

THROUGH
MANY
DANGERS!

AN
AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

BY
JOHN NEWTON

Through Many Dangers!

John Newton's Autobiography in a series
of 14 letters written to Thomas Haweis

"I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them!" [Isaiah 42:16](#)

PREFACE

The first of the following Letters is so well adapted an introduction to the rest, that to trouble the reader with a long preface would be quite needless and impertinent. I assure the reader that the narrative is quite genuine, and that the following letters were written to me at my request.

The repeated solicitations of friends have at last prevailed. I have therefore, with consent of the author, now sent these letters abroad in their original form. They were written in haste, as *letters of friendship*, to gratify my curiosity — but the style, as well as the narrative itself, is so plain and easy, that corrections were thought needless. I can only add my best wishes, that the great truths they contain may prove as edifying, as the facts are striking and entertaining.

Thomas Haweis, 1764

LETTER 1.

Dear Sir,

I make no doubt but you have at times had pleasing reflections upon that promise made to the Israelites, "Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands." [Deuteronomy 8:2](#)

They were then in the wilderness, surrounded with *difficulties*, which were greatly aggravated by their own distrust and perverseness. They had experienced a variety of bitter dispensations, the design of which they could not as yet understand. They frequently lost sight of God's gracious purposes in their favor, and were much discouraged by reason of the difficulty of the way. To compose and animate their minds, Moses here suggests to them, that there was a future happy time drawing near, when their journey and warfare would be finished; that they would soon be put in possession of the promised land, and have rest from all their fears and troubles; and then it would give them pleasure to look back upon what they now found so uneasy to bear: "Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands."

But the importance and comfort of these words is still greater, if we consider them in a *spiritual sense* — as addressed to all who are passing through the wilderness of this world, to the heavenly Canaan; who by faith in the promises and power of God are seeking eternal rest in that kingdom which cannot be shaken. The hope of that glorious inheritance inspires us with some degree of courage and zeal to press forward — to where Jesus has already entered as our forerunner; and when our eye is fixed upon Him, we are more than conquerors over all that would withstand our progress.

But we have not yet attained it — and we still feel the infirmities of a fallen nature. Through the remains of ignorance and unbelief, we often mistake the Lord's dealings with us, and are ready to complain — when, if we knew all, we would rather rejoice. But to us likewise there is a time coming, when our warfare shall be accomplished, our views enlarged, and our light increased. Then, with what transports of adoration and love, shall we look back upon the way by which the Lord has led us!

We shall then see and acknowledge, that mercy and goodness directed every step. We shall then see that what our ignorance once called adversities and evils — were in reality blessings which we could not have done well without. We shall then see that nothing befell us without a cause. We shall see that no trouble came upon us sooner, or pressed us more heavily, or continued longer — than our case required. In a word, we shall see that our many afflictions were each in their place, among the means employed by divine grace and infallible wisdom, to bring us to the possession of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which the Lord has prepared for His redeemed people.

And even in this imperfect state, though we are seldom able to judge aright of our present circumstances — yet, if we look upon the years of our past life, and compare the dispensations we have been brought through — with the frame of our minds under each successive period; if we consider, how wonderfully one thing has been connected with another — so that what we now number among our greatest advantages, perhaps took their first rise from incidents which we thought hardly worth our notice; and that we have sometimes escaped the greatest dangers that threatened us, not by any wisdom or foresight of our own — but by the intervention of circumstances, which we neither desired nor thought of — I say, when we compare and consider these things by the light afforded us in the holy Scriptures, we may collect indisputable proof, from the narrow circle of our own concerns — that the wise and good providence of God watches over his people from the earliest moment of their life, overrules and guards them through all their wanderings in a state of ignorance, leads them in a way they know not, until at length his providence and grace concur in those events and impressions, which bring them to the knowledge of him and themselves.

I am persuaded that every believer will, upon due reflection — see enough in his own case to confirm this remark; but not all in the same degree. The outward circumstances of many have been uniform; they have known but little variety in life; and with respect to their inward change, it has been effected in a secret way, unnoticed by others, and almost unperceived by themselves. The Lord has spoken to them, not in thunder and tempest, but with a still small voice he has drawn them gradually to himself; so that, though they have a happy assurance that they know and love him, and are passed from death unto life; yet of the precise time and manner, they can give little account.

Others God seems to select, in order to show the exceeding riches of his grace, and the greatness of his mighty power. He allows the natural rebellion and wickedness of their hearts to have full scope. While sinners of less note are cut off with little warning — these are spared, though sinning with a high hand, and, as it were, intent upon their own destruction. At length, when all who knew them are perhaps expecting to hear that they are made signal instances of divine vengeance — the Lord (whose thoughts are high above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth) is pleased to pluck them as brands out of the fire, and to make them monuments of his mercy, for the encouragement of others; they are, beyond expectation, convinced, pardoned, and changed. A case of this sort indicates a divine power no less than the creation of a world — and it is evidently the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in the eyes of all those, who are not blinded by prejudice and unbelief.

