

CONVERSATIONS

WITH - , AND

LETTERS

TO

JOHN CAMPBELL

BY

JOHN NEWTON

## CONVERSATIONS of John Newton with John Campbell

[Newton was born in 1725 — and died on December 21, 1807]

### 1802.

**April 3.** I called upon Mr. Newton, on my arrival from Scotland. When told who I was, he said, "I am glad you are come, but I cannot see you, for my sight is so gone. I observe your face, but I cannot distinguish your features." At dinner a person remarked, that the East India Company had overset the college at Calcutta.

"What a pity," said I.

"No," said Mr. Newton "No pity — it must do good. If you had a plan in view, and could hinder opposition, would you not prevent it?"

"Yes, Sir,"

"Well, God can hinder all opposition to his plans — he has permitted that to take place, but he will carry on his own plan. I am learning to see God in all things — I believe not a person knocks at my door but is sent by God."

The conversation turned upon the lack of teeth. Mr. Newton was silent for some time — at length he said, "Give over that conversation, it is too trifling for Christians. Let us talk about the Lord."

**April 7.** Speaking respecting Colossians 1:28, 29, he said, "To attack human depravity with philosophy, or fine sentiments, or by extolling morality — I compare to fighting Goliath with a paper sword. Christ was the subject of Paul's preaching, and no man did more good. One who preaches Christ, should know him. Colleges can never make up the lack of the knowledge of Christ. Without Christ, ministers may amuse their audience, perhaps may send them away admiring the sermon — but Paul would have thought little of this. Paul warned every man of Hell — and of existing eternally in misery, if they persisted in sin. He warned Christian men of their danger of being taken in the snare of the devil — thousands of unseen enemies surround us. To present every man perfect. "This," said he, "is not sinless perfection — the more grace a man has, the quicker sensibility he has about sin — nor is it the perfection of an angel, but of a child, who has all the parts of a man, but is not a man. A perfect Christian is one who has all the parts of a Christian, the head, the heart, the hands, etc. if we may so speak — he has faith, love, humility, etc."

"Some people confine their religion to devotional exercises, and lay great stress upon it — but these are not mature Christians; this is only a part of Christianity. Some are offended at the

minister who detects them in any part of their character which is defective; but a Christian is thankful when his defects are revealed to him."

**April 10.** After tea, Mr. Newton proposed some questions for discussion. The principal ones were:

What is the difference between a tender and a scrupulous conscience? How far is a scrupulous conscience obligatory?

Those present agreed, that a tender conscience must always be a well-informed one — and a scrupulous conscience not. Some were of opinion, that it is right always to obey conscience — that where it is wrong, the sin lies in not properly using the means of information.

**April 14.** Mr. Newton remarked, that "the communion of saints could not be easily made intelligible to the world; but a Christian in London could rejoice in the conversion of a man in the East Indies, whose face he never saw, nor ever expected to see on earth. He can also feel for a congregation when they have a faithful pastor removed from them by death, though not personally acquainted with anyone person in that congregation."

"A philosopher," said he, "would smile at the ignorance of a Christian ploughman, who would consider the sun no larger than his cartwheel. But the ploughman, in his turn, would be as much surprised at the philosopher's ignorance, if he attempted to persuade him that the Savior was only a mere man, like Paul. There is a greater disproportion between Jesus and Paul, than between the sun and the cart-wheel. The philosopher would not be capable of persuading the ploughman, that it was a few tall men who placed the sun in the heavens; he would find it equally hard to persuade him that he who made atonement for sin, was only a man."

"The knowledge of arts, sciences, business, etc. are good things; but if men, going to eternity, spend all their time in pursuing these, they are mere fools! They neglect the best knowledge."

**April 17.** Before family worship in the morning, Mr. Newton made a few pertinent remarks on Hebrews 2:14. "*Abel*," said he, "was a good man, a convinced sinner — made God's will his rule — so he offered sacrifice. This was not a natural suggestion; it was contrary to carnal reason to think that destroying any of God's works could please him. The philosophers, in all the countries where it has been practiced, have conformed to the custom of the country, but they have smiled at the practice. *Cain* was one of these wise reasoners; he considered it more rational to offer some of the fruits of the ground as a thank-offering."

"Warburton tells us that there was no revelation of a future state of rewards and punishments previous to the captivity — but could it not be plainly inferred from this passage. If no reward after death, it must have been considered a very dangerous thing indeed to please God, seeing, it exposed a man to instant annihilation; for Cain slew Abel on that account. Cain very much, resembled the Pharisee, and Abel the Publican, in the New Testament. The whole of Hebrews 11 contains a history of the exploits of faith."

After prayer, turning to me, he said, "When you leave London, it is probable you will never see me again. I am an old man now; but I leave the day of my death to God's choosing. He did not consult me when he should bring me into the world, and he will not do it about my going out of it. It will not do to live on past experience. I must live by the day, by the hour, by the minute — on God. Recollecting I had a good meal last week, will not feed me today. I must have new food, or I shall starve."

Conversing upon 2 Corinthians 5:2: "House from Heaven." "If it does not refer to some temporary case for holding the soul," he said, "I do not know the meaning of it. I cannot conceive of seeing without eyes, or hearing without ears. But I will tell you of a poor carpenter at Sheerness, whom I frequently went to hear, in my young days, in a small room. He used to take a good many verses for his text. When he came to a difficult one, he would say, 'We shall pass over this' — for he was a humble man. I wish many of us ministers would imitate this carpenter.'

"O!" said he, "I give many good advices to others — -which I do not take myself. Crosses are good things! God does most good to man by them — they humble him, they bring him to know his dependence on God."

"Men are most disposed to notice the power of God. Think of the power of God which supports this ponderous world — and that sun!" pointing to it.

**April 22.** Mr. Newton advised us to "beware of clever enemies to the truth, for they are generally subtle. Paul, who knew the wickedness of the human heart, and how ready men are to be carried away by winds of false doctrine, rejoiced when he beheld the steadfastness of the believers at Colosse."

**May 1.** Mr. Newton before prayer, read the hymn, "Upon the Sea" in Olney collection. He remarked, "that there are monsters in the heart of man as well as in the sea, even when they do not appear. In calm weather seamen will say: If it were always this way, old wives would go to sea, but by and by the wind rises, and the water rages, and all are at their wit's end. So it is often with God's people."

After breakfast I retired with him to his study. During the conversation he stated the following circumstance: "A minister told me of a dumb man, who was admitted a member of his church, and who made in writing a good confession. When they asked him, what he thought of Christ? he referred them to 1 Peter 2:7. He always referred them to the scriptures in answer to their questions.

"Mr. Polhill, a minister who lost his sight, told me he had never seen so clearly with his mind, as since he lost the use of his eyes. An old lady, who had lost her sight at the age of twelve, told me, that in ten years she lost almost all recollection of what sight was, and when I saw her, she declared she had not a wish for sight.

"King Herod and Saul were contemporaries. Saul was at least as wicked a man as Herod. But behold the sovereignty of God — Herod was eaten by worms and died, while Saul was converted!

"The angels know when a true work of grace is begun in a man's heart, for they rejoice on the real repentance of a sinner. Depend upon it, they never were mistaken, as we have often been."

He then said many things respecting his own former character, and with great feeling and humility. "O!" said he, "I was a base despicable creature! Sir, I was not a grossly abandoned creature merely, but I fought against Jesus — I sometimes compared him with Mahomet, and gave the preference to the latter — no vice was too wretched or wicked for me!

"Since *French principles* came among us, suicides have greatly increased — we hardly read a paper now without an instance or two of this."

**May 7.** At breakfast, Mr. Newton said to a gentleman, who had lately lost a daughter by death, "Sir, if you were going to the East Indies, I suppose you would like to send a remittance before you. This little girl is just like a remittance sent to Heaven before you go yourself. I suppose a merchant on the exchange is never heard expressing himself thus, 'O my dear ship, I am sorry she has got into port so soon! I am sorry she has escaped the storms that are coming.' Neither should we sorrow for children dying."

A person present told us of two of the seamen who were under sentence of death for the mutiny at Bantry-bay, having been brought to the knowledge of Jesus while under that sentence. The sentence being remitted, they were sent to the hulks at Woolwich. This gentleman providentially met with a letter from one of them, named C\_\_\_\_\_, to his father, in which he complained most pathetically of the dreadful company with which he was surrounded. The letter, altogether, was a most Christian one, and very well expressed. The father made sport of it, and exhibited it to the people who frequented a tavern, to excite laughter. By this means it came to the knowledge of this gentleman, who obtained it from the father. It is now in possession of those in power, and

likely to procure their removal from the hulks. The writer was afraid of relapsing into his former profligacy, if he continued among the horrid company in the hulks. Upon hearing this relation, Mr. Newton remarked, "They would be in a more dangerous situation were they placed among a set of smooth reasoners in the higher circles of life — at present they are kept on watch; in the other case they would be off their guard, and more likely to receive damage."

**May 14.** Mr. Newton told us at breakfast, that "Mr. Collins," whom he called "archbishop of the free-thinkers, met one day with a plain countryman going to Church. He inquired where he was going?

"To church, Sir."

"What are you going to do there?"

"To worship God."

"Is your God a great or a little God?"

"He is both, Sir."

"How can he be both?"

"He is so great, Sir, that the Heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and so little that he can dwell in my heart."

Collins declared that the simple answer by the countryman had more effect upon his mind than all the volumes which the learned doctors had written against him."

"Dr. Taylor of Norwich," said Mr. Newton "told me, one day, that he had critically examined every original word in the Old Testament seventeen times; and yet he did not see those glorious things in the scriptures which a plain enlightened Christian sees in them. The Doctor had not the plain man's eyes. Criticisms in words, or rather ability to make them, is not so valuable as some may imagine. A man may be able to call a broom by twenty names, in Latin, Spanish, Dutch, Greek, etc. but my maid, who knows the way to use it, but knows it only by one name, is not far behind him."

The conversation turned upon the aspect of *war*. Some dreaded this would produce it — others that. Mr. Newton observed, "We need not dispute about these causes — the Lord reigns! The philosophers long disputed whether the earth moved around the sun — or the sun went round the earth. But while they were disputing, the sun, moon, and earth were moving in their courses."

Telling us how much his memory was decayed, "There," said he, "last Wednesday, after dinner, I asked Mrs. C\_\_\_\_\_ what I had

been about that forenoon, for I could not recollect. "Why," said she — "You have been preaching at St. Mary's."

"It is astonishing," added Mr. Newton "when I am in the pulpit, I can recollect any passage of scripture I want to introduce into my sermon from Genesis to Revelation."

During another part of the conversation, he said, "I have a sun, and I know he is shining when I do not see him, and I wait until he shines again. O how seldom do we think how much we are indebted to Christ living in us! How seldom do we think of the natural life that is in us — of its being the cause of the motion of our fingers, feet, etc. But when a paralysis comes, we fall down — this sometimes draws our attention to it. If Christ were to suspend his living in our souls, we should as quickly fall foully as in the other case."

**May 21.** During breakfast, Mr. Newton remarked, "That if it was constant day — we never would see the stars, we never would have seen the glory of the heavens. Just so, if God was not to bring us into times of affliction — many precious and wonderful truths of God would remain in obscurity, as to us. Physicians do not prescribe sweet cakes for medicine; no, it is generally something that is bitter. In the same way, when God means to give us health of soul, he generally afflicts us. Had he not afflicted me, I might have fallen into something which might have been injurious to my character as a minister, consequently dishonoring to Jesus."

A friend told me of a good old man, who said, with sorrow, to Mr. Newton, that he could not recollect sermons now, as he used to do when younger. Mr. Newton took no notice at the time of what the old man had said; but a little after, he asked him if he recollected what he had for dinner that day last month. He answered, No, he did not. "Do you think that dinner helped to support you in life?" He replied, Yes, he did. "Well," said Mr. Newton "it is in that way you enjoy the word now."

**May 28.** Before prayer, Mr. Newton made some observations from 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." He began by saying, "This verse is a bone for Calvinists to pick."

He told us what he called his doctrine of *preventatives*. It was this, "God sends little trials in order to prevent greater ones. That you may understand distinctly what I mean, I will tell you a story. I knew a family who were going out to India, and had secured their passage on board a ship. They were happy that they were to go in so good a ship, so good a cabin, with so agreeable a captain, and so pleasant a company. They received a letter from Portsmouth, informing them they must join the ship at a certain day which was specified. They left London in time to spend two or three days with

friends on the way down. These friends prevailed on them to stay two or three days beyond the time fixed, assuring them that a ship going upon a voyage of two or three years, would never keep to the very day fixed for sailing, perhaps not to the week.

On their arrival at Portsmouth, they found, to their great mortification, that the ship was sailed and just getting out of sight. They returned to London greatly dejected; but they were but a few days in London before they heard of the total loss of the ship in which they were to sail, (the Halsewell,) on the coast of Cornwall, and most of those on board perished. Here they had to admire the *providence* that detained them. The losing their passage was a little trial; but it prevented a much greater one."

As this was to be my last visit previous to my return to Scotland, when I rose to go away, he asked me to remain a little longer, adding, "you will probably see me no more." When I took my leave of him, he desired me to carry my pockets full of love from him to friends in Scotland.

### **1803.**

Having returned to London on the 28th of October, 1803, I called at Mr. Newton's next morning. I found him attempting to read a little. When I told him who I was, he said, "Wait a little until I recollect myself." After being silent for about a minute, he held out his hand, saying, "I am glad to see you. I am very feeble. I never experienced before what it was to be seventy-nine."

While at dinner, conversing of the awful effects of sin in the world, he said, "That little of the effects of sin were to be seen here — in comparison of what shall be seen in the eternal world.

"Satan," said he, "frequently does great damage to the minds of God's people, in dulling their powers to perceive the truth, and their saving interest in the Lord. It resembles this: Suppose that while I was asleep, some person painted my spectacles green; in the morning, when I awoke, I would see everything green."

On the alarming state of the country, as threatened by foreign invasion, he remarked, "All is in good hands — all things are foreseen and managed by the Lord." Then he said, "*O what a sorry creature I am — I believe, in my judgment, that no man in the world has more cause to be thankful than I; yet I am not thankful.*"

**November 1.** He had many excellent remarks on *providence*. One was, "Rahab of Jericho had her house on the wall. I do not know when she moved to it, but had she not had her house there, it is probable that she and her family would have been destroyed with the others."

When the servant was employed putting on his shoes, he looked up, saying, "I did not have this trouble in Africa — for I had no shoes! Sir," [looking to me] "when I rose in the morning and shook myself like a dog, I was dressed. For forty years past, I have thought, every waking hour, on my former misery." At worship, he read and expounded the 93d Psalm. He observed, that "the word was made flesh, took a human body, died, rose, and ascended in that body — and, at present, the Lord reigns over all in that body!"

**November 5.** Speaking of people who had met with losses, he said, "When we lived at Olney, we had a low fence in front of the house, within which we used to bring up birds. While they were very young, the fence prevented them from straying; but when they grew a little older, they used to fly over. To prevent this, Mrs. Newton clipped their wings, and that effectually prevented them from straying. God's sending losses to many of his friends, is like clipping their wings to prevent their straying."

**November 29.** Speaking in reference to Psalm 103:5, "Who satisfies your mouth with good things," etc. Mr. Newton said, "Bring a man to see the best covered table in the world, looking at it might gratify his eyes, but would never satisfy his mouth. We must *taste*, before we can see that God is good."

## **1804.**

**January 2.** He told me that after he was settled at Olney, and had preached six sermons — he thought he had told them his whole stock, and was considerably depressed. "But," said he, "I was walking one afternoon by the side of the river. I asked myself, How long has this river run? Many hundred years before I was born, and will certainly run many years after I am gone. Who supplies the fountain from whence this river comes? God. Is not the fund for my sermons equally inexhaustible? — the word of God. Yes, surely. I have never been afraid of running out since that time." I asked if he had consumed all the variety in the bible now that he was an old man and an old minister. He smiled, and said, "O no, Sir! O no, Sir!"

**April 20.** Mr. Newton in the course of conversation, observed, that, "No man looking at the grub-worm in the garden would ever suspect that it would become a butterfly. In the same way, neither does it appear what believers shall be!"

**October 9.** Conversing of some remarkable conversions, and the wickedness on board some war-ships, he said, "Had I a medicine that could cure all diseases, I would not deal much with people

who had only a cut finger to cure. I would go among inveterate and mortal diseases, that the power of my medicine might be more manifest. God often acts so."

Speaking of the glory of Jesus, he said, "O how little I love him — but I am sure I desire to love him."

A friend told me that some of the first missionaries who went out to Otaheite, called upon Mr. Newton one morning. Among other inquiries they asked, what books he would recommend to take with them. In answer to which, he said he would tell them a story. "There was a man and his wife who had no book but the bible. In this they read daily, and received much comfort. One day their minister from the pulpit, recommended some commentary. They attended to his recommendation, for they purchased the commentary, and sat down to read it. After reading in it for some time, the man asked his wife, how she felt now, under the commentary. I will tell you how I feel. When I read the bible itself, I felt as if I had drank a glass of wine; but this commentary tastes like a glass of wine in a pail of water. The wife acknowledged her feelings were the same; and by mutual consent they returned to the bible."

**November 20.** Calling on Mr. Newton, I asked him if he had any good news? "Yes, I have — the Lord reigns!"

"We have reason to praise the Lord, that in every sense that was not news to us," said a person present.

"It is news to us," replied Mr. Newton "as the song in Heaven is ever a new song. Why," added he, "the person who has the finest ear for music, and can relish it most, might be delighted to hear a new and excellent tune, frequently repeated; but he could not bear to hear it all the year round."

Conversing about trials, he said, "A blacksmith, when about to make a tool, puts his iron into the fire. In the same way, the Lord, when he means to make his people more holy, puts them into the furnace."

While we were conversing, a lady called, and inquired of Mr. Newton how he felt today? "I feel," said he, "like a man of eighty. I have long been a wonder unto many, and a wonder to myself. Had God left me to myself, and had I had the abilities of Hume and Voltaire — I would have been worse than either of them!"

"My time is not yet come," he observed, "When a man's heart is much set upon anything, he will pray very earnestly to obtain it; but even though the Lord may have promised that very thing, he will not get it until the Lord's time has come. The giving and the timing of things, are both from the Lord; and both are equally necessary. A man in spiritual distress cannot deliver himself from it, nor can all the world, though they should endeavor to assist him, until the Lord's time comes. Like a vessel that has run

aground, all the men and horses you could find would not be able to draw it off; but so soon as the tide returns (and none can make the tide return a moment sooner than the regular fixed time) it moves off with the greatest ease. Even one man can move the ship now, which so many horses could not move before. So when God returns to a soul — it is an easy matter to steer clear of troubles, etc.

"A father who loves his child who is very ill, will employ and pay a physician to do very painful things to him — that the illness may thereby be removed."

A gentleman present, having related the circumstances that happened during a tremendous storm at sea he had been exposed to about three weeks before, the imminent danger he had been in of perishing, etc. — Mr. Newton turned to him, and said, "Sir, you were as safe there as here! The danger was only apparent, not real. I prove it by your having escaped it — only you did not know that you were to escape; if you had, you would not have been so much afraid. I have been almost in every quarter of the world, but I have received more damage at my own door than in any of them. We are immortal until our time comes!"

During another part of the conversation, Mr. Newton remarked, that, "The world loves the *name*, but not the *nature* of a Christian." As Christ was to the Jews and Greeks long ago, so he is to many yet — a stumbling-block and foolishness.

## **1805.**

**May 26.** I asked Mr. Newton how he did. "Never in better health — but my spirits very low."

"Do you purpose trying a few weeks in the country this summer? The country air might recruit your spirits."

"No Sir, I never intend now to move beyond the stones of London, I am eighty. I have but little time left. I would not leave my people now for a thousand pounds."

"How does past life appear when looked back to from the top of eighty?"

"Like a dream!"

"We have had much forgiven us, do you not think so, Sir?"

"Yes, some as to outward conduct, owe fifty pence; others five hundred. In this sense, those who are forgiven much, should love much; but though much has been forgiven me — I love little."

"Are you much fatigued after preaching?"

"I am no more fatigued on a Sabbath evening than on a Saturday."

"Sir, I was telling Miss C\_\_\_\_\_ that I am soon going to Scotland by sea; she says I may be captured by the French."

"And though you are, they cannot take you to the wrong place — only where God would have you."

"Mr. R\_\_\_\_\_ is an amiable character. Let us admire God in such characters; they are what God makes them, and no more."

**August 27.** Called, and inquired how he did. "I am eighty-one since you went to Scotland." Speaking of Christians being more than conquerors, he said, "If a person was attacked on the highway by a robber, and he took a pistol from his pocket, and shot the robber dead — that person was a conqueror. Likewise, a general might obtain a victory, and die in the field, as General Wolfe did — yet he was a conqueror. A Christian when he overcomes death — overcomes his last enemy."

Speaking of the surprise of some at Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ leaving his people, among whom he had been useful, he said, "When I left Olney for London, some people were surprised; but I had reasons in my own mind, that I could not proclaim upon the Royal Exchange. Perhaps that may be Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s case."

