appears that William had planned out a larger work, annotating blank pages with "subjects", but never completed it. After his death, the town clerk apparently used the blank pages, inverted, for the town records.

Although the condition of the manuscript is poor, it can be handled with extreme care. The script is legible in parts, but with significant effort. A page by page index of the manuscript follows.

Queens Borough Public Library-Long Island Division (QBPL-LID)

The compiler of this paper visited QBPL-LID on July 30, 2005. The library has microfilm copies of the Newtown Town Records from the Historical Documents Collection at Queens College, CUNY. This includes William Leverich's "Scriptural Commentary", 80 pages, designated Book 286A of the Newtown Town Records, on microfilm roll # TNT 10.

Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

Based upon an examination on August 16, 2005, The Family History Library microfilm # 484027 appears to be identical to the microfilm roll # TNT 10 at QBPL-LID, and includes the scriptural commentary, 80 pages.

SCRIPTURAL COMMENTARY OF THE REV. WILLIAM LEVERICH

PAGE	BOOK OF THE BIBLE	CHAPTERS	RIKER QUOTATION	DIGITAL IMAGE
Cover				DSC 074-076 Mun Arc 8/16/04
Title				DSC 077-079 Mun Arc 8/16/04
1	?	25-32		DSC 080-082 Mun Arc 8/16/04
2	?	32-36		
	Deuteronomy	1		
3	?	?		
4	?	?		
5	? Genesis ?	4		
6	? Genesis ?	6-7		
7	? Genesis ?	8-11		
8	? Genesis ?	12-15		
9	? Genesis ?	? 16-17 ?		
10	? Genesis ?	18-19	Gen 18.5	
11	? Genesis ?	20-21		
12	? Genesis ?	21-23		
13	? Genesis ?	24-25		DSC 083-085 Mun Arc 8/16/04
14	? Genesis ?	25-26		
15	? Genesis ?	26-28	Gen 27.32	
16	? Genesis ?	29-31	Gen 29.6	
17	? Genesis ?	31-34		
18	? Genesis ?	35-37		
19	? Genesis ?	38-40		
20	? Genesis ?	41-44		
21	? Genesis ?	44-49		
22	? Genesis ? Exodus	49-50 A Discourse		
23	Exodus	A Discourse		
24	Exodus	A Discourse		
25	Exodus	1-3		
26	Exodus	3-5		
27	Exodus	6-11		
28	Exodus	12-16		
29	Exodus	17-22		
30	Exodus	23-26		

PAGE	BOOK OF THE BIBLE	CHAPTERS	RIKER QUOTATION	DIGITAL IMAGE
31	Exodus	27-34		
32	Exodus	34-40		
33	Leviticus	1-2		
34	Leviticus	3-8		
35	Leviticus	8-12		
36	Leviticus	13-18		
37	Leviticus	19-24		
38	Leviticus Numbers	25-27 1-4		
39	Numbers	5-11		
40	Numbers	11-14		
41	Numbers	14-20		
42	Numbers	20-24		
43	?	?		
44	?	4-7		
45	?	18-21		
46	?	?		
47	?	?		
	1 Samuel	1		
48	1 Samuel	2-5		
49	1 Samuel	6-8		
50	1 Samuel	9-10	1 Sam 10.5 1 Sam 10.25	
51	1 Samuel	11-13		
52	1 Samuel	14-15		
53	1 Samuel	15-16	1 Sam 16.17&18	
54	1 Samuel	17-18		
55	1 Samuel	18-22	1 Sam 22.2	
56	1 Samuel	22-25		
57	1 Samuel	25-30	1 Sam 26: 23&24	
58	1 Samuel 2 Samuel	31 1-3		DSC 086-092 Mun Arc 8/16/04
59	2 Samuel	3-7		
60	2 Samuel	8-12		
61	2 Samuel	12-15		
62	2 Samuel	15-18		
63	2 Samuel	19-21		
64	2 Samuel	21-24		
65	1 Kings	1-2		
66	1 Kings	3-8		

PAGE	BOOK OF THE BIBLE	CHAPTERS	RIKER QUOTATION	DIGITAL IMAGE
67	1 Kings	8-13		
68	1 Kings	14-17		
69	?	6-10		
70	?	11-17		
71	?	17-21		
72	?	22		DSC 100-102
	2 Kings	1-2		Mun Arc 8/16/04
73	2 Kings	3-4		DSC 093-099 DSC 100-102 Mun Arc 8/16/04
74	2 Kings	5-6		
75	2 Kings	6-12		
76	2 Kings	13-17		
77	2 Kings	17-23		
78	? 2 Kings ?	? 24-25 ?		
79	?	18-22		
80	?	23		
	1 Chronicles	1-5		
81	2 Chronicles	1-6		
82	2 Chronicles	7-12		DSC 112-114 Mun Arc 8/16/04
83	2 Chronicles	12-18		DSC 103-111 DSC 112-114 Mun Arc 8/16/04
84	2 Chronicles	19-22		

**SCRIPTURAL COMMENTARY OF THE
REV. WILLIAM LEVERICH
PAGE COUNTS**

DATE	PAGE COUNT	SOURCE
1840's	96	Riker Papers, Memoria Volume 31 (old volume 9) Complete Genesis 1 to 2 nd Chronicles 12
1865	?	Rev. John P. Knox: unbound: some pages missing at beginning and end; Deuteronomy to 2 nd Chronicles
1881	?	Volume bound by Town Clerk William O'Gorman
c 1975	86	Catalog description: Historical Documents Collection, Queens College, CUNY
8/16/04	84	Municipal Archives, City of New York
7/30/05	80	Queens Borough Public Library, Long Island Division: Microfilm TNT 10
08/16/05	80	Family History Library Microfilm #484027

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