Such was the persecuting Saul — his heart was full of enmity against Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore he persecuted and made havoc of his disciples. He had been a terror to the church of Jerusalem, and was going to Damascus with the same purposes. He was yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against all who loved the Lord Jesus. He thought little of the mischief he had hitherto done. He was engaged for the suppression of the whole sect; and hurrying from house to house, from place to place, he carried menaces in his look, and repeated threatenings with every breath. Such was his spirit and temper, when the Lord Jesus, whom he hated and opposed, checked him in the height of his rage, called this bitter persecutor to the honor of an apostle, and inspired him with great zeal and earnestness, to preach that faith which he had so lately attempted to destroy!

Nor are we without remarkable displays of the same sovereign, efficacious grace in our own times — I may particularly mention the instance of the late *Colonel Gardiner*. If any real satisfaction could be found in a sinful course, he would have met with it; for he pursued the experiment with all possible advantages. He was habituated to evil. Many uncommon, almost miraculous deliverances, made no impression upon him. Yet he was likewise made willing in the day of God's power. The bright example of his life, illustrated and diffused by the account of him, published since his death, has afforded an occasion of much praise to God and much comfort to his people.

After the mention of such names, can you permit me, Sir, to add my own! If I do, it must be with a very humbling distinction. These once eminent sinners — proved sincere Christians. Much had been forgiven them — therefore they loved much. The apostle Paul could say, "The grace bestowed upon me was not in vain — for I labored more abundantly than they all."

Colonel Gardiner likewise was as a city set upon a hill, a burning and a shining light. The manner of his conversion was hardly more singular, than the whole course of his conduct from that time to his death. Here, alas! the parallel greatly fails. It has not been thus with me — I must take deserved shame to myself, that I have made *very unsuitable returns* for what I have received.

But, if the question is only concerning the patience and long-suffering of God, the wonderful interposition of his providence in favor of an unworthy sinner, the power of his grace in softening the hardest heart, and the riches of his mercy in pardoning the most enormous and aggravated transgressions — in these respects, I know no case more extraordinary than my own. And indeed many people, to whom I have related my story, have thought it worthy of being preserved.

I have never given any succinct account in writing, of the Lord's dealing with me, until very lately. For I was deterred, on the one hand, by the great difficulty of writing properly where *self* is concerned; on the other, by the ill use which people of corrupt and perverse minds are often known to make of such instances. The Psalmist reminds us that a reserve in these things is proper, when he says, "Come unto me, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul!" And our Lord cautions us not to "cast our pearls before swine." The *pearls* of a Christian are, perhaps, his choice experiences of the Lord's power and love in the concerns of his soul — and these should not be made public, lest we give occasion to earthly and groveling souls, to profane what they cannot understand.

These were the chief reasons of my backwardness — but a few weeks ago, I yielded to the judgment and request of a much respected friend, and sent him a narrative in a series of eight letters. The event has been what I little expected; I wrote to one person — but my letters have fallen into many hands! Among others, I find they have reached your notice; and instead of blaming me for being too tedious and circumstantial, which was the fault I feared I had committed, you are pleased to

desire a still more distinct detail. As you and others of my friends apprehend my compliance with this request may be attended with some good effect, may promote the pleasing work of praise to our adorable Redeemer, to confirm the faith of some or other of his people — I am willing to obey. I give up my own reasonings upon the inexpediency of so inconsiderable a person as myself adventuring in so public a point of view. If God may be glorified on my behalf, and his children in any measure comforted or instructed by what I have to declare of his goodness — then I shall be satisfied. I am content to leave all other possible consequences of this undertaking in his hands, who does all things well.

I must again have recourse to my memory, as I retained no copies of the letters you saw. So far as I can recollect what I then wrote, I will relate. I may perhaps, in some places, when repeating the same facts, express myself in nearly the same words — yet I propose, according to your desire, to make this narrative more explicit and particular than the former, especially towards the close, which I wound up hastily, lest my friend should be wearied. I hope you will likewise excuse me, if I do not strictly confine myself to narration, but now and then intersperse such reflections as may offer, while I am writing.

Though you have signified your intentions of communicating what I send you to others, I must not, on this account, affect a conciseness and correctness which is not my natural talent, lest the whole should appear dry and constrained. I shall therefore (if possible) think only of you, and write with that confidence and freedom which your friendship and candor deserve.

This initial letter may stand as a preface. I purpose, as far as I can, to intermit many other engagements, until I have completed the task you have assigned me. In the mean time, I entreat the assistance of your prayers, that in this, and all my poor attempts — I may have a single eye to his glory, who was pleased to call me out of horrid darkness, into the marvelous light of his gospel. I am, with sincere respect, dear sir, your obliged and affectionate servant, January 12, 1763.