**September 10.** I found Mr. Newton very feeble. He said, "If you come to be eighty-one, though in good health, you will find your feelings not very pleasant. O it is good to have God with us. God did not say to Noah and his family — *Go* into the ark, but *come* into the ark. He was there before them."

I happened to say, that the promise in the 8th of the Romans, namely, "All things shall work together for good to those who love God," would be made good to every individual believer, and also to the church as a body, or great society. "Yes, to be sure," said he, "a bushel of peas is composed of so many individual peas; if you boil every individual pea, you boil the bushel."

I asked if he had written any more of his Ecclesiastical History than the single volume he had published? "No," said he, "I wrote that volume before I was a minister."

"Why did you not carry on the work?"

"Because I had not read enough of church history — but I was the remote cause of Milner writing his church history, which is a good one — he got the hint from me. There are many church histories, that contain a history of the vices of the men who called themselves Christians."

Did you ever meet, after you returned to Africa in better circumstances, that black woman mentioned in your Narrative, who treated you so harshly while you were in the fever?

"O yes; I will tell you about that affair. When I went there as captain of a ship, I sent my long boat ashore for her. They soon brought her on board. I desired the men to fire guns over her head, in honor of her. She seemed to feel it like heaping coals of fire upon her head. I made her some presents, and sent her ashore. She seemed to feel most comfortable when she had her back to my ship.

"I just recollect a circumstance," said he, "that happened to me when I first stepped ashore on the beach at that time. Two black females were passing — the first who noticed me observed to her companion, that there was *Newton*, and what do you think? He has got shoes! Ay, said the other, and stockings too! They had never before seen me with either."

A friend told me that he was present at Mr. Newton's when some ministers were disputing whether faith or repentance were first. Mr. Newton was silent until the debate was ended; then he said, "I have a question to ask. Are not the heart and lungs of a man both equally necessary to the life of the man?" Yes, surely. "Well, tell me which of these began to move first? This resembles the point you have been discussing."

**September 24.** Mr. Newton was in better spirits today than the last time I saw him. Conversing of the providence of God — which was a favorite topic of his, he said, "There is not a drop of rain which falls, which is not directed by God. There is not a particle of dust carried along by the wind, which is not carried the very place which God has appointed."

"I sometimes say that men live in a clock. The annual revolution of the heavenly bodies I call an hour; the four seasons are the quarters; days are the minutes; and hours, the seconds. I used to call Christmas twelve o'clock. But how many allow this great clock to go on, without observation."

"Human life, I sometimes compare to a candle, which can burn no farther than the socket. But it is in danger, frequently, of being put out before it gets to the socket."

## **1806.**

**May 20.** Conversing of a minister in the church of Rome, who had written an excellent letter to the Bible Society, rejoicing in its institution, one observed, "Is it not wonderful to find such a man in such a church."

"No," said Mr. Newton "God brought an infidel from Africa, [meaning himself] to preach his Son in England. Indeed Paul was converted to God while breathing out slaughter against the people of Christ. But I am worse than Paul. He acted uprightly while

opposing Christ. I did it contrary to conviction. I was religiously educated, and I knew well that I was doing wrong."

When conversing on another subject, Mr. Newton remarked that, "God's *commands* are like the works of his right hand, and his *permissions* like those of his left — but both fulfill his will."

"It is astonishing that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ is not more popular!"

"He is as God made him — he has been honored by God to the conversion and building up of several."

Afterwards he remarked, "We perceive God's plans best, by taking an enlarged, general view of providence."

**December 18.** When I went in to Mr. Newton I inquired after his health. He said, "*I am just as God would have me.*" He was much affected when he spoke of the death of his curate, Mr. Gunn, who had died only a few days before. He was so low at this time that I could hardly get him to speak. He said that his spirits were no better, but that he lay at the mercy of God."

A friend told me, that Mr. Newton when sending a supply of cash to Mr. Gunn, wrote on the outside of the parcel, "Ammunition, for my Gun."

## **1807.**

**January 14.** I found Mr. Newton looking worse — his feet and legs so swelled that he could not walk across the room without help. I asked, "How do you do, Sir?"

"I am just as the Lord pleases."

"This is changeable weather."

"It is according to the Lord's will."

"There are great sufferings just now on the continent."

"All the fruit of sin."

**February 10.** Mr. Newton was now confined to his bed-room, not having been downstairs for three weeks. When I spoke, he said, "I know your voice still." He said also, "I have comfort from the Word — there is much comfort in it, could we take it." When taking leave of him, he held up his hand, and prayed, "The Lord be with you all the day long, and grant you the best desires of your heart."

**May 28.** Calling in the evening, I found Mr. Newton very weak. I sat by his side about ten minutes, repeating in his ear passages of scripture; but he spoke not a word, nor took any notice of me. I asked if he recollected who I was. He said, "I shall recollect you so long as I remember two words, Grass Market" (The street in Edinburgh to which he used to direct his letters to me.) After prayer with him, he thanked me, and shaking my hand, he wished every blessing might attend me.

**July 20.** When I left Mr. Newton on May 28, before going to Scotland, I never expected to see him any more in this world; but was happy to find him tonight more lively than he was when I parted from him. He said, "he hoped his friends in Scotland did not forget him." Having repeated Philippians 2:13. "For it is God who works in you to will and to do of his good pleasure;" he added, "Not at the same time — first to will, then to do."

Before we went to prayer, when the first verse of a hymn was read, he said, "You must read louder, for I cannot hear." At the end of the prayer, he said, with a loud voice, "Amen!" which showed he had heard and joined in the prayer.

**December 14.** Visited Mr. Newton this evening for the last time. He was very weak and low, more so than usual — it was thought to be owing to a cold. He took little notice of any present. I asked him how he slept? "Pretty well."

"There is no sleeping in Heaven, Mr. Newton."

"We shall not need it there." A little after he added, "We need it here." After going to prayer with him, he stretched out his hand, and shook mine, as if he thanked me; but he said nothing.

A person present mentioned, that the last time he had called on Mr. Newton he remarked to him how useful he had been by his writings — that Mr. Newton replied, "I need none of these sweetmeats."

Mr. Newton retired from all things here below, to his heavenly rest, on the following Monday evening, *December 21, 1807*. His memory will be revered for many ages by all the lovers of simple truth.

The End.

## Letters of John Newton to John Campbell

### INTRODUCTION

Though the publication of the letters of Whitfield, Cowper, Romaine, Cadogan, and many other valuable characters, after their decease, may be deemed a sufficient apology for publishing the no less valuable letters of the late worthy Mr. Newton; still it may be proper and satisfactory to state the circumstances which induced me to send them abroad at the present time.

On the Lord's day evening after the death of Mr. Newton, I preached a sermon in Kingsland Chapel, in reference to that event. Before concluding the discourse, I read a few extracts from those letters which he wrote to me while residing in Edinburgh, wherein his views respecting his final dismissal were very impressively stated. Since that time I have been repeatedly requested to publish such letters from him as were in my possession. This led me to look over the correspondence, which appeared so truly interesting that I was induced to make a selection, leaving out whatever I thought he would have suppressed had he revised them himself for publication. I

I was peculiarly pleased to find, on reviewing my papers, that immediately after Mr. Newton became incapable to carry on epistolary correspondence, I had kept journals of my various visits to London, previous to my settling in its neighborhood; and that in these journals I had inserted the substance of many conversations which I had with that excellent man. This I did entirely for my own gratification. I cannot, however, help viewing the period of my commencing this practice as having been overruled by a higher hand, especially as it happened immediately after Mr. Newton's eye-sight was so impaired as to render him unable to write any more letters to his friends; so that the letters and conversations make a connected history of that valuable man, for the last eighteen years of his life.

Having finished my extracts, I put them aside, not to be published until after my own dissolution. Since which time, various friends at a distance, who knew that Mr. Newton had written to me many valuable letters, have very strenuously urged their immediate publication, observing, that every day I withheld them unnecessarily from the public, I was sinfully withholding a mean of great usefulness. This determined me to send them to press as soon as I conveniently could.

I have only to add that I enjoyed great pleasure in performing the task of transcriber. Indeed, it is the only book I have published that I was sorry when I came to the conclusion. I have been edified and comforted almost by every page, and have no doubt but many readers will be affected in the same way. They are commended to the care and blessing of a gracious God.

John Campbell, December 16, 1609.

London, February 22, 1792

**Dear Sir,**

I printed the *Ebenezers* that I might offer a copy to my friends, and as a friend I enclosed one to you. If any of my friends in Scotland think them worth the reprinting, and will be at the expense, (which would not be very great) so that they may be freely and entirely given away, I have no objection.

The revival at Bala demands thankfulness. The Lord, according to his sovereign pleasure, now and then vouchsafes such seasons of refreshment as to draw the attention of many. But hitherto they have usually been local and temporary. I remember one in Scotland, almost fifty years ago. The most extensive, I think, took place in America about the same time, and was first observed under Dr. Edwards' ministry at Northampton. There is generally much good done in such seasons of power — but we must not expect that every appearance will answer our wishes. There are many more *blossoms* upon a tree in spring, than there will be *apples* in autumn. Yet we are glad to see blossoms, because we know, that if there are no blossoms there can be no fruit.

When such sudden and general awakenings take place among people who were ignorant and unacquainted with scripture, they are more or less attended with blemishes and misguided zeal. The enemy is watchful to sow tares among the wheat. Thus it has always been. It was so in the apostles' day. Offences arise, and they who wish to find something, at which they may stumble and cavil — by the righteous judgment of God, have what they wish for. But those who love the Lord, and have a regard for precious souls, will rejoice in the good that is really done; and can account for the occasional mixtures, from the present state of human nature.

That the good work at Bala may flourish, and extend to London and Edinburgh (if the Lord pleases) is my sincere prayer, as I doubt not it is yours.

Your affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, June 2, 1792

**Dear Sir,**

I have been hurt by two or three letters directed to *Dr. Newton*. I beg you to inform my friends in Scotland as they come in your way, that after a little time, if any letters come to me, addressed to *Dr. Newton* — I shall be obliged to send them back unopened. I know no such person, I never shall, I never will, by the grace of God.

Do not think I am displeased with you, or any of any kind friends, who mean me kindness and honor by such an address. I only beg for my peace sake, that it may not be repeated.

I have been informed that a college in America, I think in New Jersey, has given me the honorary degree of *Doctor*. So far as this mark of their favor indicates a regard to the gospel truths which I profess, I am much pleased with it. But as to the title itself, I renounce it heartily; nor would I willingly be known by it, if all the universities in Europe conferred it upon me. My youthful years were spent in Africa, and I ought to take my degrees (if I take any) from thence. Shall such a compound of misery and mischief as I then was — be called Doctor? Surely not!

I thank you for the pamphlets. I have not had time to read them all; but I doubt not I shall like them all — but that which I have read, "The Dialogue between the Devil and a Socinian," I cannot say I approve either the manner or the spirit of it. I am hurt when gospel truths are put into the devil's mouth — nor do I think we are warranted to consign over Socinian ministers so coolly to his powers.

I suppose a ready penman at Damascus might have written a smart dialogue between the devil and Saul of Tarsus. But Saul became Paul; grace has long and strong arms; and I think it more befitting a Christian, to be unwilling to give any one up to the Devil, while living. In brief, I cannot think that dialogue likely to do much good; and if it was only designed to hold up an opponent to ridicule and contempt, it might as well have been spared.

It is my mercy that I am not a Socinian, for had I been left to myself, I might have been among the foremost. It befits me to be thankful; and to pity and pray for those who know not what they do. May the Lord open their eyes — then they will soon be of our mind.

May the Lord bless and guide you.

Your affectionate servant,

John Newton

London, Oct. 3, 1792

**Dear Sir,**

A winter's task, which I have set myself, will oblige me to make my letters as short as I can, and to indulge myself in no correspondence but what is necessary. It seems, however, if not quite necessary, at least proper, to thank you for yours of the fifth of September, and would join you in thanking the Lord for his goodness in giving you a safe and comfortable return home. We enjoy a thousand mercies in common with many who neither pray to him nor praise him; but to know that they come from him in answer to prayer, and as pledges of future and better blessings —

gives them an additional relish of which worldlings can have no conception.

In this world we have an appointed station and calling, in which our religious profession requires us to be accurate and faithful. But how to be fervent in spirit and serving the Lord, while we are not slothful in business — is a lesson which only He can teach us. It is necessary to be diligent — but it is not necessary to be rich. The event must be left in his hand; our aim should be to promote his glory, which may be answered either way, whether we have what the world calls great success, or not.

If you have a servant who is an honest man, and understands your business, he will be as active and industrious in it as yourself. But then he is not responsible, and when his work is done — he sleeps at night without care. The care of the outcome is your part, and whether you gain or lose, you will not blame your servant, who has faithfully done his duty according to your direction.

Now if you consider yourself, as it were a servant, so to speak, of the Lord — you will manage your concerns with ease and comfort. The business is not yours, but his. You are to employ your talents to the best of your judgment, and then to cast all the cares upon him. You need not be anxious, for he will overrule all for the best. Whether he gives you but just food and clothing, (which they who seek his kingdom in the first place, and use his appointed means are seldom without,) or whether he allots you an abundance — either shall answer your professed end; his glory will be equally answered.

In the former case you will have enough, because it is what he sees is sufficient for you. In the latter case, what you have more than enough, is not your own, but is still to be employed for him. But too many think things do not go well, unless they can amass wealth. They stretch every nerve to be rich, and thereby pierce, themselves with perplexities and sorrows. 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

I have no insight into the unfulfilled prophecies, nor is my mind turned for that study. I would direct the whole, of my little strength to the points mentioned, "I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." Acts 26:17-18

In the mean time, I wish with you that we were more sensible of our present privileges, and more thankful for them.

The Lord's people, instead of amusing themselves with politics, may be stirred up to serve their country by prayer. If they sigh and mourn for the abominations in the midst of us, and stand in the breach to avert deserved judgments — then our peace and liberty may be yet prolonged.

With my prayers and best wishes for your prosperity and welfare in the best sense,

I remain, dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend and servant,

John Newton

London, January 3, 1793.

**Dear Sir,**

I have no skill on the subject of Scotch patronages. I suppose they are what is called *legal*, or they could not take place. But there will be some things deemed right in *law* — which are not quite consistent with *equity*.

I wish to be more thankful for the peace and liberty we do enjoy. The crooked things I would leave to him, who only can make them straight. You seem yourself to think this evil is overruled for good, by stirring up the people, and spreading the gospel. If the gospel is preached in simplicity, and honored by a meek, inoffensive behavior in those who profess it — it does not much matter, whether they meet in a church, a chapel, or a barn.

The times are gloomy — but the Lord reigns! To him I would refer everything in public or in private life. There is discontent in some hearts, and in some places. But I ought to be discontented with myself — that I am not filled with wonder and praise that things are so much better with us than we deserve.

If I was to add another article to our Litany, it might run thus: "From poison and politics, good Lord deliver me." I think a political spirit as hurtful to the life of God in the soul as poison is to the bodily frame.

I am sorry that I forgot your order for six sets of *the Messiah*, but I will speak for them as soon as I can. A new edition of *Omicron*, is in the press, and would have been published before now, but that the printers are full of political business, and the intervention of what are called the *holidays*, and which with many are more emphatically *idle* days, and *sinning* days, has been some hindrance.

I must write briefly, being much engaged. With my sincere prayer for your welfare,

John Newton

London, January 21, 1793.

**Dear Sir,**

Many things in the misguided zeal of the year 1788 surprised me, but none more than that it should so generally lead the good people of Scotland to think so highly of the man, who, to answer his own ends, put himself at the head of a religious party.

I am glad that you agree with me, that *it is well both for ministers and private Christians to have as little to do with politics as possible.*

Your idea of a pit in the path pleases me. I am afraid it is a pit that will swallow up the life and spirit, if not the very form of the religion of many professors. The Lord reigns, and every issue will be directed by infinite wisdom and goodness, without our interference. And can we wish them under better management? It is true he usually works by instruments, but there are some services which are not good enough for his own children. He can employ such men as compose the bulk of the French convention, as laborers and scourgers. Sennacherib with his blasphemies, executed his will no less than Hezekiah by his prayers. And he could do no more — he was thrown aside like an old broom, when the dirty work for which he was commissioned was performed. And there will always be dead sufficient to bury the dead.

I have told you why I cannot afford to write long letters.

May the Lord bless and guide you. Amen.

Yours sincerely,

John Newton

London, March 22, 1793.

**Dear Sir,**

What the Lord might justly do — I know not; but at present, my thoughts are not so gloomy. The gospel is with us, yes increasing among us, and I trust there is a goodly number who are mourning over their own sins, and the sins of the nation, and are standing in the breach by prayer. For their sakes, I hope mercy will still be afforded. I rely more upon the prayers of God's people, than upon all our fleets and armies. I thought I saw a wonderful interposition of providence in our favor about the beginning of December. Since that time I have been in tolerable spirits.

The Christian politicians are to be pitied, and I have time for no more than pity. May the Lord bless you.

I am sincerely yours,

John Newton

London, May 18, 1793.

**Dear Sir,**

I have hardly time to acknowledge your letter, but know not when I shall have more. As you desire it I will send you my thoughts very briefly.

So far as Popery may concern the civil state of the nations, I apprehend no great danger from it. *Infidelity* and *skepticism* seem to me, to be spreading more than Popery at present. The spirit and strength of Popery seem quite broken, and the pope himself I think is little more regarded by the bulk of the Roman church, than by the Protestants.

The heavy penal laws which forbade other religions in England, which were formerly in force, however politically necessary — do not appear to me consistent either with the letter or spirit of the New Testament.

In a religious view, I cannot see why a Papist has not as good a right to worship God according to his conscience, though erroneous, to educate his children, etc. as I have myself. I am no friend to persecution or restraint, in matters of *conscience*.

The stir made in 1780, at a time when Protestants were gaining more liberty in popish countries — I thought was a reproach to our national character, both as Britons and Protestants. And I was not surprised at the outcome, by which I thought the Lord poured contempt upon it. I hope we shall never see such a time again, upon such a pretext.

I cannot see that an unprincipled or wicked Protestant is a whit better than a bigoted Papist. Yet these, of all sorts — are tolerated.

The spirit of the times is quite altered since martyr fires were lighted in Smithfield; and, humanly speaking, I think it morally impossible for things to revert into that channel.

Therefore whatever liberty the Papists may obtain by law, that of sitting in parliament chiefly excepted — will give me no pain.

Perhaps if I had lived in Scotland, the opinion of many wise and good men might have outweighed my private judgment, and given it a different bias. The *Jews*, while a separate people and under a theocracy, had a peculiar rule, the application of which to Christian societies, I think has been productive of much mischief and misery; and quite unsupported, as I judge, by any precept or precedent in the New Testament.

I have only time to add my best wishes. May the Lord bless you, and bless us all with his precious peace, and that philanthropy which his example teaches.

Your sincere friend and servant,

John Newton

London, August 1, 1793.

**Dear Sir,**

A lady of my acquaintance here, who I believe was much more distressed than Mr. G\_\_\_\_\_, has been relieved. She was in a state of despair for eight years, all which time she was never out of bed, but to have it made. She lay, until by disease, she had lost the use of her legs, and could stand no more than a newborn infant. She is now cheerful and comfortable, and can walk from her house to my church (the distance is near a mile.) So true it is, that our Lord is able to save unto the uttermost. Mr. G\_\_\_\_\_'s case is singular, and so, in a different way, is mine. We are proofs, not easily set aside, that grace reigns.

Dr. Robertson had great talents, and a great name in the world, but I doubt not but he saw at last, that he might have been more useful as a minister, than as a historian. It is a poor thing to gain the applause of men. One page of John Bunyan is of more real value than many volumes of high estimation in the judgment of those who know not the worth of the soul.

I commend you to the Lord — and remain

Your affectionate friend, etc.

John Newton

Southampton, September 2, 1793.

**Dear Sir,**

I thank you for providing a letter for me in my retirement. Your anecdotes are both entertaining and instructive. Like you I highly relish the country; but I am better off in point of ordinances and Christian conference, than you were when on the banks of the Tweed. The preaching of the gospel is indeed a great privilege, which cannot be safely neglected while in our power, and will not, so long as we possess our spiritual senses. But if sickness, or clear providential calls of absence, detain us from it — we are not so absolutely dependent upon it, but that we may do well without it.

Perhaps none of David's psalms breathe a more sublime and spiritual strain of devotion, than those which he wrote in the wilderness: such were the 42nd, 63rd, and perhaps the 84th. The occasion of his writing the 51st psalm happened at Jerusalem, when he was at the fountain-head of public means. And I think my

heart was never more warm and fixed, than during my two last voyages to Africa, though I was engaged in the slave trade, which I now see was unlawful and abominable.

The Word of grace, and the Throne of grace — are the two principal means which can supply the lack of all others, when not to be had. But without attending to these — the rest can yield but little solid benefit. I have met with happy, lively believers, who have had no opportunity for hearing the gospel. And I have met with others, who, like Pharaoh's lean cows — devour a great deal, but do not appear to thrive.