LETTER 2.

Dear Sir,

I can sometimes feel a pleasure in repeating the grateful acknowledgment of David, "O LORD, I am your servant — you have freed me from my chains!" [Psalm 116:16](#). The tender mercies of God towards me were manifest in the first moment of my life — I was born as it were in his house, and dedicated to him in my infancy.

My mother (as I have heard from many) was a pious experienced Christian — she was a dissenter, in communion with the late Doctor Jennings. I was her only child; and as she was of a weak constitution and a retired temper, almost her whole employment was the care of my education. I have some faint remembrance of her care and instructions. At a time when I could not be more than three years of age, she herself taught me English, and with so much success (as I had something of a forward turn,) that when I was four years old I could read with propriety, in any common book put before me. She stored my memory, which was then very retentive, with many valuable pieces, chapters, and portions of Scripture, catechisms, hymns and poems. My temperament, at that time seemed quite suitable to her wishes. I had little inclination to the noisy sports of children, but was best pleased when in her company, and always as willing to learn as she was to teach me.

How far the best education may fall short of reaching the heart, will strongly appear in the sequel of my history — yet, I think, for the encouragement of pious parents to go on in the good way of doing their part faithfully to form their children's minds, I may properly propose myself as an instance.

Though in process of time, I sinned away all the advantages of these early impressions — yet they were for a great while a restraint upon me. They returned again and again, and it was very long before I could wholly shake them off. And when the Lord at length opened my eyes, I found a great benefit from the recollection of them. Further, my dear mother, besides the pains she took with me, often commended me with many prayers and tears to God — and I doubt not, but I reap the fruits of these prayers to this hour.

My mother observed my early progress with peculiar pleasure, and intended from the first to bring me up with a view to the ministry, if the Lord should so incline my heart. In my sixth year, I began to learn Latin; but, before I had time to know much about it, the intended plan of my education was broke short. The Lord's designs were far beyond the views of an earthly parent; he was pleased to reserve me for an unusual proof of his patience, providence, and grace — and therefore overruled the purpose of my friends, by depriving me of this excellent parent, when I was something under seven years old. I was born the 24th of July, 1725 — and she died the 11th of July, 1732.

My father was then at sea (he was a commander in the Mediterranean trade at that time). He came home the following year, and soon after married again. Thus I passed into different hands. I was well treated in all other respects — but the loss of my mother's instructions was not repaired. I was now permitted to mingle with careless and profane children, and soon began to learn their ways. Soon after my father's marriage I was sent to a boarding school in Essex, where the imprudent severity of the master almost broke my spirit and relish for books. With him I forgot the first principles and rules of arithmetic, which my mother had taught me years before. I stayed there two years; in the last of the two, a new teacher came, who observed and studied my temperament — and I took to the Latin with great eagerness; so that before I was ten years old, I reached and maintained the first post in the second class, which in that school read Tully and Virgil. I believe I was pushed forward too fast, and therefore not being grounded, I soon lost all I had learned (for I left school in my tenth year,) and when I long afterwards undertook the Latin language from books, I think I had little, if any advantage, from what I had learned before.

My father's second marriage was from a family in Essex. When I was eleven years old, he took me with him to sea. He was a man of remarkable good sense, and great knowledge of the world; he took great care of my morals, but could not supply my mother's part. Having been educated himself in Spain, he always observed an air of distance and severity in his carriage, which overawed and discouraged my spirit. I was always in *fear* when before him, and therefore he had the less influence. From that time to the year 1742, I made several voyages, but with considerable intervals between, which were chiefly spent in the country, excepting a few months in my fifteenth year, when I was placed upon a very advantageous prospect in Spain; but my unsettled behavior and impatience of restraint rendered that design abortive.

In this period my temperament and conduct were exceedingly various. At school, or soon after — I had little concern about religion, and easily received very bad impressions. But I was often disturbed with convictions; I was fond of reading from a child — and among other books, Bonnet's Christian Oratory often came in my way; and though I understood but little of it, the course of life therein recommended appeared very desirable, and I was inclined to attempt it. I began to pray, to read the Scriptures, and to keep a sort of diary. I was presently religious in my own eyes; but alas! this seeming goodness had no solid foundation, but passed away like a morning cloud, or early dew. I was soon weary, gradually gave it up, and became worse than before! Instead of prayer, I learned to curse and blaspheme, and was exceedingly wicked, when from under my parents' view.

All this was before I was twelve years old. About that time I had a dangerous fall from a horse. I was thrown, I believe, within a few inches of a newly cut down hedge-row. I got no hurt, but could not avoid taking notice of a gracious providence in my deliverance — for had I fallen upon the stakes, I would have inevitably been killed. My conscience suggested to me the dreadful consequences — if in such a state I had been summoned to appear before God. I presently broke off from my profane practices, and appeared quite altered — but it was not long before I declined again.

These struggles between sin and conscience were often repeated. The consequence was, that every relapse sunk me into still greater depths of wickedness!

I was once roused by the loss of an intimate companion. We had agreed to go on board a man-of-war (I think it was on Sunday,) but I providentially arrived too late. The boat overturned, and he and several others were drowned. I was invited to the funeral of my play-fellow, and was exceedingly affected, to think that by a delay of a few minutes (which had much displeased and angered me — until I saw the outcome,) my life had been preserved. However, this likewise was soon forgotten.

At another time, the perusal of *the Family Instructor* put me upon a partial and transient reformation. In brief, though I cannot distinctly relate particulars, I think I took up and laid aside *a religious profession* three or four different times before I was sixteen years of age — but all this while my heart was insincere. *I often saw a necessity of religion as a means of escaping Hell — but I loved sin, and was unwilling to forsake it.* Instances of this, I can remember, were frequent. I was so strangely blind and stupid, that sometimes when I have been determined upon things which I knew were sinful and contrary to my duty — I could not go on quietly, until I had first dispatched my ordinary task of prayer, in which I have grudged every moment of my time; and when this was finished, my conscience was in some measure pacified. Then I could again rush into folly with little remorse!

My last reform was the most remarkable, both for degree and continuance. Of this period, at least of some part of it, I may say, in the apostle's words, "After the strictest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee." I did everything that might be expected from a person entirely ignorant of God's righteousness — and desirous to establish his own. I spent the greatest part of every day in reading the Scriptures, meditation and prayer. I fasted often, and I even abstained from all animal food for three months. I would hardly answer a question for fear of speaking an idle word. I seemed to bemoan my former sins very earnestly, sometimes with tears. In short I became an *ascetic*, and endeavored, as far as my situation would permit, to renounce society, that I might avoid temptation.

I continued in this serious mood (I cannot give it a higher title) for more than two years, without any considerable breaking off. But it was a poor religion; it left me in many respects under the power of sin, and so far as it prevailed, only tended to make me gloomy, stupid, unsociable, and useless.

Such was the frame of my mind when I became acquainted with the philosopher, *Lord Shaftesbury*. I saw the second volume of his *Characteristics* in a petty shop at Middleburgh in Holland. The title allured me to buy it. The style and manner gave me great pleasure in reading, especially the second piece, which his lordship, with great propriety, has entitled *a Rhapsody*. Nothing could be more suited to the romantic turn of my mind, than the address of this pompous declamation — but of the design and tendency, I was not aware. I thought the author a most religious person, and that I had only to follow him, and be happy. Thus with fine words and fair speeches, my simple heart was beguiled. This book was always in my hand — I read it until I could very nearly repeat *the Rhapsody* verbatim from beginning to

end. No immediate effect followed, but it operated like a *slow poison* — and prepared the way for all that followed.

This letter brings my history down to December, 1743. I was then lately returned from a voyage, and my father not intending me for the sea again — was thinking how to settle me in the world. But I had little life or spirit for business — I knew but little of men or things. I was fond of a visionary scheme of contemplative life — a medley of religion, philosophy, and indolence. I was quite averse to the thoughts of an industrious application to business. At length a merchant in Liverpool, an intimate friend of my father (to whom, as the instrument of God's goodness, I have since been chiefly indebted for all my earthly comforts,) proposed to send me for some years to Jamaica, and to charge himself with the care of my future fortune. I consented to this, and everything was prepared for my voyage. I was upon the point of setting out the following week.

In the meantime, my father sent me on some business to a place a few miles beyond Maidstone in Kent; and this little journey, which was to have been only for three or four days, occasioned a sudden and remarkable turn of events, which roused me from the habitual indolence I had contracted, and gave rise to the series of uncommon dispensations — of which you desire a more particular account. So true it is, "that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his steps."

I am affectionately yours in the best bonds. January 13, 1763.

LETTER 3.

Dear Sir,

A few days before my intended journey into Kent, I received an invitation to visit a family in that county. They were distant relations, but very intimate friends of my dear mother, as she died in their house. But a coolness took place upon my father's second marriage, and I had heard nothing of them for many years. As my road lay within half a mile of their house, I obtained my father's permission to call on them. I was, however, very indifferent about it, and sometimes thought of passing on — however, I went.

I was known at first sight, before I could tell my name. I was met with the kindest reception, as the child of a dear deceased friend. My friends had two daughters. The eldest, whose name was Mary, (as I understood some years afterwards) had been often considered, by her mother and mine — as a *future wife* for me from the time of her birth. I know indeed, that intimate friends frequently amuse themselves with such distant prospects for their children, and that they miscarry much oftener than succeed. I do not say that my mother predicted what was to happen — yet there was something remarkable in the manner of its taking place.