I think, if I was a lawgiver, I would not make robbery a capital crime; and therefore I would be unwilling to prosecute for it. Many of our penal laws, by being too severe — become too remiss. Offenders are so often pardoned, that others are encouraged to offend, in hopes that the prescribed punishment will not be inflicted.

The law of God requires murderers to be put to death, and I think there are other crimes, which by their effects might be fatal, that may be forbidden under the same penalty; such as house-breaking — setting houses on fire — perjury in criminal causes — and perhaps I might add, the stealing of a child, which may be of dreadful consequence both to the child and to the parents — and yet I believe does not expose to worse punishment than the stealing of a dog.

But as I have no hand in making laws, nor influence with the legislature, I must be content to take things as I find them. I only give you my sentiments because you asked me. There is a verse in Dr. Watts' little book for children, which offers a good pattern to me who am in my 69th year:

"I'll not willingly offend,  
Nor be easily offended,  
What's amiss (in myself) I'll try to mend,  
And endure what can't be mended."

These principles I would adopt in my politics.

I am thankful that the French were checked in their mad design of fraternizing and plundering all the nations far and near. But had I the rule of affairs, when I had cooped them up within their own boundaries, I would have left them to fight it out among themselves.

But we are sinners also, and therefore what the Lord has permitted to take place, must be, and what he has appointed to follow, must come. My heart aches for the final outcome. But as he reigns over all, he can, and he will, make all work for the glory of his name. And in the mean time, he knows how to support, or to protect his own people. "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows those who trust in him." May we be found as those in Ezekiel 9:4 "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a *mark* on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament

over all the detestable things that are done in it." — and his invisible mark will secure us from real harm.

I have not properly more leisure when abroad, than when at home. For besides the time taken up in moving from place to place, and in seeing and being seen, by old and new friends, I have generally a double quantity of letters to answer. But I am willing to show that I value your correspondence.

I am with dear friends, in a retirement about two miles from Southampton. I believe the situation is not less pleasant than what you have seen in Kent. I preach three or four times a week in my friend's house, to 100 or more people.

I have a letter from Dr. Bobbins of Plymouth in Massachusetts, whose name I never heard of before. I wish I could show it to you. He gives an account of a sudden revival of religion in this place, much like that you had from Bala. It began since last Christmas, at a time when everything seemed dead or declining around him. He has been minister there upwards of thirty years. He writes like a good old soldier. Thus, in different places, the wall of Zion is building up in these troublous times. The Lord has not forsaken the earth, as bad as it is.

In London we have abundance of the gospel — and perhaps it never was more clearly and practically preached. But we may lament with you the lack of more accompanying *spiritual power*. However, good is done, and perhaps we are as much favored, in this respect, at my church, as in most places. We have the blessing of peace and unanimity — and I can see several persons in the assembly, who I believe would have been judged eminent Christians — had they lived in the apostles' days.

I pray the Lord to bless you in all things, and hope we shall have a share in your prayers. I hope to be at home in about three weeks, if nothing unforeseen should require my return sooner.

Your affectionate friend and servant,

John Newton

London, October 19, 1793.

**Dear Sir,**

I would have informed you sooner of the price of the books, had I not called on Mr. J\_\_\_\_\_, and found him just then writing to you. Indeed I am much in your debt for your amusing and instructive communications. I must not say, "have patience with me — and I will pay you all." I am nearly an insolvent in correspondence, and fear I shall hardly pay you a composition of two shillings in the pound. Nor do I consider this as any part of payment. I send it to introduce to you Mr. F\_\_\_\_\_. From the short acquaintance I have

had with him, I judge you will like him. I cannot doubt your readiness to do him any good offices in your power — at first for my sake, and afterwards for his own.

We came home safe and well from our recent agreeable tour on the 27th, and found all safe and well at home. I must defer an account of the goodness and mercy which followed us all the days and hours we were abroad, as two gentlemen have just now come in to breakfast, and perhaps there may be two more by the time I can subscribe myself,

Your affectionate and obliged,

John Newton

London, December 17, 1793.

**Dear Sir,**

If I do not thank you immediately, I shall perhaps have to double my apology. The truth is, that before I can write one letter — I receive two, some of which must be answered directly. So that I am likely always to be sadly behind hand. My promptness and agility in despatching business does not increase with my years. I believe I have now more than fifty unanswered letters before me; so that if I am more tardy than I could wish in paying what I owe to you, I must beg you to accept the will for the deed.

You thank me for sending Mr. A\_\_\_\_\_ and Mr. F\_\_\_\_\_, and I thank you for the kindness you showed them at my recommendation. I did not doubt but they would recommend themselves when once introduced. I take the liberty to constitute you my agent at Edinburgh, and shall not scruple to make you more remittances in this way, when in my power. I hope I shall send you none but what will be worth your acceptance.

In return, I shall gladly receive all whom you recommend.

My love to Mr. S\_\_\_\_\_; I shall be glad to see him again: but he must tell me his name, for I have already lost the idea of his person. I see many people — and my head is more than 68 years old.

My heart went a little pit-a-pat when I read about your famous convention. I am thankful they are dispersed. If sin does not give success to their designs, they are too wild and visionary to succeed. But the Lord when displeased can execute his judgments by improbable means. Sin can fan a small spark into a fierce and wide spreading flame. But as his gospel is spreading, as the number of his praying people are not few, and as he has lately appeared for us more than once — I hope that though we may be *chastened*, we shall not be *destroyed*. At the worst, those who trust in him have no just cause to fear, "though the earth were

shaken, and the mountains should sink into the sea!" He expressly tells us not to be terrified "when we hear of wars and tumults." Psalm 56:1, 2, 112:7, Luke 21:".

When we really feel our need of a revival, it is a sign that we are already in a measure revived. The grand symptom of a decline, is insensibility in spiritual thing. When Ephraim has *gray hairs* (the mark of the leprosy, Leviticus 13:20-25) here and there upon him, and knows it not, Hosea 7:9. But indeed we all need reviving in our persons, families, religious societies, and in the nations. We pray for it, and perhaps the Lord is about to answer our prayers, by the very things which we are afraid of.

The building of the wall may be carried on most prosperously, in troublous times. And whatever report flesh and sense may make, faith will allow, that those must be the best times, when the best cause flourishes most. It is to be hoped that many have been taught by famine, sword or pestilence — after they had long heard the gospel in vain.

I could tattle on, but my time will not permit. My love to Mr. A\_\_\_\_\_ and to Mr. F\_\_\_\_\_. I thank the latter for his letter, and hope to write to him before it comes in his turn — but I cannot yet.

The 15th December falling this year on the Lord's day, I preached a sort of second funeral sermon for my wife from 1 Peter 1:24, 25: "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." O that word of the Lord! It is a balm for every wound, a substitute for every loss! But for this word, I would have sunk and perished in my affliction. But though I was happy with her — I am not unhappy without her. Praise the Lord on my behalf, and continue to pray for me; I will, as I am enabled, repay you in the same way.

The Lord bless you in body, soul, and spirit, and in your affairs and connections. Amen.

I am Your assured and obliged friend,

John Newton

London, January 4, 1794.

**Dear Sir,**

I must put you off for the present. My little leisure time has been wholly exhausted in writing the two letters which I now enclose to your care.

Miss Catlett and I are still favored with good health. The new year has begun. It will probably prove an eventful one. But the Lord reigns, and it shall be well with those who fear and trust in him.

May it prove a happy year to you. If we are kept close to him, it may be the happiest year we have seen, however things may go in the world abroad. Let us meet often at a throne of grace.

Your very affectionate friend,

John Newton

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah." Psalm 46:1-3

London, January 7, 1794

**Dear Sir,**

The minute after I had sent off my letter to you, I received yours of the 1st, which I would not have acknowledged so soon, but to assure you that the rumor of my having altered my sentiments of the revival in Wales is entirely unfounded. When Mr. C\_\_\_\_\_ was in London, he told me that what appeared sudden and extraordinary in the affair, was in great measure subsided — and that some who were affected, they knew not well why — were returning to their former level. He hoped the revival itself was in the main solid, extensive, and abiding. This is as much as I expected, and this is all I have known of the matter since Mr. C\_\_\_\_\_ wrote to you. Therefore, my sentiment, that many *blossoms* would fall off — and my hope that many would abide, and yield good fruit, remain still the same.

I thank you for your information respecting *Letters to a Wife*. You will perceive by the preface, that I was aware of the different opinions which would be formed of a book which is rather novel in its kind. None but married persons can be competent judges of the subject — nor all of these. The unfeeling, the careless, and the licentious, will think it rhapsody and folly. But as I said, if my leading motive was right, I ought to be in good measure indifferent to the judgment of mortals. To be sure, it was a high gratification to me to erect a *monument of affection and gratitude* to the memory of my excellent wife. But had this been my only view, I dared not have done it. I intended it chiefly as a *memorial of the Lord's goodness to a chief sinner* — to confirm the account given in my narrative, and to record many additional instances of His wonderful providences in my favor.

I thought likewise it would afford proof, that there may be a degree of conscientious regard to the Lord, of submission to his will, of dependence upon his care, and of answers to prayer — in a person whose doctrinal light is very indistinct, and before he has formed a systematic and clear view of the truth. Indeed, though my knowledge was at that time, more defective than it is even

now, some of the happiest days of communion with God I ever knew, were while I was a sailor, and particularly in my third and last voyage to Africa. Indeed I wish I had a right to say that I can trust him as simply at present, as I did then.

I felt a desire of publishing some extracts of my letters to my wife, from the day that she left me, and perhaps sooner. But I deliberated upon it a whole year before I undertook it. I submitted it frequently to the Lord; and from the time I began, I believe I may say that there was not a page of it written without prayer for his direction and guidance. I hope he inclined me to begin — and I am sure he has enabled me to finish. For though it was in the main a pleasing task, it was *painfully pleasing*. It cost me not only prayers, but tears. I thank him that it is now abroad. I trust I shall never repent of it; I rather expect it will be a source of comfort to me to the end of life, that I was spared to complete it.

With respect to others, I hoped it might be read with some pleasure, and perhaps benefit, by some, who like me, have outlived their *gourds*. Also, I trust that I might put useful hints in the way of some who are about to enter into the marriage state. That it might undeceive some who have imbibed prejudices against marriage, and convince them that there is more satisfaction to be found in that state, when properly conducted, than they are aware of. I hoped likewise, that others might be cautioned by my example against that *over-attachment*, which sometimes cost me so dear. And I hope and believe, that when the Lord shall have shown you the proper person appointed to bear your name, and has brought you together — you will not regret the time you spent in reading *Letters to a Wife*.

The history of my trial in the Appendix, No. 1. is to me the most interesting part. When I reflect (which is but every day) how I lived, what I felt, and how I was supported — it seems the most remarkable part of my remarkable life. Surely had not the Lord been my helper, I would have sunk like a stone in deep water. I thank him, that I could bear such a testimony to his faithfulness and all-sufficiency.

I have been already favored with notices that my book has been useful in most or all the cases I have mentioned; and therefore I am not afraid of the censure of severe critics.

Paper and leisure time are brought to a close together. I can only add my love and best wishes — with an assurance that I am

Your affectionate and obliged friend,

John Newton

London, April 29, 1794

## My Dear Sir,

I have at present about sixty unanswered letters, and while I am writing one, I usually receive two, so that I am likely to die much in debt. I have many dear friends to whom I cannot write for a year or two or longer. Often I am forced to write to those whom I never saw. But you are not likely to be omitted long, because you repay me with interest.

Please to tell Miss G\_\_\_\_\_, that I thank her for her obliging letters. She asks my sentiments on the times. She may see them in print, if the *Fast Sermon* I lately printed should reach Edinburgh.

*Cardiphonia* is made up of letters which were actually written to my friends, and were returned to me that they might be printed. Such additions as you propose, would not suit *Cardiphonia*, for I could not write confidential letters, which I intended, at the time, should appear in print. I ascribe the blessing the Lord has given to *Cardiphonia* chiefly to this circumstance, that there was not a line written with the least thought that it would ever appear in public. There might be an addition to *Omicron* in the manner you mention — but I have no time for it; and, indeed, I have already printed enough for one volume.

I lately received three volumes of Mr. Riccalton, sent, as I understand, by his son, who is the publisher. I am informed he has suffered by their not selling. It is a wonder to me that they have not found a ready sale. Only, I am told, there were but two of the three Volumes sent to London, and therefore I suppose people were not eager to buy an incomplete set. I think if they were all three in London shops, and advertised a little, they would soon be called for.

*I seldom meet with a human writer, to whose judgment I can implicitly subscribe in all points.* But upon the whole these books have pleased me highly, and I think have thrown light upon some particulars which I did not so well understand before I read them. I never heard of them before, though they were printed in 1772.

Your sorrowful complaints have often been mine; if they are not so now, it is not because I feel less ground for them — but because, as I hope, I am more acquainted with the *remedy* provided against them. *I see much, daily, continual, cause for humiliation — whether I look backward or inward.* But if it is true that Jesus lived and died for sinners, and is now a High Priest upon the throne — if he really said, "Him that comes unto me I will never cast out" — if he meant what he said — if his word may be taken — and if he be able to make it good — then I can see no just cause for distress.

The sum of my complaints amounts but to this — that I am a sick sinner, diseased in every part. But then, if He who is the infallible Physician has undertaken my case, I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord.

I have no remarkable experience to talk of. I never was like Paul, at any difficulty to tell whether I was in the body or out of the body. I am burdened with a body of sin and death. But I have a little book, which I am enabled to believe is the sure word of God. The doctrines and promises I meet with in it, which we call the gospel, exactly suit my wants, and the temper and conduct it is designed to form, agrees with my leading desires.

I was once far otherwise minded, and would doubtless have remained so — had not almighty power and mercy softened me. I would therefore praise him for what he has done, and wait upon him to do more, for I can do nothing for myself. In the mean time, instead of complaining, I would try to be thankful. If he has begun a good work, I dare not indulge a doubt of his carrying it on to completion. This would be to dishonor his wisdom, power, and faithfulness.

For the rest; if the scripture describes the Christian life as a warfare and a wrestling — then why should I be discouraged that I find it so? The apostle says of all believers, "the flesh strives against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;" if it was otherwise with me, how could I be right?

Give my love to Mr. F\_\_\_\_\_. I might say the same things to him. We have all need of patience. We hope to overcome at last. But I can form no idea of two hills, without thinking of a valley between them — nor of a *victory*, without a previous conflict.

I commend you and yours to the great and sure Surety.

Your affectionate and obliged friend,

John Newton

London, August 1, 1794.

**Dear Sir,**

I take a large sheet, but perhaps if I keep it until I have filled it, I shall tire your patience, both in waiting for my letter, and in reading it afterwards.

Eliza and I left home the 17th of June, and returned in peace and safety on the 24th. Your letter of the 3rd found me at Cambridge. Give my love to Mr. Black. I hope his relocation to Edinburgh will prove a blessing to many; and that in watering others — he may be abundantly watered himself.

I am glad you have good news from what you call the east country. May the gospel spread east, west, north, and south — until every part of this land, and all the lands and nations of the earth are filled with light and love.

I have seen many of Mr. B\_\_\_\_\_'s and T\_\_\_\_\_'s letters; and perhaps those which you have. Mr. B\_\_\_\_\_ was a first rate man, both as a minister and a Christian — but he could not easily restrain his natural turn for humor and jesting. This was certainly a moral *blemish*, especially when he brought it into the pulpit. But though he was sensible of the impropriety, in his latter years, and often acknowledged it — he was frequently drawn into a repetition of his error. What made it worse — his taste was far from delicate. His allusions were often base and vulgar, and disgusting even to his friends. But, as we say, there are spots and blemishes even in the best. He was, upon the whole, a burning and a shining light.

Mr. Whitfield likewise could say comical things — but then it was in a manner quite his own, in which none of his imitators could succeed. When he made his hearers smile, it was usually with a design to make them weep, and I have more than once seen these different effects produced in almost the same minute.

My narrative is indeed imperfect: but I think *Letters to a Wife* will serve both as a commentary and a supplement to it. *Mr. SELF* seems to have obtruded sufficiently upon the attention of the public already — I am not willing to introduce him again.

In preferring a warm heart to a clear head — you certainly judge by the rule of scripture. The Lord looks to the heart, not to the stature, the address, the intellect, the rank or wealth of a person. These are to the man, no more than the trappings to a horse, which is the same animal, whether laden with banners, or dressed in a fine style. In the same way, at the theater, people do not admire an actor merely for the *character* he plays, but for the *manner* in which he performs it.

All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof like the flowers of the field. The mass of mankind may be compared to grass, and those who are distinguished by intellectual or external accomplishments of any kind, may be compared to the flowers, which look more gaudy, and are perhaps a little taller than the grass. But when the mower comes — the scythe finds no difference; both fall by the same stroke, and wither with equal speed.

"Knowledge puffs up — but love builds up." 1 Corinthians 8:1. Indeed, I believe, the most lively grace, and the most solid comfort, are known among the Lord's poor and unlearned people. Every outward advantage has a tendency to nourish the pride of the human heart, and requires a proportionate knowledge of the deceitful self and the evil of sin to counter-balance them. It is no less difficult to have great abilities, than great riches — without trusting in them.

If I was qualified to search out *the best Christian in the kingdom* — I would not expect to find him either in a professor's chair or in a pulpit. I would give the palm to that person who had the lowest thoughts of himself, and the most admiring and loving thoughts of the Savior. And perhaps this person would be some bed-ridden old man or woman — or a pauper in a parish workhouse.

The Lord's regard to us, is not to be measured by our theological knowledge — but rather by the simplicity of our dependence, and the uniform tenor of our obedience to His will.

I believe there are many good people at \_\_\_\_\_. But I thought them too hasty in their determination to build; and that the plan they proposed, as mentioned to me, was not likely to settle them comfortably. I did not approve, and therefore I did not encourage it.

I have often seen young and warm zeal lead to difficulties. In these points we must judge for ourselves, as appearances strike us. But I trust I wish equally well to the gospel, whether it be preached in a church, a chapel, a meeting-house, or a barn; and whether the preachers are of the English or Scotch Establishments, Seceders, Baptists, or Methodists.

I am sorry for Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, and for many more, who would do better if they consulted the rule of God's word. Some well-meaning people, seduced by those of erroneous views — I compare to children playing with gunpowder, who are sometimes blown up before they are aware of danger.

They are happy who study to be quiet, to promote peace, and to persuade those whom they can influence, to seek a saving interest in the kingdom which cannot be shaken.

I have now taken some notice of every paragraph in your letter — and have little to add from my own stock. Our late excursion was very pleasant. We were chiefly at and round about Cambridge, at no time more than 62 miles from London. We saw many friends, and received much kindness. I preached while abroad in ten churches, nine of them in different places, besides many house-preachings. I found in most of these parishes — active, faithful ministers, and attentive congregations.

The gospel is certainly spreading in the Anglican churches. Young men of abilities and piety are ordained every season — and we now and then hear of clergymen awakened, after they had been blind teachers of the blind for many years. In London we are highly favored with many ministers of the first rank for zeal and wisdom. Such there are likewise in some of our great towns, such as Leicester, Birmingham, Leeds, Halifax, York, Hull, Reading; and I hope there are several hundreds settled in places of less note, in different parts of the kingdom, who are diligent and useful. Add to this, the itinerants in town and country, in Mr. Whitfield's, Wesley's, and Lady Huntingdon's regions — among whom, though they are not all alike, there are many faithful good preachers; and many of the evangelical dissenters — and I think we may hope that real religion is greatly on the spread and revival among us.

This, I trust, is a token for good (I fear almost the only one) in this dark and threatening day. The bulk of the nation is asleep in sin. Infidelity, folly, and sinful dissipation, abound everywhere: but the Lord has a praying people, who are mourning for the evils they cannot prevent, and the miseries which are the fruits of sin.

These, I hope, would appear a large number, if they could be brought all together — but-scattered as they are up and down, they are one in him; and, for their sakes, I hope our civil and religious privileges, so little prized, so much undervalued by the majority, will be still preserved to us.

I know not if I mentioned Mr. Fuller's book, "The Tendency of the Calvinistic and Socinian Doctrines compared, as to Morals" — but I suppose you must have seen it. I think it the most complete unanswerable refutation of the Socinian scheme, and the best book of controversy I ever saw. The great learned Doctors dodged Dr. Priestley about in Greek and Latin to little purpose. It was reserved to Mr. Fuller to cut off this great Goliath's head. I think there is none of their party hardy enough to attempt to answer it.

On next Monday, if I live, I shall enter my 70th year. The time of my dismissal cannot be very distant. Pray for me, that whenever it comes it may find me waiting, willing, and ready — that my decline in life (if I am not called away suddenly) may be honorable, and consistent with my profession — that I may live as befits a saint, and die as befits a sinner, with no other plea or hope, but that Jesus lived and died, and rose and reigns, to save to the uttermost those who put their trust in him.

Let the length and speed of this letter plead for me, if I should seem dilatory hereafter. I shall not forget you, but I cannot write when I would. I commend you to the Lord — may he guide, guard, and bless you, and make you a blessing to all your connections I only add, that I am sincerely,

Your affectionate friend and servant,

John Newton

London, November 26, 1794.

**Dear Sir,**

I take a whole sheet, for I have a large letter to answer. I date the top, but what date the bottom may bear — is yet unknown.