All fellowship between the families had been long broken off; I was going into a foreign country, and only called to pay a hasty visit; and this I would not have thought of, but for a message received just at that time (for I had not been invited at any time before.) Thus the circumstances were precarious in the highest degree, and the outcome was as extraordinary. Almost at the first sight of this girl (for she was then under fourteen,) I was impressed with an affection for her, which never abated or lost its influence a single moment in my heart from that hour! In degree — it actually equaled all that the writers of romance have imaged; in duration — it was unalterable. I soon lost all sense of religion, and became deaf to the remonstrances of conscience and prudence; but my regard for her was always the same; and I may perhaps venture to say, that none of the scenes of misery and wickedness I

afterwards experienced, ever banished her a single hour together from my waking thoughts, for the seven following years!

Give me permission, Sir, to reflect a little upon this unexpected incident, and to consider its influence upon my future life, and how far it was subservient to the views of divine providence concerning me — which seem to have been twofold: that by being given up, for awhile, to the consequences of own wilfulness, and afterwards reclaimed by a high hand — my case, so far as it should be known, might be both a *warning* and an *encouragement* to others.

In the first place, hardly anything less than this violent and commanding passion, would have been sufficient to awaken me from the dull melancholy habit I had contracted. I was almost a misanthrope, notwithstanding I so much admired the pictures of virtue and benevolence as drawn by lord Shaftesbury. But now my reluctance to active life was overpowered at once — and I was willing to be or to do anything which might subserve the accomplishment of my wishes at some future time.

Further, when I afterwards made shipwreck of faith, hope, and conscience — my love to this girl was the only remaining principle, which in any degree supplied their place. The bare possibility of seeing her again was the only present and obvious means of restraining me from the most horrid designs against myself and others.

But then the ill effects it brought upon me, counter-balanced these advantages. The interval, usually styled the time of *courtship*, is indeed a pleasing part of life, where there is a mutual affection, the consent of friends, a reasonable prospect as to settlement — and the whole is conducted in a prudential manner, and in subordination to the will and fear of God. When things are thus situated — then it is a blessing to be of tender passions; but when these concomitants are lacking, what we call *love* is the most tormenting passion in itself, and the most destructive in its consequences, that can be named — and they were all lacking, in my case.

I dared not mention it to her friends, or to my own, nor indeed for a considerable time to herself, as I could make no proposals. It remained as a dark fire, locked up in my own bosom, which gave me a constant uneasiness. By introducing *an idolatrous regard to a creature* — it greatly weakened my sense of religion, and made further way for the entrance of infidel principles. And though it seemed to promise great things, as an incentive to diligence and activity in life, in reality it performed nothing.

I often formed mighty projects in my mind, of what I would willingly do or suffer for the sake of her whom I loved. Yet this did not prevent me from engaging in a long train of excess and riot, utterly unworthy the honorable pretensions I had formed. And though through the wonderful interposition of divine goodness, the *maze of my follies* was at length unraveled, and my wishes crowned in such a manner as overpaid my sufferings. Yet, I am sure, I would not go through the same series of trouble again to possess all the treasures of both the Indies.

I have enlarged more than I intended on this point, as perhaps these papers may be useful to caution others against *indulging an ungovernable passion* by my painful experience. How often may such headstrong votaries be said "to sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind."

My heart being now fixed and riveted to a particular object, I considered everything I was concerned with in a new light. I concluded it would be absolutely impossible to live at such a distance as Jamaica, for a term of four or five years — and therefore determined at all events that I would not go. I could not bear either to acquaint my father with the true reason, or to invent a false one. Therefore, without giving any notice to him why I did so, I stayed three weeks instead of three days in

Kent, until I thought (as it proved) the opportunity would be lost, and the ship sailed. I then returned to London.

I had highly displeased my father by this disobedience; but he was more easily reconciled than I could have expected. In a little time I sailed with a friend of his to Venice. In this voyage, I was exposed to the company and evil examples of the common sailors among whom I ranked. Importunity and opportunity presenting every day, I once more began to relax from the sobriety and order which I had observed, in some degree, for more than two years. I was sometimes pierced with sharp convictions; but though I made a few faint efforts to stop, as I had done from several before — I did not, indeed, as yet turn out profligate; but I was making large strides towards a total apostasy from God. The most remarkable check and alarm I received (and for what I know, the last,) was by a *dream*, which made a very strong, though, not any abiding impression upon my mind. This dream had a direct and easy application to my own circumstances, to the dangers into which I was about to plunge myself, and to the unmerited deliverance and mercy which God would be pleased to offer me in the time of my distress.

Though I have wrote out a relation of this dream more than once for others, it has happened that I never reserved a copy — but the principal incidents are so deeply engraved in my memory, that I believe I am not liable to any considerable variations in repeating the account.