I do not wonder that Moses would have been willing to wait a little longer for Heaven, to have seen Israel established in Canaan, though he was sure it would be so after his decease.

God has in mercy so constituted the human frame, as to produce an engagement of heart in necessary affairs, so that we are not only employed in his service — but interested in what he appoints us to do. Because it is his concern — it becomes our own. This wonderfully sweetens labor, and likewise keeps up that attention and exertion, which are necessary to our doing things as well as we can. Perhaps you have known parents who seemed very willing to go to Heaven (if it were the Lord's time) and yet not unwilling

to live a little longer to see a dear child comfortably settled before they went. Surely the object of Moses' desire was as noble and important as anything that we can propose on earth now. Moses loved Israel, and longed to see them settled — but when the Lord forbade it, he cheerfully acquiesced.

Abraham was, as you observe, a great man — yet he was but a *man*. We may admire his faith and obedience, for the bible commends them, and holds him forth to us as a pattern; yet he had no more inherent grace, or properly his own, than you or I. When left a little to himself, this great believer stooped to equivocation and falsehood to save his life, when it was, in reality, in no danger.

Let us learn a lesson from him in this case likewise, not to presume upon our past experience, upon the grace or comfort of yesterday — as though these could warrant our standing tomorrow. We cannot see by the *light* of yesterday, nor exist long upon yesterday's *food*. We need continual supplies — and divine help every moment. Therefore let us not be high-minded, but fear. So long as we feel our weakness, and lean upon an almighty arm — we are safe, but no longer.

The profanation of the Lord's day is undoubtedly a great sin. But many sin through ignorance. They have neither good example to lead them to church, nor good instruction when they go. It is one of the many crying sins, which form our national character. But I do not think it is the loudest. I think the guilt of it lies heavily on the great — the magistrates, and the clergy. If the hungry sheep look up, they are not fed — or the places where there is food for them are very few.

When I see multitudes customarily breaking the Sabbath, I think such was my practice once; and I hope some of you will know better before you die. I obtained mercy. Grace reigned in my case, and grace is still upon the throne!

I have known several instances of *dreams* resembling Mrs. Tooley's, and they are worth recording when verified by the outcome; but this is not always the case. *Dreams* are to me a sufficient proof, first, that we are surrounded by visible agents, and liable to impressions from them when our senses are asleep, and perhaps when they are indisposed by nervous disorders — but not when we are in perfect health, or distinctly awake.

N.B. It is a great mercy that some of these agents are under a restraint, or we should be scared by dreams and terrified by visions every night!

Second, I infer from dreams, that there is a power belonging to the mind, adapted to the unseen state, which though dormant when we are awake — is active in sleep. Then we seem to perceive by intuition. We are engaged in scenes we had no consciousness of before — and yet we know all that is going forward, take a part in the business, and are engaged and interested as if we were quite at home. This appears very

remarkable to me. I think we know very little of our own powers at present.

Third, Though some dreams are important, perhaps monitory, perhaps prophetic, as I believe that dream mentioned in my narrative was — yet there is so much uncertainty in their general character, that we should be cautious of laying much stress upon them, at the time.

I had once a young lady a month at my house, who had the singular faculty of dreaming that she heard a sermon every night — and she usually told us the text, the heads, and much of the discourse at breakfast. The preacher was sometimes one whom she knew, and sometimes an utter stranger. But when she married, she lost her gift; and, poor thing, she has since met with many things which she never dreamed of!

Now for Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. His case is a strong proof of *the power of habit*. How else could he have been afraid to shorten his prayers, when the general voice of his people pronounced them too long? He knew the gospel too well to expect to be heard for his much speaking. I think very long *prayers* are more blameable than long *sermons*. A peculiar attention is due when speaking to the Most High; and if the attention is overstrained by the length of the service, it is lost time to the hearer. Weariness of mind in prayer, and the thought still returning — *When will you have finished?* — is worse than unpleasant, especially to persons of weak judgment, who charge their consciences with guilt, for the speaker's indiscretion.

The holiness of sinners and angels, which you seem to compare, differ not only in degree, but also in kind. A rabbit or a greyhound can run swiftly — but they cannot fly like an eagle; had they been made to fly — then they would have had wings. We hope to be as the angels before long, but at present, in our compound state of spirit and matter — the distinction between us and them is no less real than between birds and beasts.

The holiness of a saved sinner consists chiefly of low thoughts of self, and high thoughts of the Savior. These will always be in proportion. The lower we appear to ourselves — the more highly we shall esteem Him. The more His glory strikes us — the more we shall sink in our own eyes. Could you find the man who has most of these properties, you would find the most holy man upon earth. And as we advance in these — we shall, in the same degree, attain to everything else that properly belongs to holiness.

Why are we liable to anger, pride, aggressiveness, and other evil tempers? Because we think too highly of ourselves, and suppose we are not treated as we ought to be.

Why are we so apt to be captivated with the gewgaws of the world? Because we are so faintly impressed with a real sense of the excellence of Jesus.

We say indeed that His loving-kindness is better than life, but if we really and fully thought so — then hard things would be easy, and bitter things would be sweet, and there would be no room for impatience or discontent in our hearts.

But alas! all within us, and all around us, is defective and polluted!

The death of Mr. Y\_\_\_\_\_, and of many others who are daily removed, are encouragements to us to trust the Lord when our call shall come. Those who are born of God, belong to his heavenly kingdom. Those who are not, belong, at least for the present, to the kingdom of the wicked one. Neither the one nor the other, while in the body — can have a full perception of what awaits them; but, at the approach of death the respective scenes begin to open.

[Mr. Y\_\_\_\_\_ was converted under the ministry of Mr Whitfield, and lived a humble, consistent Christian, to the age of fourscore. His faculties latterly were so impaired that he neither knew his wife, nor his most intimate acquaintances when they called on him. He said much during his last days, and the manner and matter of his sayings indicated that he thought himself in Heaven, in the immediate presence of his God and Savior. In health he conversed but little upon any subject; but in his last illness he spoke much to the honor of God, and to the comfort and joy of those around him. His last words were "My King! My Lord!"]

It is not necessary to suppose that the believer upon his dying bed is, strictly speaking, better than the believers who are around him, listening with admiration to his words — but now he stands upon the threshold of glory — he sees more, and therefore he can say more than he did formerly. And often the impenitent sinner before his departure has such discoveries as terrify not only himself, but all who are about him. But what passes within the curtains, seldom transpires abroad. We observe that Christians who walk uprightly and humbly, generally express the same feelings when they come to die; or rather they give intimations of views and feelings which they find no words to express.

Now I will tell you a story. It was in the newspaper some years ago — but possibly you may not have heard it.

A German prince, traveling through France, visited the prison at Toulon, where the galley slaves are kept. The commander, as a compliment to his rank, said that he was welcome to set any one galley slave at liberty, whom he should choose to select. The prince, willing to make the best use of this privilege, spoke to many of them in succession, inquiring why they were condemned to the galleys. Injustice, oppression, false accusation, were the only causes they could assign — they were all innocent and ill-treated. At last he came to one, who when asked the same question, answered to this effect: "My Lord, I have no reason to complain. I have been a very wicked desperate wretch. I have often deserved to be broken alive upon the wheel. I account it a great mercy that I am here." The prince fixed his eyes upon him, gave him a gentle blow upon the head, and said, "You wicked

wretch — it is a pity you should be placed among so many honest men! By your own confession you are bad enough to corrupt them all, but you shall not stay with them another day."

Then turning to the officer, he said, "This is the man, Sir, whom I wish to be released."

Was not this a wise decision: Must not all who hear the story allow, that the man who was so sensible of his guilt, and so submissive to his punishment — was, in all probability, the most worthy of pardon, and the most likely not to abuse it? Though the ways of God and his thoughts are higher than ours — yet upon some occasions, and when their own concerns are not in question — men, by their judgments, show that they can form no just objections to his.

Think of me, if we live to the 15th December (the anniversary of Mrs. Newton's death). It stands first in the list of my memorable days. It calls me to the special exercise of humiliation and praise. Not that the subject is out of my thoughts the year round. The Lord's goodness, and my own folly and ingratitude, during a course of forty years — suggest matter for daily meditation.

The four years since my bereavement have been more free from *snares and cares* than any former period of my life; and therefore I ought to number them among the happiest I have seen. *Blessed be his name — who can make losses, gains; and cause comforts to spring from our crosses!* For the rest, the Lord deals so bountifully with me, that I have not a wish. I have health, peace, plenty, friends, acceptance. I can still preach, and have reason to hope I am useful. I am very happy in domestic life, so that I still find home is home. What more can I desire?

Through mercy, I know and feel that the world can offer nothing to amend my situation. The lines have fallen to me in a pleasant place. He who brought me out of the house of bondage in Africa — has dealt well with me in the wilderness! How wonderfully has he led me about, and kept me as the apple of his eye!

But I am drawing near 70, and cannot be far from *Jordan*. I am at present willing to live — and I trust when the time comes, the Lord will make me willing to die. *It is easy to talk of death, while he is at a distance.* But I rely upon his promise of strength according to the day, to enable me to meet him with composure. Let us pray for grace to live today, and to leave tomorrow at his wise disposal. I commend you to his blessing. I am

Your affectionate friend,

John Newton, November 28, 1794

London, December 30, 1794,

**Dear Sir,**

We have no reason to be much grieved, if the world speaks any or all manner of evil of us — provided it is false, and especially if it is on account of our Christian profession. Rather we may rejoice, for so they treated the prophets and apostles who were before us — yes, our Lord himself. Jeremiah 37:14, Acts 24:5, Luke 23:5. We may apply Peter's words, 2 Peter 2:20.

I think with you, that considering what a world we live in, the preservation of our characters is no less an evidence of the Lord's providential care over us, than the preservation of our persons from the many harms to which we are daily exposed.

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s letter is, as you say, a curiosity. I hope it is the only one of the kind that I shall have occasion to see. However, if the event of his last misconduct was sanctified to bring his heart back to the Lord — it is well with him now. I think we have warrant to hope that his faith and repentance were sincere. If we have not all deserved to be hanged for breaking human laws — we have all deserved much worse as transgressors of the law of God. The way to Heaven sometimes lies by the gallows — and I fear that the path from a bed of state much more frequently tends downwards.

If my pocket was full of stones, I have no right to throw one at the greatest sinner upon earth. I have either done as bad, or worse than he — or I certainly would have done so, if the Lord had left me to myself — for I am made of just the same materials. If there is any difference between myself and the greatest wretch — it is wholly of grace. "But by the grace of God I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10

I pray the Lord to bless you in all things.

Your affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, January 17, 1795.

**Dear Sir,**

I differ from some of your friends about Mr. W\_\_\_\_\_; nor do I think a whit worse of him (now I have read his confession) for his misconduct. I have no reason to doubt his veracity, nor can see why the truth should be concealed. Does not his whole case say, "Let him who thinks he stands — take heed lest he fall?" Have any of us a stock of inherent grace sufficient to secure us from equal and greater miscarriages? Who can equal the fervor and spirituality of David's mind as expressed in Psalms 42, 43 and 84? Yet how base and complicated were his crimes in the affair of Bathsheba. It was written for our instruction — and similar declensions, with their awful consequences, are permitted for our instruction and warning to this day. May the Lord preserve us in so

resting in past experiences, as to go forth as supposing ourselves wise and good. I hope I shall never dare to think myself out of equal danger, an hour longer than I feel the necessity of praying, "Hold me up — and I shall be safe!" and not otherwise.

It should excite lamentation, when a believer gives occasion for the way of truth to be evil spoken of. But if the heart is so deceitful and desperately wicked as the scripture declares, I rather wonder it does not happen more frequently. When Jude says, "To Him who is able to keep you from falling" — we know that he means the Lord. His expression intimates, that no power less than that which keeps the planets in their orbits, can preserve us from dreadful things for a single day. "Hold me up — and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117

Through great mercy I have been thus kept as to my character before men; but I can remember many turns in my experience, when, if the Lord had not watched over me when I was sleeping, I might have proved very vile indeed. More than once, he permitted my enemy to rob me of my spear and cruse, my strength and my comfort — by which I know to whom I owe it that I am alive at this day.

I know nothing of St. Vincent's, but you were certainly misinformed about Antigua. There the gospel is protected and flourishes greatly. The Moravian brethren have there nearly 8000 enlightened blacks under their care, whose behavior is such, that a slave under their tuition will fetch double the price of another. It is the same in the Danish islands St. Cruz and St. Thomas, where they have still a greater number, and they have begun a good and prosperous work at St. Christopher's. Some of Mr. Wesley's preachers are likewise useful in our islands — but the Moravians seem almost to engross the true missionary spirit. If you read the history of the missions in North America, lately published — you will see such instances of simplicity, self-denial, wisdom, courage, patience, perseverance, and success, and so likewise in Cratz's History of the Greenland Mission, as I think cannot be equaled in any age, or by any people since the apostolic day — excepting Mr. Brainerd, and a few others, from New England. It is easy to form *missions* — but the Lord alone can form true *missionaries*.

My time is gone when I have commended you to the Lord's blessing, and asked you to give my love to all that love the Savior, and that think of me for his sake.

Your affectionate and obliged friend,

John Newton

London, February 28, 1795.

**My dear friend,**

How one thing hangs upon another! The French revolution has produced a revolution in the franking business. I suppose this is the last frank that will pass between Scotland and me. My next letter per post will cost you money, and therefore I ought to wait until I can send you something worth paying for.

Mr. R\_\_\_\_\_ is a good man, and his *sermon* is a good one. It was much called for. Besides the impression at L\_\_\_\_\_, about ten thousand of his sermons were printed here. I hope Wednesday was a good day. The churches, etc. where the gospel is preached, were in general crowded, and I hope the business of the day will be still remembered by many. But the majority, I fear, are returning into their old courses. I preached from Psalm 123:1, 2, and Exodus 17:11.

I congratulate you on the *precious visit* the Lord has favored you with. Such favors call for a double guard of watchfulness and prayer. The pickpockets are busy about our Bank, when the dividends are paying, and sometimes they who have received a good sum of money have been deprived of it before they returned home — but they seldom attempt to rob a poor man. Thus Satan the arch-thief, lets a mere *formal* professor pass unmolested — but if he sees one whom the Lord has enriched, he watches him with a malicious eye, and longs to rob him of his treasure. It seems he once formed a plan to rob Paul himself, upon such an occasion, 2 Corinthians 12. But the Lord constrained him to send a messenger of his own, to defeat his own design, and to put Paul upon his guard.

Messengers from Satan, and thorns in the flesh, are gifts and mercies — if they preserve us from being exalted above measure. For there is that in our nature which can extract poison even from gracious manifestations and spiritual comforts.

A man who has his money in his pocket, buttons up close, avoids a crowd, and looks and moves, as if he thought every person he meets may be a thief. Let us imitate them! May the Lord's voice to Peter sound frequently in our ears, "Satan has desired to have you — that he may sift you as wheat." But if we are enabled to walk humbly and circumspectly, we shall walk safely.

The slips and falls (some very great) of the most eminent servants of God, are recorded in Scripture for our admonition. Abraham, Lot, Noah, Aaron, David, Solomon, and Hezekiah were not novices — but men who had known much of his goodness; and their greatest faults were usually committed just after some signal deliverance, or some singular manifestation, or after they had been honored by the performance of some important service. Lord, what is man! and what are we! Let us not be high-minded, but fear!

Such *extraordinary views* of divine things are very desirable, provided we can safely bear them — of which he who knows our frame is the proper judge. They have not been a part of *my* experience, though, I hope, I likewise rest upon the simple truth: but it is as it lies in the book. What I read I am enabled to believe,

so far as to venture my soul and my all upon it. And I trust it has some general effect upon my temper, aims, and expectations — but not often much more at one time than another. My walk is chiefly upon even ground. I am seldom greatly elevated — or greatly depressed. I would be thankful for that word of our Lord to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed." For indeed, in the way of sensible impression, I have seen but very little.

I think the Roman Catholics in Ireland were long treated much like Israel in Egypt. I do not consider their toleration as any way connected with religion; and as a political measure I highly approve it upon this principle, that I am glad of liberty to worship God according to my light, and therefore am very willing that others should have the same liberty. *Toleration*, if considered as a matter of favor — is an insult upon conscience, and an intrusion on the prerogative of the Lord of conscience. I would be glad of a toleration to eat, if I might not eat without it; yet I should think it hard if I could not breakfast or dine without the permission of Parliament.

Popery always showed a persecuting spirit; and therefore when the Protestants got power on their side, as they were unwilling to run the risk of being again called to the honor of suffering for the gospel sake, and equally unable to trust in the providence of God — they entrenched themselves within a bulwark of cruel, unchristian, penal laws.

The Jewish nation was a theocracy, and idolatry was not only a sin against God, but a crime against the state, and therefore punishable with death. Protestants wrongly availed themselves of this precedent: "Call the Papists idolaters, and then you may treat them as you please. Tear away their children from them — hinder them from worshiping God at all. Let any rebellious profligate son claim his father's estate — if he will but renounce Popery, he need not have any religion: he may be an atheist, provided he promises not to be a Papist. Oppress them as much as you can, and still if you do not murder them, you may admire your own mercy."

I abhor the treatment of the presbyterians in Scotland in Charles II's time; and I do not think much better of the severities against the Papists in Ireland.

I did not wonder at the contempt the Lord poured upon the well-meant, but mistaken zeal of the Protestant association of the year 1780. Can the Gospel of Christ authorize such things? Are these the fruits of love? Is it thus we do — as we would wish to be done by? Surely the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

Thus much for the present. I commend you to the care and blessing of the Lord.

Your affectionate friend and servant,

John Newton

London, April 17, 1795.

**Dear Sir,**

I cannot keep pace with your kindness in the article of correspondence. I am willing to thank you once more for books, extracts, and letters.

A Calvinist professes that a man can receive nothing — unless it is given him from Heaven. If so, we need not wonder that others, who are not favored like us — cannot see with our eyes. However, if a man is born again, I am content he should call himself an Arminian; and if he be not born again, his Calvinism will do him but little good. I believe there is not a truly awakened Arminian in the world, though many through prejudices of education and connection, etc. (which we have happily outgrown if ever we had them) deem themselves so. Detach them from their teachers, avoid the Shibboleths and expressions they have been taught to boggle at, and let them *pray* together — and you will find they all say and mean the same things.

True religion is not a system of doctrines — it is a new nature, a new life — and those who have it are under divine teaching, and will in due time learn all that the Lord sees it needful for them to know.

Some of my holiest hearers would startle at the word *Calvinist* — which therefore they never hear from me. Nor do they hear the words *election* or *predestination* — unless they lie in my text, and then I explain them in an experimental way, and they receive the truths intended, as a young child does milk. They will not allow themselves to be Calvinists; but they are humble, spiritual, peaceful — they love the Lord and his people — and they overcome the world. They are satisfied with me, and I with them.

Some people have a sharp eye, others are near-sighted, but both sorts love the light, and can see by it to walk and work — though good eyes have the advantage in viewing an extensive prospect. It is thus in spirituals. Yet if the heart is upright, we usually grow wiser by years and experience. Thus some who set out as Arminians — in the Lord's time become Calvinists; and many who were once speculative and positive, are ripened by age, and become less assuming and dogmatical — learn to bear and forbear; and though they have not changed their sentiments — they are strongly suspected by some, because they can love even an Arminian.

A dealer in anecdote should have the scripture touchstone and fan always at hand. I think the story of *Pagey*, however attested to you, is not quite sterling. The Moravian brethren had many Indian converts. These, all of them loved the Savior, not because he gave them corn, but because he gave himself for their sins, and redeemed them by his bloody death upon the cross. If the voice

Pagey heard had convinced him of the depravity of his nature, or told him of the atonement — I would have liked it better. I dare not say what the Lord may or may not do; but I have no present conception of love to Christ without faith — or of faith without some communication of gospel truth and light to the mind.

I think I could match you, and overmatch you on the hand of coldness and wanderings in secret prayer. But in prayer I am to confess my sins and depravity, which I could not honestly do unless I felt them. Nor do I expect to be much better than Paul was, who found that when he would do good — that evil was present with him. Farther, if the Lord favors me with some liberty before men, it may be a great mercy that he leaves me to feel in private how little I can do without him. Otherwise, pride might tempt me to consider that as my own, which experience now assures me I only receive, and am dependent entirely upon him for, without whom I can do nothing.

You will meet with the sum of all your complaints in the Olney Hymns, book 1. No. 119, which I wrote long before I heard of you:

'Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought;  
Do I love the Lord, or no?  
Am I his, or am I not?

If I love, why am I thus?  
Why this dull and lifeless frame?  
Hardly, sure, can they be worse,  
Who have never heard his name!

Could my heart so hard remain,  
Prayer a task and burden prove,  
Every trifle give me pain,  
If I knew a Savior's love?

When I turn my eyes within,  
All is dark, and vain, and wild:  
Filled with unbelief and sin,  
Can I deem myself a child?

If I pray, or hear, or read,  
Sin is mixed with all I do;  
You that love the Lord indeed,  
Tell me, Is it thus with you?

Yet I mourn my stubborn will,  
Find my sin a grief and thrall;  
Should I grieve for what I feel,  
If I did not love at all?

Could I joy his saints to meet,  
Choose the ways I once abhorred,  
Find, at times, the promise sweet,  
If I did not love the Lord?

Lord, decide the doubtful case!  
You who are your people's sun,  
Shine upon your work of grace,  
If it be indeed begun.

Let me love you more and more,  
If I love at all, I pray;  
If I have not loved before,  
Help me to begin today.

As face answers to face in a glass — so the heart of man to man. Your guinea and mine bear the same impression, because they came out of the same mint. When we most feelingly say, "O wretched man that I am!" we may still cheerfully add, "I thank God, through Christ Jesus my Lord." There is a difference in us — according as the Lord is pleased to afford or suspend his power. But in ourselves we are no better at one time than another; for there dwells in us no good thing.

The eye can only see when there is light — but it has no light in itself.

The sermons you mention are now out of print, or I would send you one. Miss C. with her respects, sends you a copy of the hymn. My love to Mr. and Mrs. B\_\_\_\_\_. May the Lord bless their union. Yes I trust he will.

Mrs. Rowe was an excellent woman — she had a warm heart, a lively imagination — she was a poetess. But I confess that some of her aspirations are too seraphic for me. Mrs. A\_\_\_\_\_'s Christian Character Exemplified is more to my taste.

Give my love to Miss G\_\_\_\_\_ — tell her I am in good health, excepting a cold in my head, which has made me for some time almost totally deaf; but I can now hear a little better. But at the age of 70, I must expect mementos that my outward man must decay.

'The breaches cheerfully foretell,  
The house must shortly fall.'

Few people have less reason to be weary of life than I; and I trust in him who has promised strength according to the day, that when the time comes I shall not be afraid to die. I seem not to fear death at present, but as yet he is at some distance. If he should open the study door, while I am writing, and beckon me away, I cannot answer for myself, how I should behave; for it is a very serious transition. But I may say with Dr. Grosvenor, "if the Lord be pleased to smile upon me — then I will smile upon death."

With my love to all who love the Savior, in Edinburgh, Leith, and elsewhere, as they come in your way, and my prayers for your and their best welfare, I remain,

Your affectionate and obliged,

John Newton

London, June 5, 1795.

**My Dear Sir,**

I have two of your letters to thank you for; one of the 21st April, the other the 23d May, by Mr. Struthers, who brought it on Tuesday. I asked him to dinner, but he was engaged. He promised to come again, but I have not seen him since.

Burghers, Anti-burghers, Kirk-men, and Relief-men — all are *fish* that come to my net — and especially those whom you send. Last week I directed a letter to your care for my sister, who I suppose is now at Leith. I wished to give you an opportunity of calling upon her. It is twelve years I believe since I saw her, but I trust you will find her a truly gracious woman.

Neither you nor I know how Paul preached: but his writings are designed to be a standing rule of faith and doctrine to the Church. If he and his brethren had said nothing in their epistles about election and predestination — we would not have so well understood those points, nor had the same authority for maintaining them. Though I think they may be fairly inferred from other parts of scripture, perhaps we could not have made them so well out.

But Paul says expressly, that he fed babes, not with strong meat, but with milk. I think I hardly said that I never mention the words in preaching. When they lie in my text, they make a part of my subject and sermon, but seldom otherwise. I think these doctrines should be in a sermon like sugar in a dish of tea, which sweetens every drop, but is no where to be found in a lump.

I hope you will enjoy the Lord's peace and presence in your new house. It is pleasant to dwell where he dwells, whether in a palace, cottage, or a prison. Indeed it does not much signify which of the three is our abode — provided he is pleased to be with us.

I am not very fond either of assemblies, consistories, synods, councils, benches, or boards. Ministers as individuals in their respective places — are like flowers, which will preserve their color and scent much longer, if kept singly, than when packed together in a bouquet or posey, for then they quickly fade and corrupt. Their associations, in my judgment, should always be voluntary and free.

Thus there are ten or a dozen of us in London, who frequently meet — we deliberate, ask, and give advice as occasions arise; but the sentiment of one, or even of the whole body, is not binding upon any. We hear what each person has to say, and then, each one judges and acts for himself. Thus, though we sometimes differ

in opinion, we always agree, and live in harmony and love. Perhaps it might be a good rule, where spiritual matters are decided by vote, that the minority should determine the point; for in most places the few are more likely to be right than the many. I can assure you, that however strange some may think it, I am glad, and have much cause to be thankful, that I am what and where I am. I think, with respect to man, we are properly the *Independents*. The bishops in England interfere with us no more than the bishops in Italy, except in requiring us to appear and answer to our names, once in three or four years: but no questions are asked, nor any fault found, by our superiors.

I have long thought that we have the same gospel in our hands, which enabled the first Christians to take joyfully the confiscation of their goods, and that the same gospel has still the same power. I am glad you have found it so.

I once visited a family that had suffered a great loss by fire. I found the mistress of the house in tears. I said, "Madam, I wish you joy." She answered, "What! do you wish me joy of the fire?" "No, Madam, I wish you joy that you have treasure laid up which the fire cannot reach." This turn stopped her grief; she wiped away her tears and smiled. In the same way, the sun breaks through the clouds and shines after an April shower.

I shall be well pleased, if the paper which I printed may provoke your ministers to do something handsome for Mr. R\_\_\_\_. The cause of his encumbrance is a noble one, to relieve a father, and a man whose memory, I think, should be precious to those who love the gospel in Scotland. Let not that proverb, "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country," be applied to him. For setting religion aside, on the sole ground of literary abilities, I think if boasting were lawful, Scotland might boast of Mr. Riccalton no less than of Hume, Robertson, Blair, etc. He was certainly a man of a strong comprehensive mind, and if not an elegant he was a masterly writer. His writings, I think, are a good broom to sweep away the fine-spun cobweb, skeptical metaphysics, which at present are too much in fashion in both kingdoms.

I am glad you reprinted Mr. Romaine's address. To your question: Do you approve of the invitation? I answer heartily, Yes. When you ask, Do you adopt it? I must answer, Not literally.

I endeavor to mourn over my own, sins, and the sins of the public, and to cry for mercy daily, and oftener than daily, both in private and in my family. Nor do I omit it in the pulpit. But after I have been engaged on the Lord's day in preaching and speaking for six hours, and nine o'clock comes — I find myself more disposed for supper and bed, than for prayer. The truth is, that I cannot confine myself much to rules, except scriptural rules. The thought, that a great number are joining with me in prayer, at the same hour and minute, is pleasing to the imagination. But the Lord hears prayer whenever we call upon him, without regarding our distinction of times. I therefore choose the seasons which suit best with my

circumstances and convenience. Sometimes my mind is thus engaged on the public account while walking in the streets.

But really, I find it not easy to know how to pray. Many think, yes many presume to say, that God does not govern the earth. He has a controversy with the nations, and especially with our nation, (which, considering our superior privileges, I deem to be the worst in Christendom) upon this account. Dare I pray, that he should give up his cause, and leave his enemies to triumph, lest I and my friends should be inconvenienced by the methods he may see fit to take, to make them know that he is the Lord? I dare not.

Personal losses and crosses are sometimes sanctified to the saving of the soul. If that person is my friend — then I ought to be rather thankful than sorry for those trials which have this effect. It may be so with a nation. If the French were permitted to land, and to spread ravages, fire, and sword, through half the kingdom, provided such calamities were the means of stirring up multitudes who now live careless in sin, to seek the Lord in good earnest, and with their whole heart — such a season of distress might be the happiest time that Britain ever saw. For surely, that must be the best time when the best cause flourishes most. We are apt to be too selfish, too little concerned for the glory of God and the good of souls. Let us pray that the gospel may spread, that the Lord may revive his work in the midst of the years, whatever may become of our fig-tress and vines! It befits us to submissively leave the methods of accomplishing his great designs, to his wisdom.

Happen what will, it shall be well with those who fear the Lord. He invites them to hide themselves in his secret chambers, and promises to keep them under the shadow of his wings. He can protect them when many fall around them — or if he permits them to suffer with others, he can, he will, give them strength according to their day, and make all things work together for their good. So that either way they are safe.

The time is short; his people will soon be at the end of their journey, and then they will not be much concerned for what they met with upon the road. I pray with submission, for peace at home and abroad. But when I look upon the state of things around me, I rather pray from a conviction of duty, than in faith, that it will be so. But the Lord's thoughts are higher than mine, as the heavens are above the earth. Who knows but he may yet turn from his fierce anger? The light and power of the gospel are certainly upon the increase in England. This is the only good sign of the times I can discern.

Miss C\_\_\_\_\_ adds her best wishes to mine for your peace and comfort.

I am sincerely yours,

John Newton

London, July 18, 1795.

**Dear Sir,**

I thank you for the only news I have had of my sister since she left Yorkshire. I hope she still has the use of her right hand, and will soon give me a proof of it. I love her dearly, and shall be glad to hear from her or my brother.

But if the Lord has engaged the hearts of the young ladies you speak of — then he will provide all that is necessary to bring them forward in his own good time. His work is perfect. All hearts and means are in his hands, and where he begins — he will surely make an end.

I like to keep you in my debt, though not having any long letter from you to answer, I am at a loss for a particular subject. But a general subject is always at hand, were my heart always in tune to manage it. Should not a believer be ashamed to own that he can find nothing to say, or write about? Perhaps not. For if he is indeed poor, and unable of himself to think a good thought — then why should he be ashamed to confess his weakness and poverty? I may well be ashamed of my depravity, that I am such a helpless, worthless creature; but if it be so, to deny or attempt to palliate the case, would expose me to farther shame for my pride and hypocrisy.

I sometimes compare myself to a mill, which differs from a common house, in having a mechanical apparatus, capable of producing motion — but without wind or water, the wheels are all useless, and the mill can neither grind nor move. Thus my knowledge of divine things, such as it is, is often dormant; and though I do not forget what I read of the person and love of the Savior, of the beauty of holiness, and the joys of Heaven — I cannot speak and write of them just when I please, or as I please; but only as I am assisted by a divine influence, which is no more at my command than the rain or the sunshine.

When a large heavy-laden ship is dry upon the shore, a thousand teams of horses could not stir her an inch; but when the tide returns and raises her from the ground, one man with a rope can move her. Thus it is with me — what is impracticable at one time is easy at another. I am a *dependent* creature. When the Lord is with me — I can do something; if he withdraws — I can do nothing. Yet I am no better in myself when I can do most, nor, strictly speaking, am I worse when I can do least. For it is at all times equally true, that I have nothing properly my own.

The eye can see if it has light — but it has no light in itself. The seeing and the blind are much upon a par in the dark; only the man who can see, is qualified to perceive and welcome the light when it returns.

Could I always depend upon this divine influence, in a steadfast use of the means by which he has promised to communicate it, without any mixture of self-dependence — I believe that I would go on better. But my rashness renders many mortifying lessons, in the *school of experience*, quite necessary. When shall I learn to be like a little child, who, sensible of his weakness, is afraid to cross the street without leading — and while he is led has no fear at all; and who, not pretending to be wise, believes with implicit confidence what he is told by his affectionate parents!

I shall be glad to see Dr. Erskine's Address. We may pray in faith for the spread of the gospel, and the enlargement of our Lord's kingdom; for we may be sure that this is the great design he has in view, and for which the *wheels of time and nature* are kept in motion. This is the grand mark, to which the rise and fall of empires, and the commotions of the present day, have a direct tendency, though the way of the Lord is so in the sea, that we short-sighted creatures cannot trace the connection of events, and the dependence of one upon another. But his word warrants us to believe, what we cannot clearly see.

They say the times are very dark — they seem so to us; clouds and thick darkness are about his throne, but light will in due time shine out. He is carrying on his work by a straight line. If you or I were engaged in a plan which we had much at heart, we would not allow anything to hinder our purpose, if we could prevent it. In the same way, much less will he, who has all power in Heaven and on earth. Even the wrath of his enemies shall praise him — they are permitted to do nothing but what shall be found subservient to his design. Not only was *Cyrus* his servant, but *Pharaoh* and *Sennacherib* likewise — they sought their own will and glory, but promoted his.

We may leave all in his hands safely — yet there is a part for us to act. We ought to be affected by what we see and hear — to mourn for our own sins, and for the sins of others, and for the miseries with which sin has filled the world. We should be jealous for the Lord Almighty — and compassionate to the souls of men. Now his hand is so visibly and awfully lifted up, it befits us to see it, acknowledge it, and humble ourselves under it, whether others will or not.

The Lord has a controversy with this nation, he is pleading his own cause against the prevailing spirit of infidelity, and the abominations that abound, and he will make sinful worms know that he is the Lord, and that in all they speak proudly, he is above them. Perhaps the steps he sees fit to take, may touch his own people in their temporal concerns — but his glory ought to be the dearest objects of their souls. It is better we should suffer a little, and for a little while — than that his enemies should triumph. The love of self and of the present world, make us terribly afraid when anything seems to threaten our ease and prosperity — but what are these when compared with the glory of our Lord and the welfare of precious souls?

The times are dark; but perhaps they were darker in England sixty years ago, when, though we had peace and plenty, the bulk of the kingdom lay under the judgment of an unregenerate ministry, and the people were perishing for lack of knowledge. In this respect, the times are better than they were. The gospel is preached in many parts; we have it plentifully in London; and many of our great towns, which were once sitting in darkness, have now the true light. Some of those places were as a wilderness in my remembrance, and now they are as gardens of the Lord. And every year the gospel is planted in new places — ministers are still raising up, and the work is still spreading.

I am not sure that in the year 1740, there was a single parochial minister, who was publicly known as a gospel preacher, in the whole kingdom. Now we have, I know not how many, but I think not fewer than four hundred.

Let us, my friend, settle it as a maxim, that it is the best time with any nation when the best cause flourishes most: for as the life is more than food, so the soul is more than the body. If one half of the kingdom was ravaged by war, provided the distress was sanctified to stir up many careless ones to seek the Lord and his salvation — such a dispensation would be more a mercy than a judgment.

It is Saturday evening, when I usually have a few select friends, chiefly ministers, to drink tea with me. Something that passes at these meetings often suggests subject matter for the Lord's day. My company is gone, and I have a little time left to finish my letter.

I believe the Lord's old and faithful servant, Mr. Romaine, is going *home*. He is nearly 82 years of age; has been 58 years in the ministry; and was never laid aside for a single Sabbath, until very lately. I have known him as a preacher of the gospel since about the year 1750, and I believe he began sooner. He has been an honorable and useful man, a burning and a shining light — inflexible as an iron pillar in publishing the truth, and unmoved either by the smiles or the frowns of the world. He is the most popular man we have had since Mr. Whitfield — and few now living will be more missed. I believe some of his friends would wish to keep him here another fourscore years if they could. But when he goes, as he could not be expected to preach if he lived, I shall not be sorry that he has entered into his Master's joy.

My turn will probably be next, for I shall be seventy the 4th of August. Pray for me, that I may be found ready when the *summons* shall come. I will try to pray for you, that the Lord may bless you more and more, and make you a blessing in all your connections.

Your affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, September 2, 1795

**Dear Sir,**

It runs in my head that I have two of your letters unanswered, but I can find only one; nor can I recollect the particulars of the other — if there is another. That letter before me is dated the 17th August.

It is good to desire to be *useful* — but it is not necessary to know how much we are so. If you walk humbly and uprightly before the Lord — then I may venture to answer for your usefulness. But we often mean by the word *useful* — to be *instrumental in doing great things*. *SELF* likes to do great things; but grace teaches us to do little things with a great spirit — that is, for the Lord's sake. To fill up his appointed post with integrity, submission, and thankfulness — is all that an angel could do, if he was upon earth.

I thank you for the extract from Dr. Gillies' letter. I hope, as you say, it does suit me, and I pray that it may suit me — if it should be the Lord's pleasure to lay me aside. I may expect it daily at my time of life; though at present I am robust and strong — but a few minutes is sufficient to produce a great change. But I wish to work while it is day, and to leave tomorrow in his hands.

Dr. E\_\_\_\_\_ bears fruit in old age. I never exchanged a line with him; but I have long had a high respect for his character. I hope to know him *hereafter*. I once breakfasted and once dined with Lord H\_\_\_\_\_. He seemed a very amiable gentleman. May the Lord give him the best honors and the best riches, and strengthen him abundantly.

I smile at your not knowing the meaning of *Easter*. Those who observe it, profess to observe it in commemoration of our Lord's resurrection. As this took place the third day after the Passover, and the Passover was regulated by the full moon, the third day, or Easter, most frequently happened on a week-day. Some great Doctors thought it most proper to observe it on the Lord's-day next following the Passover — others, perhaps as great Doctors as the former, thought it best to abide by the numerical third day. I cannot tell you how many councils and convocations were held to settle this knotty point — but as *Pope Self* presided in them all, and held both sides of the question, the disputes ended in a total and final separation between the eastern and western, that is, the Greek and Roman churches.

I consider many of the modern disputes of the like unimportance.

Your account of \_\_\_\_\_ should animate us to bear a faithful and affectionate testimony to the truth, upon all proper occasions, and not be discouraged by apparent difficulties. The heart is like gunpowder, which lies quiet if fire is kept away from it; but a single spark, in the Lord's time, is sufficient to set it in a blaze.

Mr. Romaine lived honorably and usefully — and died comfortably. The same may be said of many who live and die *unknown* and *unnoticed* by men. A poor old man or woman in a parish work-house, if faithful in their profession, and submissive to their lot, who rejoice to hear of the great minister's success, and pray for him — may be equally great in the sight of the Lord, who sees not as man sees, and accepts, not according to what his people actually do for him, but according to what they would do, if they could.

I suppose, when the beggar Lazarus died, no train of coaches attended his funeral — he had probably no funeral oration, and no illustrious monument. But he had an attendant guard of angels, and is represented to our conceptions as obtaining a chief seat in the kingdom, even in the bosom of Abraham! (see Luke 16. 22.) And what is said of him, Luke 16. will embalm and honor his memory to all succeeding generations.

Farewell. My time is expired, and my paper nearly full. May the Lord bless you and all his people in Edinburgh, in North Britain, and between the North and South Poles. Amen.

Your truly affectionate,

John Newton

London, September 8, 1795.

**MY Dear Sir,**

Your friend, Mr. E\_\_\_\_\_, breakfasted with me this morning. As he brought a testimonial from you, I told him I would be glad to see him again and again while he stayed. I thank you for your two letters by him.

If a person loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity — I care not what denomination they are called by.

It is now my turn to recommend a friend, and I do it with great pleasure. This is to introduce my respected friend M\_\_\_\_\_ to your acquaintance and good offices. Mr. M\_\_\_\_\_ will be a welcome visitant to you, for he will bring you good news from a far country. The fields there are ripe for harvest, and he will be glad of your assistance to procure more laborers to go with him into the black vineyard.

Mr. B\_\_\_\_\_ 's papers are with the bishop — and I expect he will be ordained the 20th. He will then commence as my curate. I have waited for him for four years, which is longer than I expect to keep him, if I should live so long myself. From the Lord's wonderful leadings of him — I trust that he has designed him for important services. I hope I shall be willing to part with him at the Lord's call; but should he be permitted to supply my lack of service, for I may expect soon to be laid aside, if I am not taken

away — I shall have cause to be thankful, as he is one in whom I may fully depend.

Perhaps I shall have time to add no more, when I have repeated my wishes for your welfare in every sense.

I am, Dear Sir, Your very affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, Oct. 8, 1795

**Dear sir,**

I hope you have seen Mr. Goode's Funeral Sermon on Mr. Romaine, at Edinburgh. There is a striking quotation in it from the late Lord Chesterfield. The Lord sometimes permits eminent preachers, like Ralph Erskine, to be in the dark for a season, towards the close of life — to teach us that he does not accept them for their gifts or services, but merely for that faith in Jesus, in which they are often equaled, often exceeded, by the poorest and most obscure people of his flock.

The old *seceders* were like unripe fruit — good in its kind, but harsh and sour. Succeeding summers and winters have mellowed those that are now upon the tree; and such as come in my way have generally a good flavor. We know what human nature is, and the power of prejudice and self-will — or we might wonder that any who love and preach the gospel of peace, should be bitter in their spirit.

I am glad that Mr. Black grows and thrives in his new situation. *Transplanting a useful minister is like moving a large tree, which will not always take deep root in another spot.* But sometimes it is the Lord's doing, and then it prospers of course. Give my love to him, with thanks for his letter, which I hope to answer if I am spared.

I have no further concern in the \_\_\_\_\_ than to pray that the Lord may bless and succeed the design. This I do both in public and in private, daily. I had my reasons for not taking an active part in it. Nor was my presence needful. They have many to plan, and much money. The design is undoubtedly commendable, and when I think of the uncommon concurrence it has met with throughout the kingdom, I cannot but hope that much good will come of it — but I think they are too optimistic in the outset.