The scene presented to my *imagination* was the harbor of Venice, where we had lately been. I thought it was night, and I was *on watch* upon the deck. As I was walking to and fro by myself, a person came to me, (I do not remember from whence,) and brought me a *ring*, with an express charge to keep it carefully; assuring me that while I preserved that ring, I would be happy and successful — but, if I lost or parted with it, I must expect nothing but trouble and misery.

I accepted the present and the terms willingly, not in the least doubting my own care to preserve it, and highly satisfied *to have my happiness in my own keeping*. I was engaged in these thoughts, when a second person came to me, and observing the ring on my finger, took occasion to ask me some questions concerning it. I readily told him its virtues, and his answer expressed a surprise at my mental weakness, in expecting such effects from a ring. I think he reasoned with me some time upon the impossibility of the thing, and at length urged me in direct terms to throw it away.

At first, I was shocked at the proposal — but his insinuations prevailed. I began to reason and doubt myself, and at last plucked it off my finger, and dropped it over the ship's side into the water — which it had no sooner touched, than I saw, the same instant, a terrible fire burst out from a range of mountains, (a part of the Alps,) which appeared at some distance behind the city of Venice. I saw the hills as distinct as if awake — and they were all in flames. I perceived my folly too late; and my tempter, with an air of insult, informed me, that all the mercy which God had in reserve for me, was comprised in that ring — which I had willfully thrown away. I understood that I must now go with him to the burning mountains, and that all the flames I saw were kindled upon my account. I trembled, and was in a great agony; so that it was surprising I did not then awake.

But my dream continued, and when I thought myself upon the point of a constrained departure, and stood self-condemned, without plea or hope — then suddenly, either a third person, or the same who brought the ring at first, (I am not certain which,) came to me, and asked the cause of my grief. I told him the plain case, confessing that I had ruined myself willfully, and deserved no pity. He blamed my rashness, and asked if I would be wiser, supposing I had my ring again. I could hardly answer to this — for I thought it was gone beyond recall. I believe, indeed, I had not time to

answer, before I saw this unexpected friend go down under the water, just in the spot where I dropped it — and he soon returned, bringing the ring with him.

The moment he came on board, the flames in the mountains were extinguished, and my seducer left me. Then was "the prey taken from the hand of the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered." My fears were at an end, and with joy and gratitude I approached my kind deliverer to receive the ring again. But he refused to return it, and spoke to this effect: "If you would be entrusted with this ring again — you would very soon bring yourself into the same distress. You are not able to keep it — but I will preserve it for you, and whenever it is needful, will produce it in your behalf."

Upon this I awoke, in a state of mind not to be described! I could hardly eat, or sleep, or transact my necessary business for two or three days. But the impression soon wore off, and in a little time I totally forgot it. I think it hardly occurred to my mind again, until several years afterwards.

It will appear, in the course of these papers, that a time came, when I found myself in circumstances very nearly resembling those suggested by this extraordinary dream, when I stood helpless and hopeless upon the brink of an awful eternity — and I doubt not, but had the eyes of my mind been then opened, I would have seen my grand enemy, who had seduced me, willfully to renounce and cast away my religious profession, and to involve myself in the most complicated crimes! I say, I would probably have seen him pleased with my agonies, and waiting for a permission to seize and bear away my soul to this place of torment! I would perhaps have seen likewise, that Jesus whom I had persecuted and defied, rebuking the adversary, challenging me for his own, as a brand plucked out of the fire, and saying, "Deliver him from going down into the pit! I have found a ransom!"

However, though I saw not these things, I found the benefit — I obtained mercy. The Lord answered for me in the day of my distress. Blessed be his name — he who restored the ring, (or what was signified by it,) vouchsafes to keep it! O what an unspeakable comfort is this, that I am not in my own keeping.

"The Lord is my shepherd!" I have been able to trust *my all* into his hands, and I know in whom I have believed. Satan still desires to have me, that he might sift as wheat — but my Savior has prayed for me, that my faith may not fail. Here is my security and power — a bulwark, against which the gates of Hell cannot prevail. But for this, many and often a time, if possible, I would have ruined myself, since my first deliverance. Nay, I would fall, and stumble, and perish still, after all that the Lord has done for me — if his faithfulness was not engaged in my behalf, to be my sun and shield even unto death. "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

Nothing very remarkable occurred in the following part of that voyage. I returned home in December, 1743 — and soon after repeated my visit to Kent, where I protracted my stay in the same imprudent manner I had done before, which again disappointed my father's designs in my favor, and almost provoked him to disown me! Before anything suitable offered again, I was put on board a boat. It was a critical juncture, when the French fleets were hovering upon our coast, so that my father was incapable to procure my release. In a few days I was sent on board the Harwich man-of-war. I entered here upon quite a new scene of life, and endured much hardship for about a month. My father was then willing that I should remain in the navy, as a war was daily expected — and he recommended me to the captain, who took me upon deck as a midshipman.