For myself, I am already engaged to support and recommend the Moravian missions; there I seem to know what I am about — there I see the hand of the Lord already stretched out. I know their missionaries are eminently endued with a spirit of unselfishness, self-denial, humility, fortitude, and the meekness of wisdom; and the success the Lord has given them is truly wonderful. Perhaps there has been nothing equal to what they

have suffered, and what they have done among the heathen, since the apostle's days. But it may be said of our Savior's kingdom, so far as the Brethren or Moravians are concerned in it, that it comes not with observation. It makes no noise — it attracts but little attention. They are a people little known, and therefore despised and undervalued by many, but not by me. I judge that true Christian discipline is better observed by them, than by any other body of people that profess the gospel.

October 15. My letter has already been a week in hand. It seems that your correspondence with me was maintained through the whole of your low uncomfortable state; yet I do not recollect any remarkable hints of your despondency; on the contrary, you still supplied me with anecdotes. However, I praise the Lord for your deliverance, and that the account you give of it is so scriptural and solid.

The *sting* of death is now taken away, and I hope the *stroke* of death is yet at a distance from you; and that you will live to be an ornament, and an instrument for good, to the cause you profess. Though not a minister, you may be able to apply the apostle's words to yourself, 2 Corinthians 1:3-6. It is this thought which makes me try to be thankful that my life is prolonged; though I see little else worth living for in such a world as this. And yet no one has less reason to be weary of living, for I abound with comforts, and hardly meet with anything deserving the name of a trial. To depart, and be with Jesus, is certainly far better; but upon that very account it is well worth waiting for.

I thank you for the printed papers. I can feel for Mr. E\_\_\_\_\_. But he is a young man. I hope the Lord will heal his wound, and perhaps in due time the breach may be comfortably repaired. Had they lived so long together as my dear wife and I did, and in harmony, as I believe they would have — then the separating stroke would have been no less keen after forty years than in the first. And then it is probable, that he, if the survivor, must have lived a solitary like me, for the rest of his days. The Lord's dispensations are various to different persons, but they are all right. "He led them forth by the *right* way — that they might go to a city of habitation." Psalm 107:7

I think I may now take my leave of you. I have some thoughts of attempting to write some account of my friend, the late Mr. Grimshaw. What was said of him in \_\_\_\_\_ was very poor and imperfect. If I undertake this job, it will make me very tardy in my correspondence. He was, in some respects, the most extraordinary man I have known. I shall enclose a letter to my brother. May the Lord bless you in all things.

I am affectionately yours,

John Newton

London, December 12, 1795

**Dear Sir,**

I believe the lines you quote from Dr. Watts were not spoken extemporaneous; at least, they are in one of his lyric poems. However, your observation, that we are apt to judge of a man's size by the opinion we form of him, is generally true. I might perhaps think you half a head taller than you are — if I had never seen you. It is said that Dr. Watts in the early part of his life, had a penchant for the late Mrs. Rowe — and the lady, while she only judged of him by his writings, was not averse to the thought. At last, they met — and from that time she always regarded him as a friend, but no farther.

I am sincerely yours,

John Newton

London, February 10, 1796.

**Dear Sir,**

Though I am obliged to write short letters, I wish to keep the road of correspondence open between us.

Your story of the poor widow and rich American, is a good one. Many such appearances of the Lord, in answer to the cries of his poor, are afforded, I doubt not, every day; and they will all be known, to his praise, hereafter. I think his children, when they meet in glory, will have much to tell each other of what he did for them in the wilderness.

We still jog on, much as usual, here, and at the church. Heart peace, house peace, and church peace — are great blessings. I am favored with them all. It is true that there is an *inward warfare* — but there is peace at the bottom. It might make a coward bold — to be assured of victory while upon the field of battle.

May we hold fast the shield of faith, and the sword of the spirit, and fix our eyes upon the Captain of our salvation — who holds out the prize in our view, and says, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life."

Your affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, April 9, 1796.

**Dear Sir,**

A very poor old man in Olney had a son who behaved very badly, ran away, and went to India in a war-ship. Some years after, a man came to Olney to tell him that his son was dead. Are you sure of it? Yes, very sure. I was his ship-mate, and, in an engagement with the French, he was killed by a cannon ball. I stood near him, and saw him killed. The old man did not retire and pray. He only paused a little, and then said, "Well, I shall see my boy here again for all that." So it proved. He came home safe and sound. The Lord called him by his grace, and he was one of my people for many years.

It is pleasing, as you observe, to see the partition walls of bigotry in the churches tottering. It is remarkably so in Scotland. The *Seceders*, who were accounted the most rigid, were the people who first introduced my name there, and reprinted three volumes by *John Newton* at their own risk, when the booksellers, having no knowledge of me, would not venture. There seems of late a closer coalition among the sound dissenters in England. I desire, and by His grace I resolve to love all who love Him — regardless of denomination.

I could tattle on, but time fails, and I must enclose a line for Brother Black.

May the Lord's peace and presence be with you and with yours.

Your affectionate brother,

John Newton

London, July 5, 1796.

**Dear Sir,**

It is probable that neither Mr. nor Mrs. B\_\_\_\_\_ will tell you how highly we have been gratified by so much of their company as they could favor us with — and therefore I mention it myself. We would have been pleased to have had them with us every day, and from morning until night, if possible.

I do not expect leisure time to write an Essay for many months to come. I have thoughts of a journey to Southampton soon, and when I return — I must, if possible, resume *the Life of Mr. Grimshaw*, of which I have written little more than a sheet, though I made a beginning in February. But if I live another month, I shall enter my 72d year — so that no dependence should be placed on me. I may expect to be laid aside, or called home, from day to day.

Mr. B\_\_\_\_\_, my curate, suited me and my people exactly; but I am well satisfied that his path of duty leads to D\_\_\_\_\_, and therefore I part with him without reluctance. What are my private feelings or convenience — when put in competition with what I

really believe to be the call and will of the Lord! However, I expect another curate in a few days, a particular friend, whom I know to be gracious, humble, and able.

Some have wondered, of late, how I could stay with comfort in my present situation. I hope their wonder is over before now. But I will tell you, in the first place, that nothing is imposed upon me, as a clergyman — that at all hurts my conscience. Then farther, I find liberty in the service, my church is full and crowded, my auditory is peaceful and attentive, there are many eminent Christians among them, a general seriousness is upon the face of the congregation. Many are successfully awakened, and we have particularly a fine group of young people springing up, and increasing in numbers and graces — like willows by the watercourses.

In a word, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the hungry are fed, and the burdened are set at liberty. With these tokens of the Lord's presence among us, and his goodness afforded in my private walk and public work — I am well satisfied that I am where God would have me to be. If He accepts us, and visits us — it is a small matter if some of our brethren are displeased. If He is pleased to smile upon us — then we can bear their censures

And besides, if I was to leave this church — to whom would I go? The Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Seceders, etc. all say with equal positiveness, "We are the people!" But I cannot join with them all. By the grace of God, I will love them and pray for them all — but I will join with none of them. I will stay where I am. And if I were to choose again, I would make the same choice tomorrow. I never did — and I trust I never shall repent it. My reasons assigned in the Apologia are more and more confirmed to me, the longer I live.

My time and paper are finished. Farewell for the present. May the Lord be with you and bless you in all things. Philippians 3:15, 16. I am sincerely, your affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, October 7, 1796.

**My Dear Sir,**

Six weeks absence has thrown my home affairs sadly behind hand — but I hope the time was not wholly lost. We, that is dear Miss C\_\_\_\_\_ and myself, left London the 19th August, and returned the 1st of October. We spent the first week at Reading, where the Lord has many people, warm-hearted, upright, and loving. The rest of our time we were at Mr. T\_\_\_\_\_ 's. He lives within two miles of S\_\_\_\_\_, where there are five churches, but no pulpit open for me. But Mr. T\_\_\_\_\_ opened his house, and made room for about 300

hearers. I preached three evenings in the week, while I stayed. We were often full — my hearers were chiefly from the neighboring villages, and seem willing to hear the gospel, if they had anybody to preach it to them. But, alas! in those parts, and in many parts of the kingdom, comparatively a land of light, "*The hungry sheep look up — but are not fed.*"

We need not go far from home to find people no less ignorant of spiritual things, no less unconcerned about their souls, than the heathen in Africa. We are encouraged, yes we are commanded to pray, that the Lord of the harvest would send forth more faithful laborers — for as yet they are but few, compared with the extensive *wilds* at home and abroad.

I have received a letter from my ex-curate B\_\_\_\_\_. I saw his call clear, and gave him up without reluctance, though he was to me as a right hand. I then engaged a J\_\_\_\_\_ B\_\_\_\_\_ to be my curate. He was my intimate friend. I had been chiefly instrumental in bringing him forward. He was ordained about two years ago. He was able and ready as a preacher — humble, spiritual, and devoted as a Christian, beyond the common standard at his years. I was ready to call him *Seth*, and thought the Lord had given him to me in the room of B\_\_\_\_\_. But a few days before I left London, he was suddenly taken with a bleeding of his lungs, which terminated his life below in about a two weeks. He was bereaved of an excellent wife last summer. Of four children, one only was left — a sweet little boy of about four years old. This child was taken with the small-pox while his father was ill, he could not see the child, but lived to hear of his death. He and I had promised ourselves much pleasure in our labors together. But we are short-sighted creatures. Thus all his earthly expectations were crossed; but his last words were, "The Lord has done, all things well!" and from them, I preached his funeral sermon last Sabbath evening.

I thank the Lord I can say and believe he does all things well. But I hoped that I had found a person on whom I might fully depend, and whom my people would hear with pleasure in case I would be laid aside. Perhaps I am to live and preach a little longer. If it be so — then it is well; if otherwise — then it is well, for he does all things well. When he sees that I really need assistance, he can provide it. My part is to live today, and to leave tomorrow with him.

I perhaps may write a paper for the work you mention, but I know not when, I am so overwhelmed with correspondence. Though I wrote more than forty letters while abroad, I have nearly as many beside me that should be answered, if I could find time. Almost every post adds to their number. Many are from strangers, which must be noticed of course when I cannot write to my friends.

Then I have so many visitors, that I can seldom call an hour my own, when I am at home. If I could attend to the sick and the sorrowful as I wish — I would be always abroad. I wish likewise to return to finishing my book on *the Life of Mr. Grimshaw*, which has

lain by untouched for six months past. So that I am indeed full-handed.

I am glad to hear well of Mrs. H\_\_\_\_\_, and hope I would have heard from her. I had no fear of her not being supported. How can they fall, who lean upon the Lord, and have an almighty arm underneath them? Give our warm love to her, to Mr. and Mrs. B\_\_\_\_\_, etc.

I am now getting into my old track, which seems to suit me better than rambling about the country. I have cause to be thankful, that abroad, while I was abroad, was very pleasant, but still, *home is home*. I love my friends at a distance, but it is not practical to travel to them all; and therefore I am glad when they call upon me in London, as many of them do in the course of the year. I seldom stir out for two or three days but I miss some whom I should have seen, if I had remained at home.

There was a time when I did not know that I had a friend in the world, excepting my dear Mary's family; but the Lord has given me so many since, that I cannot express a proper regard to them all. Jacob's acknowledgment, with a little variation, befit me — "With my staff I came over Jordan, and now I have become two bands!"

What a wretch was I in Africa! I was a servant of slaves, scorned and yet sometimes pitied, by the lowest of the human race! And how is it with me now? O Lord, I am a wonder to many, and to myself!

My eventful life is drawing to a close. While I walked in the way of transgressors, I found it hard indeed! Since the Lord took me up, outcast as I was, and brought me into his fold — my path has been as remarkably smooth. So far as happiness can be found in externals — I have known it. Yet I cannot wish to live my most pleasant days over again. Sin and vanity are entwined with them all. I am still as happy as temporals in my widowed state can make me. But I am not sorry that I am in my 72nd year. I have lived long enough to know what the world can do, and what it cannot do. I have no business in it, but to fill up the uncertain remnant, as befits a believer and a minister of the gospel. If the Lord by his grace enables me for this, I care not whether my stay here is longer or shorter; only may I be found ready when the summons shall come. Pray for me, and I will try to pray for you. May the gracious Savior dwell with you, and with me, and with all who love him — as the Lord, the guardian, and beloved of our hearts. Amen.

Your sincerely affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, November 23, 1796.

**Dear Sir,**

Mr. H\_\_\_\_\_ 's design is a noble one — may the Lord prosper it! I do not think that a useless life at home, is a necessary or proper qualification for serving a missionary abroad. But there are extremes on both sides — and I would be sorry if all who love the Lord, and whom he has placed in a line of service here, should think it their duty to leave their posts, and turn missionaries. Especially I hope that you will not take such a thought into your own head, as some of your friends have entertained in theirs for you. If it should enter your cranium, I hope you will have many friends to give you lectures upon moderation, prudence, etc. and that the Lord will give you the hearing ear, and make you content and willing to stay at home. I have no doubt but Satan would be glad to see you shipped off to India, or anywhere — so that he might get rid of you, for you stand in his way where you are.

Let us continue to exchange mutual prayers. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. We shall not always live this dying life. We hope to see *him* as he is. Then all will be well forever! I hope my next trip to Edinburgh will be to Mr. Black. I thank him for sending Mr. B\_\_\_\_\_ to me. He is a good remittance. I cannot make payments in this way, equal to what I receive. The Lord be with you, and yours.

Your affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, April 5, 1797.

**Dear Sir,**

I thought your last letter rather long in coming, but when it came I was made amends. I rejoiced greatly that the judgment of Mr. B\_\_\_\_\_ and your other friends coincided with my own, because it helped to *turn the scale*. I ought to be dubious of my own judgment, and I hope I am not a dogmatist — but your case was so plain, that I am morally certain that I judged right. I have little doubt, but that if you live, you will see more reason than perhaps you do at present — to thank the Lord for inclining you to follow our advice.

I am glad you have at last seen a Moravian brother. They are in general so much alike, that one may be taken as a specimen of many. They have a few peculiarities resulting from their church constitution; but, as *a body of believers, I consider them as the most exemplary, peaceful, and spiritual society of all that bear the Christian name*. Their grand object, and in which their excellence is most signally displayed, is the conversion of the heathen. In this branch, without noise or notice, they have done more in promoting the knowledge of the true gospel, in about fifty years, than has been done by all Christendom in fifteen hundred years

before them. God has given them the true missionary spirit, and I think, excepting Mr. Brainerd, and two or three more in North America, they have hitherto had a monopoly of it, though Mr. C\_\_\_\_\_, the Baptist missionary in Bengal, is, I hope, treading in their steps. Their patience, fortitude, self-denial, perseverance, courage, holy wisdom, and their success, would be astonishing — did we not know whose they are and whom they serve.

I am glad that a spirit of prayer is excited in your parts, on a national account. I wish it was more so with us. I hope indeed we have many (though comparatively few) whose eyes affect their hearts, and are mourning in secret for the evils which they cannot prevent. These I account as the chariots and horsemen of our Israel. I would have little hope from our fleets and armies, farther than the Lord may be pleased to give them success, in answer to the prayers of his people. Who knows but for their sakes he may yet avert or suspend deserved judgments, at least so far as not to give us up as a prey to the merciless teeth of our enemies. But however he may deal with others, he will favor them with his mark of protection and support.

Truly it shall be well with the righteous. He will show himself strong in behalf of them that fear him — and if he permits them to suffer outwardly like others, his promise of strength according to their day, will carry them unhurt through fire and water.

I have just touched upon the several points in your letter. I have not leisure to write more largely. I enclose a letter to Mr. B\_\_\_\_\_. I commend you to the guidance and blessing of the Lord. Pray for us.

Yours very affectionately,

John Newton

Southampton, July 24, 1797.

**My Dear Sir,**

Your letter would have been answered sooner if I had remained at home — but new places and faces have engaged me of late.

I hope that the spirit for missions, which has of late been so generally awakened — will, in due time, by the Lord's blessing, be productive of much good. The first and present good effect of it seems to be the concern excited for the multitudes in our own land, who are perishing for lack of knowledge. The *evangelical dissenters* among us are taking this matter into serious consideration, and are sending forth missionaries into all quarters. And though I am of the Established church, and their zeal is not likely to aggrandize mother church; if they employ fit instruments, and the Lord is pleased to own their labors, I must and will rejoice; for I dare not wish the *sheep* should be starved, because

their own reputed and official pastors, cannot, or will not, feed them.

I know not how you draw the line in your country, between preaching and exhorting. If I speak when the door is open to all comers — I call it preaching; but if I speak in a friend's house to the family, or to a few more who come only by invitation or permission — I do not preach; for to preach is to speak publicly. A preacher is a herald; and thus the reading of the scriptures is called preaching, Acts 15:21. The speaking upon a text, or without one, makes no difference — at least, I think not. It is possible to preach a very good sermon from an English or Scotch proverb. Modes and fashions alter in religious matters, as well as in dress. Our first reformers usually preached from common places; they did not take a text, but discussed a subject — such as faith, repentance, holiness, etc. — yet surely they were preachers of the gospel. The two volumes of Homilies, to which our clergy are obliged by law to subscribe their assent — are a valuable collection of sermons in this way.

I am no advocate for *self-sent preachers* at large. It seems a maxim in the present day, that if any man thinks himself qualified to preach — then he is fully authorized to go forth and try. Some of these have done good; but I believe many of them have done mischief, diffused errors, multiplied contentions and division, and caused the ways of truth to be evil spoken of. But when men whose *characters* and *abilities* are approved by competent judges, whose *motives* are known to be pure, and whose *labors* are excited by the exigency of the occasion — lay themselves out to instruct the ignorant and rouse the careless — I think they deserve thanks and encouragement rather than reprehension, if they step a little over the bounds of church order.

I know that many on your side of the Tweed deem Presbyterian order as a tabernacle made exactly according to the pattern on the mount, and that it would be criminal either to add, or to take away a single loop or pin. On our side of the river, many think as highly of Episcopal, or of Congregational order. Perhaps much of our differences of opinion on this head, may be ascribed to the air we breathed, and the milk which we drank in our infancy.

If I had lived in Scotland, and known the Lord, my ministry, I suppose, would have been in the Kirk, or the Secession. And if Dr. Erskine had been born and bred among us, and regarded according to his merit — he might perhaps have been Archbishop of Canterbury long ago.

Thus I have given you *my free sentiments on your knotty point*. I would not willingly offend any person. I claim the privilege of thinking for myself, and I am well content that others should enjoy the same. I hope I love all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. If they agree with me in this point, I would not waste half an hour in attempting to convert them to my opinion in smaller matters. I leave others to dispute whether the husk or the shell of the nut, is the better of the two. I hope to be content with the kernel.

My paper is nearly full. If it pleases the Lord that nothing unforeseen should call me home sooner, we shall stay here until about the middle of September.

Give my respects to \_\_\_\_\_, etc. Please tell them that my heart and prayers are with them. May the Lord bless them in their own souls, and make them a blessing to many. Give my love likewise to my brother and sister when they come in your way. She knows that I wrote last, and I can seldom afford to send two letters for one.

The Lord be with you, dear Sir. I continue to pray for you.

Affectionately,

John Newton

London, October 14, 1797.

**My Dear Sir,**

I wish well to your Philanthropic Society or Penitentiary: but we cannot imitate you. Our prisons are supplied with chaplains, and I do not know that any of our magistrates are disposed to assist, or even countenance Methodistic plans. But we likewise have a Philanthropic Society, for the education of the children of convicts and vagrants, which I hope is pretty well conducted, and the children attend a church where the gospel is preached at least one part of the day.

I believe I answered your first letter I received at Southampton. I am now to thank you for your second, dated September 8th, which, as you intended, gave great pleasure not only to me, but to my friends there. Give my love to Messrs. H\_\_\_\_\_ and A\_\_\_\_\_, and tell them that I rejoice in their zeal, their acceptance, and in their success. Why should not the Orkney and the Highland Islands, deserve attention as much as the islands in the South Sea? I hope gospel zeal will, in due time, sail northwards to Shetland, and westward to St. Kilda, and all the intermediate islands. You have already a society established for the Highlands, may the Lord put all their wheels in motion!

The gospel ministers in our Established church are mostly confined to their parishes, and cannot do much abroad. But the Congregational Dissenters are stirring in most parts of our kingdom, and associating with a design to spread the good news among the villages in their respective neighborhoods, which are woefully neglected in many places. Indeed we cannot expect those ministers who have no concern for their own souls — should be careful for the souls of their parishioners. I fear but few of them, comparatively, have either the will or the skill, which the shepherd's office requires. Therefore, I must bid Godspeed to the labors of all she preach the truth in love, whether in meetings or

barns, in the highways or the fields. It is better that people should be Dissenters or Methodists, than heathen.

We may say with the apostle, "Grace be with *all* who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!" I hope many agree in loving him — who sadly disagree about trifles. Such is the weakness and wickedness of the heart, even in good men.

There is a great and old established house, which does much business, and causes no small disturbance in the world and in the church. The firm is *Satan, Self, and Co.* Until this powerful, extensive partnership is dissolved, we cannot expect perfect peace and union among all believers. It will be a joyful day, when its credit shall totally fail. Such a day we are warranted to hope for.