I had now an easy life, as to externals, and might have gained respect; but my mind was unsettled, and my behavior was very indifferent. I here met with companions who completed the ruin of my good principles. And though I affected to talk of

virtue, and was not utterly abandoned as afterwards — yet my delight and habitual practice was wickedness. My chief friend was a person of exceeding good natural talents, and much observation; he was the greatest master of what is called *the free-thinking scheme* I remember to have met with, and knew how to insinuate his sentiments in the most plausible way. And his zeal was equal to his abilities — he could hardly have labored more in the cause, if he had expected to gain Heaven by it! Allow me to add, while I think of it, that this man, whom I honored as my master, and whose practice I adopted so eagerly — perished in the same way as I expected to have done. I have been told, that he was overtaken in a voyage from Spain with a violent storm — and *a great wave broke on board and swept him into eternity!* Thus the Lord spares or punishes according to his sovereign pleasure!

But to return: I was fond of his company, and having myself a smattering of books, was eager enough to show my reading. He soon perceived my case — that I had not wholly broke through the restraints of conscience, and therefore did not shock me at first with too broad intimations of his nefarious design. He rather, as I thought, spoke favorably of religion. But when he had gained my confidence — he began to speak plainer. In a word, he so plied me with objections and arguments, that my depraved heart was soon gained, and I entered into his plan with all my spirit. Thus, like an unwary sailor, who leaves his port just before the rising storm, I renounced the hopes and comforts of the gospel at the very time when every other comfort was about to fail me.

In December, 1744, the *Harwich* was in the Downs, bound to the East Indies. The captain gave me liberty to go on shore for a day. But without consulting prudence, or regarding consequences — I took horse, and followed the dictates of my restless passion — I went to take a last visit of her whom I loved. I had little satisfaction in the visit — as I was sensible that I was taking pains to multiply my own troubles. The short time I could stay, passed like a dream — and on New Year's day, 1745, I took my leave to return to the ship. I begged the captain to excuse my absence — but this rash step (especially as it was not the first step of the kind I had taken,) highly displeased him, and lost me his favor, which I never recovered.

At length we sailed from Spithead with a very large fleet. Several of our fleet were lost in attempting to leave that place — and the following night the whole fleet was greatly endangered upon the coast of Cornwall, by a storm from the south. The darkness of the night, and the number of the vessels, occasioned much confusion and damage. Our ship, though several times in imminent danger of being run down by other vessels, escaped unhurt — but many suffered much, particularly the admiral. This occasioned our putting back to Plymouth.

While the boat lay at Plymouth, I heard that my father, who had interest in some of the ships lately lost, was come down to Torbay. He had a connection at that time with the African company. I thought if I could get to him, he might easily introduce me into that service, which would be better than pursuing a long uncertain voyage to the East Indies.

It was a maxim with me in those unhappy days, *never to deliberate* — and I was resolved to leave the ship at all events. I did so, and in the worst manner possible. I was sent one day to work in the boat — but I betrayed my trust, and deserted my post. I knew not what road to take, and dared not ask for fear of being suspected. Yet having some general idea of the country, I guessed right; and when I had traveled some miles, I found upon inquiry, that I was on the road to Dartmouth. All went smoothly that day, and part of the next day. I walked apace, and expected to have been with my father in about two hours — when I was met by a small party of soldiers. I could not avoid or deceive them. They brought me back to Plymouth.

I walked through the streets guarded like a felon. My heart was full of indignation, shame, and fear. I was confined two days in the guard house, then sent on board the ship, and kept awhile in iron chains. Then I was publicly stripped and whipped; after which I was degraded from my office, and all my former companions forbidden to show me the least favor, or even to speak to me. As midshipman, I had been entitled to some command, which (being sufficiently haughty and vain,) I had not been backward to exert. I was now in my turn brought down to a level with the lowest, and exposed to the insults of all.

And as my present situation was uncomfortable — my future prospects were still worse — the evils I suffered were likely to grow heavier every day. My old friends were somewhat disposed to screen me from ill usage. But, during the little time I remained with them afterwards, I found them cool very fast in their endeavors to protect me. Indeed they could not avoid it without running a great risk of being punished themselves; for the captain, though in general a humane man, who behaved very well to the ship's company — was almost implacable in his resentment, when he had been greatly offended — and took several occasions to show himself so to me; and the voyage was expected to be, as it proved, for five years!

Yet I think nothing either felt or feared distressed me so much, as to see myself thus forcibly torn away from the object of my affections, under a great improbability of ever seeing her again, and a much greater of returning in such a manner as would give me hopes of seeing her *mine*. Thus I was as miserable on all sides, as could well be imagined. My bosom was filled with the most excruciating passions — eager desire, bitter rage, and black despair. Every hour exposed me to some new insult and hardship, with no hope of relief or mitigation, and no friend to take my part, or to listen to my distresses.