Infidelity spreads, and I trust the gospel spreads likewise. Perhaps the time is coming, when all sects and parties shall be reduced to two — Christians and infidels. So it was at the first promulgation of the gospel. For what I know, before long, the infidel spirit may be so prevalent — that no man without real grace will dare to avow so much as a professional attachment to the name of Jesus. Then formal professors will drop off like leaves from the trees in October! The Lord's fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and burn up the chaff; but he knows those who are his, and how to take care of them. He who endures unto the end shall be saved!

Navigation would be more dangerous than it is — if the storm gave no warning of its approach. But the skillful mariner has his eye upon the clouds, and when he sees them gathering thick and black, he takes in his sails, and prepares, as much as he can, to meet what he expects. If he would neglect this, and play or sleep — his vessel might be overset. May we walk circumspectly, considering the times, because the days are evil!

Your two missionaries called upon me, and promised to come to breakfast, if they could; but I saw them no more. I invited two others sent from Glasgow, who spoke to me at church on Sabbath evening — but I suppose they had no time. They were all set apart at Mr. Hill's chapel on Monday, and from what I hear may be by this time at Portsmouth. May a blessing go with them! I am glad to find by your memorial, that you are better informed of the Moravians than you seemed to be when I first mentioned them to you. They say money is the sinews of war. If money was likewise the sinews of missions, we might do well. But, O that the Lord may drop the mantle of the Moravian missionaries among us.

We returned from Southampton in peace and safety the 14th September, after ten weeks' absence, and found all well at home and at the church. I have a new curate, Mr. Gunn; I know not whether his report is heard in Scotland. I have reason to hope that the Lord owns both his labors and mine. The church is crammed, the hearers are attentive — we often hear of new inquirers, especially young people. I know of no gross miscarriages among those who profess the gospel. Last time we had more than 300 communicants. We are situated, as it were, upon an island. The

storms of controversy and dissension which make such havoc upon the religious world — are not permitted to reach our peaceful shore. We know but little of them, and that little only by report. I may truly say, (O that I could say it with due thankfulness) the lines are fallen to me in a pleasant place.

As to myself, I am in status quo. I am a year older than when I went to Southampton last summer — in other respects I am much the same. I feel but little abatement either of bodily or mental powers. In spirituals, I have nothing to boast of. I am poor and needy, but I trust the Lord cares for me. I hope it is not worse with me than in former times. I seldom have the sunshine of sensible comfort, but I am favored with day-light. I certainly do not walk by sight, but I hope it is given me to walk by faith, and to maintain a conscience void of offence.

Long experience and advancing years have gradually weakened my attachment to the present world, especially since the removal of my late dear wife. The Lord has so smoothed my temporal path, that I can think of nothing worth a wish, to add to my comfort. Yet the best, and the whole of it, would scarcely make me desirous of living here another day-but for the sake of my profession and ministry. For these, I am willing to live my appointed time. May I live, while I do live — to him, and be found ready and willing to depart when he shall see fit to call me hence. The rest I wish to leave, without anxiety or choice, to him who does all things well.

But though I have been remarkably exempted from *outward* trials since the year 1790, I have an *inward warfare*. I am a poor creature still. When I would do good — evil is present with me. My best is defective and defiled, and needs pardon before it can hope for acceptance. But, through mercy, my hope is built, not upon frames and feelings, but upon the atonement and mediation of Jesus. When I am called *home*, I shall leave all my abominations behind me, as my dear friend Cowper says in his hymn —

"One view of Jesus as he is,  
Will strike all sin forever dead."

If I do not write often, you have a good quantity at a time, when it comes. Let us pray for each other, and may the Lord hear and answer. I only add an assurance that I am

Affectionately yours,

John Newton

London, April 2, 1798.

**My Dear Sir,**

I know not how much matter I have to thank you for, but it seems high time to make some acknowledgment, though at present, perhaps, I must be brief. I have but just seen your friend, Miss

D\_\_\_\_\_, and told her that we would be glad to see her again. Send as many Scots folks as you please; if they bring the olive leaf in their mouth, they will be welcome here.

I rejoice in the success of the northern mission. May it still increase! Yes! I trust the Lord is spreading and reviving his work in our land, and if so, I care not by what *instruments*, or under what *mode* or *name* — the good cause is promoted.

Mr. H\_\_\_\_\_ brought me Mr. Black's Sermon on Tuesday, but I have not yet had time to read it. My hands are full, full, full — and my growing years hinder my activity.

I cannot speak as you do of remarkable discoveries, etc. I trust I do walk by faith — I certainly do not walk by sight. All my hope, light, and comfort is derived from a little book which I can carry in my pocket. It is given to me to believe that what I read in this book is true. I find my malady, with all its symptoms, accurately described, and having tried the remedy therein proposed, I feel, in a measure, the good effects. Though my cure is not yet perfected, I trust I am in a state of convalescence, and that I shall not die but live. I would be thankful for daylight, and I should like to share with you in the sunshine; but the Lord knows what is best for me. On the other side, I am seldom tempest-tossed. I am more frequently becalmed and inert, than agitated with storms; and I am such a fair-weather sailor, that I seem content to go quietly on, though my progress is but slow.

I believe those who come the nearest to the apostle's experience in 2 Corinthians 12 — must have a proportionable share of his thorn in the flesh, and the buffetings of Satan. A ship would be in danger, with a strong wind and much sail abroad, unless *well-ballasted*. I am often obliged to row for lack of wind. Rowing is not so pleasant, nor so speedy a movement, as sailing — but it is more free from the risk of being overset. Any trial should be welcome, which checks the growth of that abomination, *pride*; and that worst of all abominations, *spiritual pride*.

The Lord is pleased to afford me much liberty and acceptance in my public service. If I was equally comfortable in private, I know not what might be the outcome — for my heart is still desperately wicked, and deeply deceitful.

I suppose the introduction to the Northern Tour will not be relished by everyone — but the arguments in favor of itinerancy and lay preaching will not be easily refuted. Yet still, I think, lay preachers should be sent, if not by bishops, consistories, or elders — at least by some churches or religious societies, who are competent to judge of their fitness. Perhaps even this would not be necessary if all who undertake the service were men of character and abilities, like your friends, and influenced by their motives.

But the position, that every man who thinks himself qualified to preach, has therefore a warrant to go forth as a missionary, is productive of many bad effects on our side of the Tweed. Some of them, though they can smite with the hand, stamp with the foot,

and speak with a loud voice — do not well understand what they say, nor what they affirm; their preaching is crude, often erroneous. They diffuse pride, censoriousness, antinomianism, and party rage among their adherents; for there are few so bad, but they have *some* adherents. The characters of others are very suspicious, they run about to the neglect of their proper business and their families, and perhaps become bankrupts, and cause the good way to be evil spoken of.

They say, that if it can be shown that one person was converted by lay preaching, it proves that the instrument was warranted to preach. But I know a man who was excluded from \_\_\_\_\_'s society, for known and repeated acts of wickedness, and yet after his expulsion he continued preaching, and I believe he was owned to the awakening not of one or two, but of many sinners, perhaps of many scores — but I cannot think such a man had a warrant to preach.

And though Paul was glad if any good was done by those who preached Christ out of envy and strife, I question if he would say they had a warrant to preach while in such a spirit. If all lay preachers were like-minded with H\_\_\_\_\_ and A\_\_\_\_\_ — then I would pray the Lord to increase their number a hundred fold. We have some such in England, but not a few who would be better employed at the *plough* or the *loom* — than for preaching. A man who is more fond of novelty, than of honest labor or of being always called plain Tom or Dick, having a good stock of self-conceit — transforms himself into a preacher. He then takes exception to be called Mr. Thomas. He prefers to be called *the Rev. Mr. Thomas*, to be excused from work, and to look almost like a gentleman. I fear such motives as these may stimulate some to be missionaries, both for at home, and for abroad.

When these are invited to the houses of the affluent, courted and caressed by people of the first characters, laden with gifts and presents, etc. considering what human nature is — I cannot wonder if this sudden transition, from obscurity to honor and public notice — has a tendency to turn their heads, and make them think themselves persons of great importance. I pray for the coming of our Lord's kingdom — but it has not usually come with ostentation, and as it were, with sound of trumpet.

I thought to have put you off with half a sheet, but I have filled it, and therefore must write something on this sheet, and not send you much blank paper. I must look again over your letters.

But first I must tell you that my poor old head forgot to send some copies of the sermon I lately printed, preached on the day of Thanksgiving. Whether any of them have found their way to Edinburgh without my help, I know not, or whether they are yet to be had at Johnson's. I believe he sent one, at least, to be put in a volume of my detached papers. An edition of all my printings has been long in hand at Edinburgh — the six volumes, two Messiahs, and the smaller pieces, will make nine volumes — but when they

will appear who can tell? I have expected them for about or above a year.

I suppose I have already noticed the particulars in your letter of the 23rd December; but it appears to me as a new letter. Your account of the young man executed for forgery is awful. Sin first deceives — and then hardens! So it hardened me. Nothing but omnipotent grace could have softened such a heart as wicked as mine.

In sickness and in many dangers I seemed no more afraid of death than of sleep. Had I not been restrained by a strong invisible hand — I would probably have killed myself; for my life was miserable, and I thought myself quite sure, like the French philosophers, that death was an eternal sleep. Was ever such a wretch — such a striking monument of divine mercy!

I know not if infidelity has greatly spread, though the avowal of it is more public. Many, perhaps most, were *heart-infidels* before they read the books to which they ascribe their new wisdom. But the writings of Paine and others, have brought them forth in their true characters. Infidelity is now enthroned at Rome. Popery is no more — for there is no more pope, and many of the cardinals have sung hymns to the praise of French liberty: but the Roman Catholic religion, so called, still exists, in many parts of Christendom.

Therefore I think, infidelity has not done all its work. It will proceed to the extent of its commission — but no farther; and when it has finished its work, it will receive its wages. How far this commission may reach, we know not, but we know the Lord has marked the bounds beyond which it cannot pass.

I think neither Mr. Fleming, nor any other commentator of the prophets foresaw the wonderful revolution which has taken place within these four years. They thought France would be scourged, but were not aware that France was to be the scourge of Europe! *Events are the best expounders of prophecy.* May not Daniel 7:25 have some reference to these times: but I stop.

My business is to preach Jesus Christ crucified — and leave political concerns in the hands of Him whose counsel shall stand, and who will do all His pleasure. Truly it shall be well with the righteous. He will either preserve them from the evils they apprehend, or give them strength according to their day. It will make little difference to them a hundred years hence, whether they lived here in peace, or in the midst of trouble.

He says to his people: See that you be not terrified. Lo, I am with you always, your sun and your shield. But he likewise commands them to watch and pray, that they may maintain a spirit suitable to the times in which they live. We have no just cause to be afraid for ourselves, if we are duly affected with the sin and misery that surrounds us. There is *a secret mark of protection* put upon those who sigh and mourn for what they cannot prevent. The Lord is

pleading his own cause, and the glory of his holy name should be the nearest and dearest concern to our hearts.

But though I can write with much seeming composure while I sit quietly by the fire-side, I am aware that if such things as we have deserved, were actually to come upon us — that I would tremble like a leaf, and prove a very coward, if left to myself. But he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. I rest my hope upon his faithful promise.

My health and ability for public service are still mercifully preserved. Dear Miss C\_\_\_\_\_, and all my little family, are tolerably well. I trust we have tokens of his favorable presence in our assemblies. Hitherto the Lord has helped us. I have good reason to praise him for what is past — and have I not equal reason to trust him for the future?

We unite in love to you, and all friends, as if named, and request a continuance of your prayers for me and mine. May the Lord bless you in all your concerns and connections.

Your affectionate friend and servant,

John Newton

London, July 5, 1798.

**My Dear Sir,**

I have not touched my book on Mr. Grimshaw for more than a year. I hope to take him with me to Southampton, (if the Lord permits me to go thither as I propose in about a two weeks,) and, if possible, to finish the book while I am there. The truth is, *business* and *years* increase together. I have more to do than formerly — but cannot do so much. But I need not apologize to you, because whoever else falls short, you are served. I have no correspondent to whom I write so many and such long letters, as to yourself.

I hear that Lady L\_\_\_\_\_ has gone home. But your dependence, for support to your plans, was upon the Lord, not upon a lady. I trust he will find ways and means to enable you to go on. Whoever dies — Jesus lives. Remember Professor Frank, and what he did without any fund — he lived by faith from day to day, from hand to mouth. He trusted in the Lord, and was not ashamed.

I call the latter part of your letter a *gospel newspaper*, and it really contains much good news. I wouldn't give a fig for names and forms — so long the truth is preached, and sinners are converted.

Yesterday brought me an acceptable letter from Captain H\_\_\_\_\_. As it is the first, I wish to answer it speedily, and having a little

time at command, I must, as they say, *rob Peter to pay Paul*, and break off from you abruptly, to attend upon him. I shall be glad if you can find your way to London, provided you do not come until towards the middle of September, if I go to Southampton.

Wherever you are, I hope, pray, and believe the Lord will be with you, and I humbly trust he will likewise mercifully be with you.

Yours affectionately,

John Newton

Southampton, September 12, 1798

**My Dear Sir,**

This letter comes rather to acknowledge, than to answer your two letters; for being the move, I inadvertently packed them up, not expecting leisure time to write. But as I have a spare hour, and expect to be fully taken up with indispensables for a time when I return home — I will write something now, lest you should think me negligent or ungrateful.

We left London the 19th July, were one week at Reading, and have been here the rest of the time. I would leave this pleasant place, and these kind friends with more reluctance — if I was not going home; and thus though we have many friends and comforts in this world — yet one bright powerful view of our heavenly home, will, when the time comes, I trust, make us willing, and ready, and glad to leave all below.

Mr. Grimshaw's life, of which I undertook to give some account, has lain by untouched two years, and perhaps I never should have been able to finish it, if I had not brought it with me, and likewise made a resolution to write no letters while abroad (necessary business excepted) until I had finished Mr. Grimshaw. This is the reason why you have not heard from me sooner, (for I love to have you in my debt) for I have served all my friends alike. I have now finished what I intended, according to the ability the Lord has given me. If all is well, I hope it will appear in print before Christmas. I shall send a few to you, but they must be for sale, as I have devoted the profits of the first edition (at least) to the use of the Society for the Relief of the Poor Clergy.

I preached here three evenings in the week, as I believe I told you I did the last two years. My friend, Mr. T\_\_\_\_\_, has made accommodations to receive about 300 people, and we are sometimes full. Tomorrow evening will be my farewell sermon.

Being now in my 74th year, I seem to take a *final leave* of my friends in every place. It may be otherwise, as my health is remarkably good, and I have but few of the symptoms of advancing old age. I am in the Lord's hand, willing to live, (no one has less reason from externals to be weary of life) and if the Lord

is pleased to be with me, when the time comes, I shall not be afraid to die. He has promised strength according to our day, and I aim to rely upon his faithful word.

Notwithstanding the threatening of the French, and the confusion and misery which they have spread over the greater part of Europe, and which has reached even to our sister kingdom — we on this island, are still preserved in internal peace. Is not this astonishing? To me it appears almost miraculous. May we not accept his repeated interpositions in our favor, as a token for good; that though he will chasten — he will not destroy us, nor give us up to the will of those who hate us? May we not accept it as an answer to the prayers of *his remnant* among us? A small remnant indeed, compared with the nation at large, but not very small in the aggregate number.

If all who stand in the breach, pleading for mercy, could be brought together into one place, I trust they would appear a goodly company. And though they are dispersed and scattered up and down the land, the salt of the earth, which preserves it from total putrefaction — yet in his view they are all one connected army, who meet and unite daily, and often, at the same rallying point, the throne of grace.

Is not the spirit that is engaged to spread the gospel at home, as well as abroad — another token for good, at such a time as this? Far from recalling his ambassadors, which might have an awful appearance of war — I trust he is increasing their numbers, and enlarging their powers. Many neglected barren spots, in different parts of our kingdom, are already beginning to rejoice and blossom as the rose.

I question if anything you see in Scotland can give you an idea of the ignorance and wretchedness that reign in many of our parishes, where they are no less destitute of the *form* than of the *power* of godliness — where the church doors are seldom opened, even on the Lord's day — where three-fourths of the children of ten or twelve years of age cannot even write. But these evils are diminishing partly by the Sunday schools in some places, and partly by the village preaching which the evangelical dissenters are setting forward in most of our counties, and in which I, though not a dissenter, greatly rejoice, and daily pray for their success.

If the official shepherds neither *feed* or to *care* for, either themselves or their flocks — then I would be thankful that others are stirred up to supply their lack of service. I care not much for order, regularity, or commission in such a case. When a house is on fire, people of any party or profession are welcome to bring water to extinguish it — whether churchmen or separatists, Presbyterians or ploughmen.

The ways of God, in His providence, are untraceable by us — but we are sure they are right. They would not be His ways — if we could comprehend them! Isaiah 55:8, 9. But our path of duty lies plain and straight before us. Ezekiel 9:4.

Remember me to all friends. I have more friends in Edinburgh than I have room or time to name. The Lord bless us all, and give us one heart and mind, to promote his glory, and the good of our fellow-creatures, in our respective posts — and then we need fear nothing for ourselves. Miss C\_\_\_\_\_ joins in respects and best wishes.

Your affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, December 4, 1798,

**My Dear Sir,**

It is high time to bring you into my debt again, as you were before I received your letter of the 7th November. I am glad to find that you are more and more engaged in useful services, even though it should render your letters shorter and less frequent than formerly.

I know not that my *duties* are much upon the increase — but my *ability* to manage them is certainly upon the decline. I once could sit many hours in the day at my pen — but now two hours weary me. I begin to feel a lack of that energy and application, which I once possessed; and I am afraid lest I exculpate myself too easily by charging the whole blame upon old age. Yet I cannot reasonably expect to do as much at 74 as I could at 50.

I cannot with truth plead guilty to the charge of *willful indolence* — yet upon a review of almost every day, it seems to have passed in a sort of *busy idleness*. We are directed even if we have done our duty — to confess ourselves to be unprofitable servants. What then must I say — conscious that I come so lamentably short in all things, and that my best attempts are both defective and defiled?

On Friday the 23rd, when rising, after a good night's sleep, and in perfect health, I fell down. I fell several times, before I was convinced that I could not stand. The strength of my left leg was withdrawn, without any pain or numbness. I was, for a time, led about the room, not being able to walk across it, without support. I stayed home on the Lord's day. But means were used, and the prayers of my affectionate people and friends prevailed for a blessing on them. Last week I was enabled to preach both Wednesday and Thursday (the Thanksgiving-day.) Yesterday I preached twice, and distributed the bread at the Lord's table to more than 300 communicants, and today I have walked more than a mile in the streets — so that you may now set me down as well. I hope you will praise the Lord on my behalf, and continue to pray for me.

The missionaries, who brought your letter, called when I was at church; they did not come again, so that I have not seen them. One married missionary named \_\_\_\_\_, was with me two hours,

and I much liked him. They seem to be chiefly very young folks; but if their hearts and views be right before the Lord, he will teach them to profit apace, and enlarge their minds and experience, as occasions require. There is none who teaches like Him — and where he bestows a humble and dependent spirit, every other good will follow.

I suppose by this time they are all safe on board the Duff, at Portsmouth. May the Lord of the sea and the dry land, who steered the ark of Noah to its appointed place, bless them while on their passage, and dwell in their hearts and houses, wherever his providence may fix them!

I loved J\_\_\_\_\_ L\_\_\_\_\_. I believe he was a truly upright honest man, though in some things a little eccentric. I know he has long been a sufferer, and therefore I am not sorry that the days of his mourning are ended. I have lost a true friend — but my loss is his gain, and I trust we shall soon meet in a better world.

You send good news of M\_\_\_\_\_. May the Lord strengthen and bless him! When great awakenings take place among people who are grossly ignorant of the scriptures, there are frequently some extraordinary appearances. It was so among our first Methodists, under Wesley, Whitfield, Berridge, etc. It was so in the great revival in America, which began under Mr. Edwards — so likewise at Kilsyth. The Lord permits it, perhaps for two reasons:

1st, These *stirs* engage the attention of the neighborhood, and prompt many to hear, who otherwise would not.

2nd, There are those who want something to cavil at, and these things furnish them with the occasions they wish for, according to the prophecy, Isaiah 8:14, 15. The light comes — but those who love darkness think themselves justified in opposing the light, on account of these *incidental blemishes*, which, therefore, they are glad to expatiate upon.

Messrs. \_\_\_\_\_'s were good men, but they were *bigots* in the extreme; and because they had left the kirk, they took it for granted that the Lord had forsaken it likewise, and therefore hastily concluded that the work could not be his. I have heard that they fasted, and prayed the Lord to put a stop to it. Well may we say, "Lord, what is man!"

My book about Mr. Grimshaw has been three weeks with the printer — but I have only one sheet from the press — at this rate we may wait until March for his appearance: but I hope we shall go on faster. *Poor authors have need of a good stock of patience.* However, all our concerns are in a higher hand, and I trust that Mr. Grimshaw will be seen, whether sooner or later, just at the right time.

The close of your letter pleases me. I shall rejoice to see you once more before I leave this poor world. Forecast, and contrive to stay as long as you possibly can, and be sure to reserve one whole day for me. On a Tuesday or a Saturday I can usually be at home from

morning until night. Hoping to have you soon, I shall conclude with my prayers and best wishes for your welfare. The Lord bless you, and keep you, and cause his face to shine upon you. I only add Miss C\_\_\_\_\_ 's respects, and subscribe myself, with love to all friends,

Your very affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, February 4, 1799.

**My Dear Sir,**

Though I do not promise to fill this large sheet, perhaps I may. My first point is to tell you the *egg* [my book on Grimshaw] is hatched, is now at the bookbinders. I think it will be fledged, and fly about the town, in a few days. I do not offer one even to you as a present, as I have many friends in Scotland, to whom I would be glad to offer such a token of respect — and as I must *buy* what I should give away, I serve you all alike.

I think, in London, tabernacles might be built in every street, without giving umbrage. Indeed places of that cast are springing up like mushrooms, frequently — but then it is an old matter with us. When Mr. Whitfield and Wesley first began, there was stir enough. People were alarmed as if St. Paul's Cathedral and the monument were to be overturned; but these fears have been long since quieted.

When men have gone on for a long course of years in the same train of thinking and practice, they cannot easily, and at once, shake off their old prejudices. If we duly consider human nature, and the *force of habit* — we shall not expect it. I suppose there was a time when the erection of a theater gave the good people of Edinburgh, great uneasiness; but now, perhaps, they can walk by it without trembling. If builders of tabernacles are conscious that they only aim at promoting the glory of God and the good of souls, and have no design to give offence either to church or state, I would advise them to waive disputes as much as possible, say, "You shall answer for me, O Lord." Let them leave their cause in his hands, and he will plead it. When, instead of this, we are very anxious and earnest to *vindicate ourselves* — he often leaves us to make the best of it that we can, and very often that best turns out but badly.

The believers at Jerusalem were in a great bustle when they first heard that Peter visited Cornelius. What! an apostle go to eat and drink with the uncircumcised! Such a thing was never known before! But when they found that the Lord had sent him, they held their peace. *Let us remember that men are but men, and that the best men have their infirmities and mistakes.*

Let us walk as circumspectly as we can, our brethren will, at times, have something to bear with in us; and we must pray for grace to be able to bear with them.

If you are about a good work — then Satan will do all he can to discourage and hinder you; but he cannot break his *chain*, nor go beyond it. He cannot hurt us, unless we give him advantage by indulging unbelief or impatience.

How much am I obliged to my kind friends for their concern when they heard I was ill, and especially for their prayers. I am bound to pray for them. I am still remarkably well — but I am old; I must go the way of all flesh. Pray for me that I may live to the Lord while I do live, that I may finish my course without staining my profession, and that I may depart in peace. As to the time, whether sooner or later — I wish to leave to him who does all things well. Only, may I be found ready when the time comes.

You say, you have more to do, one way or another, than you can well manage. It is my own case as well. My duties seem to increase — as my strength and abilities decrease. I think it better to have too much — than too little. I mean such as lies fairly and providentially before us. If we *willfully* overload ourselves with worldly concerns for the sake of adding bag to bag, that we may have the pleasure of thinking we shall leave a great many bags behind us when we go — this is a bustle and an ambition unworthy of a child of God. Those who are running a race should not encumber themselves with needless weight. I am persuaded this is not your desire — but while you have a secular calling, it is your duty to be active and accurate in it. You are acting for the Lord as his journeyman — and when you are engaged in business, in a right frame of mind, you are no less serving the Lord, than when you are praying, exhorting or hearing.

Everything is beautiful in its proper season. *SELF* likes to be employed in great matters — *grace* teaches us to do small and common things with a great spirit. A servant-maid, when cleaning the kitchen, may be as well employed as another preaching the gospel through Scotland; and if she gives him a cup of cold water for his master's sake, and can do no more — then she shall have a prophet's reward. It is the *intention* which the Lord chiefly regards — and he will reward his upright and devoted people, not according to what they are actually able to do — but according to what they would have done, if they could. I Kings 8:18, 19. Luke 21:3. Mark 14:8. Ephesians 6:8. Colossians 3:23, 24.

I have buried an old faithful servant, who had been with us more than twenty years. I have two others, one has lived with me about fourteen years, and the other thirteen. We are all growing old together, and I trust we shall all live together in a better world. Remember us to all whom we know. The Lord bless you and them, and us also. Amen.

Your very affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, March 28, 1799.

**My Dear Sir,**

I praise the Lord for your candle-light deliverances, Psalm 112:4. You do well to acknowledge His hand and care — in all those events which the world considers as trivial. The way of man is not in himself. Our greatest concerns are so dependent upon small contingencies, that it is not easy to determine which are of the most importance.

Our experience may be compared to the movement of a watch, in which the little pivots are no less necessary in their places — than the spring or the wheels. See Mark 14:13. John 4:7. Acts 27:31. 1 Kings 32:34. Take away the little pivots, and the whole machine is useless.

Time was when I could write eight hours in a day, and now this short letter has almost wearied me: yet I have more than sixty letters lying in front of me, which ought to be answered, and some of them have been there more than a year. Write to me as soon as you can.

Your very affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, October 21, 1799

**My Dear Sir,**

Time was, when you received frequent and long letters from me — but times are altering. I shall always love you, but my letters will probably decrease in number and in size; for I grow old. But your letters to me will, I hope, be frequent and full. So far I wrote two weeks ago, and have not had leisure time to proceed until today.

Your letter of the 27th July found us at Southampton. It brought the good news of your safe return home. I was thankful for the *courage* and *prudence* the Lord gave you on ship-board. They are both Christian graces, when connected; but if separated, *courage* degenerates into rashness, and *prudence* into cowardice.

I must and do rejoice in the success of respectable itinerants in places sadly destitute of the gospel. I expect *there will be some mixture of human infirmity in the best designs of the best men*; and Satan will be busy when he feels his kingdom shaken. But the Lord will accept the intentions of his faithful servants, and overrule all things eventually for good. He will plead their cause, and put their enemies to shame and to silence, if they can but simply and

patiently commit it to him. But if they take it too much into their own hands, they usually make bad, worse. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. We should disclaim, not only fire and sword, but angry disputation and invective; for these likewise are carnal weapons. The apostle says: Being defamed, we entreat.

Through divine mercy, there is some stir among the soldiers with us likewise, and among the seamen in the navy. May the Lord confirm them, and increase their numbers!

The news from Orkney and Shetland is pleasant indeed. I pray the Lord to bless the laborers more and more. I pray the Lord to warm your heart, and to guide your pen, while you are writing to the young people.

Continue to write long letters and often. I love to hear from you, and will thank you when I can. Pray for us. May the Lord grant that you may always answer the description of the tree mentioned in Jeremiah 17:7, 8.

Your very affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, March 4, 1800.

**My Dear Sir,**

Though the end we propose is noble — SELF, unless watched as narrowly as a cat watches a mouse, will interpose. Even Paul, as eminent as he was in grace, needed both a thorn in the flesh, and a messenger from Satan, to keep him from being exalted above measure; and he says of both, They were given to me. Even a messenger from Satan is a gift and a mercy, however unwelcome — if the Lord sanctifies His visit to make us mindful of our weakness and our vileness — both of which we are apt to forget in a long flow of exertion and success.

But if an ounce of grace, so to speak, will suffice to carry us on in active life — it may require a pound of grace to keep us submissive and quiet by the fire-side. The Lord stands not in need of sinful man, nor will he ever lack instruments to carry on His work. They are happy, whom He honors to be His servants in the gospel — provided they give themselves up to Him without reserve, depend upon Him, and lie low in the dust before Him.

The Lord abhors pride and self-importance — and the seeds of these evils are in the hearts of his own children! Rather than allow that which He hates to remain in those whom He loves — He will in mercy pound them as in a mortar, to beat it out of them, or to prevent its growth!

The account of your Highland tour is pleasant and interesting. I hear of no such sudden, general awakenings in our kingdom. But I hope the gospel does spread, though more gradually and silently, especially in the Establishment. Several very promising young men are ordained in the course of the year; and the number of serious students in both the universities seems to be still increasing. I hope there is much good done likewise by the *dissenting itinerancy*.

I fear the savor of the good ointment is in some places injured, and its efficacy in a measure obstructed by *the dead fly of politics*. When I consider the letter or the spirit of the gospel, I would think it impossible that any persons who have the glory of God and the good of souls at heart (especially preachers) could perplex themselves, or their connections, with political matters. I am sure Paul and his brother Peter did not meddle with these matters. They lived under a most wicked government, and the emperors in their time, such as Nero and Caligula, were men of the most infamous and detestable characters — yet they uniformly inculcate submission, and quiet obedience to the powers that be.

You see how large a letter I have written to you with my own hand. Through mercy, dear Miss C\_\_\_\_\_ and *old Seventy-five* are both as well as when you left us.

The Lord bless you and your friends, and me and mine. Let us meet often at the throne of grace, and rejoice in the hope of meeting before long, in a better world.

Your affectionate and obliged friend,

John Newton

London, February 6, 1801.

### **My Dear Friend,**

I have before me four of your letters, in eight sheets. It is high time I should at least thank you for them, though I cannot go through all the particulars.

No. 1 and 2 give an interesting account of your western progress. I rejoiced in the encouragement you received, and I smiled at your arrest. How encouraging it is to think that all hearts and events are in His hands!

No. 3 reminds me that I have written to you since the receipt of the two former. It tells me likewise of Dr. D\_\_\_\_\_ 's seasonable interposition in favor of Mrs. R\_\_\_\_\_. This likewise I ascribe to the Lord's providential care, in answer to prayer. Who is like the Lord our God — who humbles himself to notice the things in Heaven — and in whose sight the earth and all its inhabitants are but as dust — a mere nothing! Yet, while he names and numbers the stars, and upholds them all in their orbits — he condescends to heal the

broken heart, to sooth the sorrowful spirit, to provide for the fatherless and the widow.

Faith is tried like gold in the fire. If the gold is pure, it suffers no loss, but it does not gain and grow in the fire as faith does. We are not warranted to pray for troubles; if we have a due sense of our weakness, we shall rather pray, with submission to his will, "Lead us not into temptation." Yet when we pray for grace, more grace, and stronger grace — we do virtually pray for troubles, for such petitions are seldom answered, but by crosses.

Your story about the drummer and his boy\* is very affecting, and shows the sovereignty and power of grace, which can work upon any person, in any circumstances — either by or without the use of public means, with equal ease. I trust the number of the Lord's *hidden ones* is not small. We sometimes meet with such, in places where we do not expect to find them.

\*[When on a preaching tour with a friend, we met with a pious drummer belonging to a regiment quartered in a town which we visited. We invited him to sup with us in the inn. After supper we requested him to favor us with his history, which he did with great modesty and seriousness in the following words, which are as nearly his own as I can recollect.

I have been (said he,) twenty-four years in the army and navy together. Until four years ago I was the wickedest wretch in either. Our regiment was then at Hull. I was seized with an unaccountable melancholy, it was not about religion. I do not know what it was, but I was miserable. One evening, as I was walking on the common, very unhappy, I observed a church lighted up, which convinced me there was sermon in it, but I dared not go lest my comrades would laugh at me for going to sermon on a week-day. I knelt upon the common, and prayed to God to give me courage to go to church. When I rose, I went directly to church. The minister was preaching upon believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Immediately when I was seated, the minister said, "If it could be of the smallest service to the most wicked person present, I would come down from the pulpit, and on my bended knees beseech that person to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." I thought: this must be a mighty matter surely, that a gentleman would come down from the pulpit, and on his bended knees beseech a poor drummer to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That, with the remainder of his sermon, made a deep impression on my mind. I went home to my wife who met me at the door. I said to her: Jane, we are all wrong, we are living like beasts, we know nothing about believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Poor thing! She trembled, for she thought I was gone mad, but, said I: Jane, I am not mad, but you and I are going to eternal destruction! I understand that the bible will tell us everything; but we have not a bible, and though we had, we cannot read it.

O, said she: we can buy a bible, and our little boy, who is only twelve miles off, can read it to us. Accordingly we sent for our boy, and also bought a bible. When he came home, we asked him to

begin at the first page and read forward to the end of the book. We gave him always two suppers to keep him from sleep, for he got drowsy with reading.

I used to rise very early in the morning to hear more of the bible, but I would say, it is cruel to awake my boy so early, and would give him another hour of sleep — then he rose and began to read where he had stopped the preceding night, and we both sat listening to our boy reading the book. He read slow, for he had many hard words to spell.

At length God opened my poor blind eyes to see that Jesus Christ was the very Savior I stood in need of. O how happy I was! Our boy read onward, and the Lord was pleased to open the poor blind eyes of my wife, so that she saw in Jesus Christ just what I saw. Now we became one of the happiest families in all Hull.

I put myself to school that I might learn to read, and in a few months I was able to read nearly as well as my little boy. I determined that my house should be a house of prayer, and my door open to all who should choose to come. I told my comrades I had now begun to pray to God, and read his word every morning and evening — and I would be glad of their company at these times. Several attended to make sport. When I could not make out a long word, then they all laughed, but I thought now, a few months ago I would have laughed at these things as well as them — but if God opens their eyes as he has mine, they will laugh no more at these things — so I read on as well as I was able. By and by some of them became very serious, but drink and wicked company did them much injury. One of them however remain very steadfast to this day.]

I am told there are about ten thousand parishes in England; I believe more than nine thousand of these are destitute of the gospel — but they have public worship on the Lord's-day. The liturgy is in an evangelical strain, and four chapters of the bible, and about a thirtieth part of the Book of Psalms, are stately read. By the Lord's blessing on these *helps*, I believe many people, who perhaps cannot read, are made wiser than their teachers; and I think were it not for the church service, nine-tenths of the kingdom would, in a little time, be as ignorant and wild as the American Indians!

Either you, or some friends of yours — told me that you had retired to study. Undoubtedly, now that you have given up business — you have more leisure time, which you will do well to improve. I know not what is the immediate object of your literary pursuits, but I hope the Lord will prevent your studying yourself out of that simplicity with which you preached while in business. *I hope you will study Jesus Christ and him crucified.* Study the text of the good word of God. Beware of great books. The first Christians had no book to read — yet they lived honorably and died triumphantly. Beware of leaning too hard upon human authority, even the best. You may get useful hints from sound

divines, but call no man master. There are mixtures of human infirmity, and the prejudices of education or denominational party, in the best writers. *What is good in them, they obtained from the fountain of truth — the Scriptures*; and you have as good a right to go to the fountain-head yourself.

If you had been designed earlier for the ministry, you must have worn the college-trammels; and in order to have obtained a license, you must have learned many things, which you might afterwards wished in vain to forget. But the Lord seems to have called you as he did the prophet. See Amos 4:14, 15.

I do not object to your adding to your stock of general knowledge, so far as it is made subordinate and subservient to the main point. But watch and pray, that your studies may not rob you of spiritual vigor and unction — and betray you into an academic, critical, curious, and dry manner of preaching. If you need not this caution, I know you will at least excuse and accept it as a token of my good-will. The effect of your own meditation and prayer over a text of scripture — will afford you more light, warmth, strength, and comfort, than the perusal of a large book upon the subject. What you thus receive from the Lord, you will deliver also to the people, and you will deliver it as you have received it. When it comes warm from your heart — then it will warm the hearts of your hearers.

Permit me likewise to advise you to *avoid all controversial points as much as possible*. To preach the simple truth, is the best preservative from error. The best way of keeping tares out of the bushel, is to fill it with wheat before hand. The religion that comes from above, though founded upon doctrines — is not so much a string of beliefs in what we call *a system of theology* — as a new nature, a new life. If a man is not born again, it signifies little, whether he is called Calvinist or Arminian, whether he belongs to Church or Kirk, or Tabernacle. He may have a name to live among his party — but he is dead. He incapable, as to spirituals — as the stones in the street.

On the other hand, if he is born from on high, he is a new creature; and though he may be for a season, under many incidental mistakes — the grace which has called him, will prevail over all, and will teach him, in due time — all that the Lord sees needful for him to know.

His children will all see eye to eye in *Heaven* — but they have not all equal light upon *earth*. Who teaches like him? He taught his disciples gradually, as they were able to bear it: but we are apt to be too hasty tutors. *Pope Self*, if he is not checked, will expect his pupils to receive, at one hearing — all that he says, and upon the authority of his saying it — and he is angry if they do not. Calvinists should be the meekest and most patient of all men, if consistent with their own principle: "That a man can receive nothing — unless, and until it is given to him from above."

Let us preach . . .  
the deity and atonement of the Savior,

the influences of the holy Spirit,  
the dreadful evil of sin, as exhibited in the sufferings of Christ,  
when treated as a sinner for our sakes,  
the new birth, and  
the nature and necessity of that holiness, which is an essential  
part of salvation, and without which no man shall see the Lord.

These points will accord with the feelings of all who are truly  
taught of God; and if, in some things, they be otherwise minded —  
then he will, in due time, reveal it unto them, if he sees it  
necessary.

Thus he taught *us* step by step, showing much patience and long-  
suffering towards us — though we were dull scholars. And thus  
may we learn of him, to speak the truth in love.

I am glad to keep my friends, so long as the Lord is pleased to  
spare them — but when they are called home, I do not much  
grieve, if I can follow them in my thoughts to the kingdom of  
glory. If they are ministers, I know they did not die until their  
appointed labors and trials were completed; and I know that God  
will never lack instruments to carry on his work. He can bring  
them even from Africa. There is not a person in Britain more  
unlikely or unfit for his service — than I once was! But grace has  
long and strong arms, and his mercy is boundless!

I am glad you are upon your guard against *the snares of kind  
friends*. We are usually more hurt by the *smiles* — than by the  
*frowns* of men. But happy is the man who feels his own weakness,  
and looks for safety to him — who alone is able to keep him from  
falling.

I have tried hard to send you one more long letter. Whether it will  
be the last — the Lord only knows. If he is with us — then we are  
not necessary to each other. He will care for us. Let us meet at the  
throne of grace daily, and hereafter! Oh what a prospect! Words,  
yes thoughts fail — we cannot conceive what it will be to be  
forever with the Lord!

I commend you to his blessing. Pray for us.

I remain your affectionate friend,

John Newton

London, September 19, 1802.

**My Dear Sir,**

It is high time to thank you for your kind consolatory letter of the  
June 30th — but my eyes fail me, so that I cannot write much. I  
am under a painful dispensation, but I am mercifully supported —  
not by lively frames, or sensible comforts — I have seldom been  
favored with these — but I am enabled, by his grace, to cleave to

his written word. I believe that my present affliction does not spring out of the ground, that it is ordained by the Lord, and that He is wise and good — and therefore, surely does, and will do, all things well. I believe he can, and I trust he will, bring light out of this dark dispensation; but it is my part to wait his time, way, and will, with submission.

My health is good, as are my spirits. I eat and sleep as usual, and preach as much, and seemingly with as much acceptance as formerly. Perhaps I may be heard more attentively now; for those who know me, take it for granted that I could not preach at all, as things are, if the Lord himself was not to uphold me. I hope some are encouraged by observing his goodness to me. Possibly I may speak with more emphasis to the afflicted, from what I feel in myself.

The Lord is a sovereign — and I am a sinner. He has the same right to me and mine, as the potter over the clay. If he has pardoned our sins, and united us to himself — all will be well at last. We ought to be willing to be placed in the most painful situation, if it may promote his glory, which should be our highest end — for he suffered much more for us than he will ever lay upon us.

And since he has said, "My grace is sufficient for you!" and "My strength shall be perfected in your weakness!" and promised that all shall work together for good in the final outcome — I am to leave all in his hands — and am, in some measure, enabled to do so. But, I find, if the spirit be willing — then the flesh is weak. Self and unbelief often assail me.

Time is short — we are traveling on, and shall soon be at *home*. Then, farewell sin and sorrow forever! Heaven and eternity will make rich amends for all the sufferings which his wise plan may appoint for us to endure while here.

A report has just reached me, that you have accepted a call to \_\_\_\_\_, and are settled there. But as I am not sure you are yet removed from Glasgow — I shall direct to you there, for the letter will find you out. Write as soon as convenient.

Give my love to you and to all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, and who inquire after me. I beg all your prayers. I need them, and I prize them. May the Lord bless you wherever you are, and make you a blessing to many. Amen.

Your affectionate and obliged friend,

John Newton

London, January 15, 1802.

**My Dear Friend,**

My eyes are so dim, that I can scarcely see to write at all, nor can I read my own writing, nor could I read yours without help — therefore I must be very brief.

I am almost willing to hope the Lord is bringing me out of my affliction. But I know that his time and way must be the best — and he enables me to wait his hour with some measure of resignation. I am mercifully supported. My health is firm — and I still preach as frequently, and with as little inconvenience to myself as formerly, though now more than five months in my seventy-seventh year.

You know that I am always glad to hear from you, though I am now spoiled for a correspondent. Pray that I may be enabled to say from my heart: The will of the Lord be done!

I hope to be with you in spirit when you go to \_\_\_\_\_, and when you are there — if I should still be living.

The Lord bless you, and all who love his name, in Glasgow, and everywhere else. Amen.

I am, Your very affectionate friend,  
John Newton

*[Newton was born in 1725 — and died on December 21, 1807]*