Whether I looked inward or outward, I could perceive nothing but darkness and misery. I think no case except that of a conscience wounded by the wrath of God — could be more dreadful than mine. I cannot express with what wishfulness and regret I cast my last looks upon the English shore. I kept my eyes fixed upon it until, the ship's distance increasing, it sensibly disappeared. And when I could see it no longer, I was tempted to throw myself into the sea, which (according to the wicked system I had adopted) would put an end to all my sorrows at once. But the secret hand of God restrained me.

Help me to praise him, dear Sir, for his wonderful goodness to the most unworthy of all creatures!

I am your most obliged servant. January 15, 1763.

LETTER 4.

Dear Sir,

Though I desired your instructions as to the manner and extent of these memoirs — I began to write before I received them, and had almost finished the preceding sheet when your letter of the 11th came to hand. I shall find another occasion to acknowledge my sense of your kind expressions of friendship, which, I pray the Lord, I may never give you cause to repent or withdraw; at present I shall confine myself to what more particularly relates to the task assigned me. I shall obey you, Sir, in taking notice of the little incidents you recall to my memory, and of others of the like nature, which, without your direction — I would have thought too trivial, and too much my own to deserve mentioning. When I began the letter, I intended to say no more of myself than might be necessary to illustrate the wonders of divine

providence and grace in the leading turns of my life; but I account your judgment a sufficient warrant for enlarging my plan.

Among other things, you desired a more explicit account of the state and progress of *my courtship*, as it is usually phrased. This was the point in which I thought it especially befit me to be very brief; but I submit to you; and this seems a proper place to resume it, by telling you how it stood at the time of my leaving England.

When my inclinations first revealed themselves, both parties were so young, that no one but myself considered it in a serious view. It served for tea-table talk among our friends, and nothing further was expected from it. But afterwards, when my passion seemed to have abiding effects, so that in an interval of two years it was not at all abated, and especially as it occasioned me to act without any regard to prudence or self-interest, or my father's designs, and as there was a coolness between him and the family — her parents began to consider it as a matter of consequence; and when I took my last leave of them, her mother (at the same time she expressed the most tender affection for me, as if I had been her own child) told me, that though she had no objections to make — upon a supposition that, at a maturer age, there should be a probability of our engaging upon a prudent prospect. Yet, as things then stood, she thought herself obliged to interfere; and therefore desired that I would no more think of returning to her house, unless her daughter was away from home, until such time as I could either prevail with myself entirely to give up my pretensions, or could assure her that I had my father's express consent to go on.

Much depended upon Mary's part in this affair — but though she was young, mirthful, and quite unpracticed in such matters, she was directed to a happy medium. A positive encouragement, or an absolute refusal, would have been attended with equal, though different disadvantages. But without much studying about it, I found her always upon her guard. She had insight to see her absolute power over me, and prudence to make a proper use of it. She would neither understand my hints, nor give me room to come to a direct explanation. She has said since, that from the first discovery of my regard, and long before the thought was agreeable to her — she had often an unaccountable impression upon her mind, that sooner or later she should be mine. Upon these terms we parted.

I now return to *my voyage*. During our passage to Maderia, I was a prey to the most gloomy thoughts. Though I had well deserved all I met with, and the captain might have been justified if he had carried his resentment still farther; yet my pride at that time suggested that I had been grossly injured, and this so far wrought upon my wicked heart, that I actually formed designs to murder him.

The Lord had now apparently given me up to judicial blindness — I was capable of anything. I had not the least fear of God before my eyes, nor (so far as I remember) the least sensibility of conscience. I was possessed of so strong a spirit of delusion, that I believed my own lie, and was firmly persuaded that after death I would cease to exist. Yet the Lord preserved me! Some intervals of sober reflection would at times take place: when I have chosen death rather than life — a *ray of hope* would come in (though there was little probability for such a hope) that I would yet see better days, that I might again return to England, and have my wishes crowned — if I did not willfully throw myself away. In a word, my love to Mary was now the only restraint I had left. Though I neither feared God, nor regarded men, I could not bear that she should think meanly of me when I was dead.

As in the outward concerns of life, the weakest means are often employed by divine providence to produce great effects, beyond their common influence — so I found it then: this single thought, which had not restrained me from a thousand smaller evils — proved my only and effectual barrier against the greatest and most fatal temptations. How long I could have supported this conflict, or what, humanly

speaking, would have been the consequence of my continuing in that situation, I cannot say. But the Lord whom I little thought of, knew my danger, and was providing for my deliverance.

Two things I had determined when at Plymouth — that I would not go to India, and that I would go to Guinea; and such, indeed, was the Lord's will concerning me — but they were to be accomplished in his way, not in my own. We had been now at Maderia some time; the business of the fleet was completed, and we were to sail the following day. On that memorable morning I was late in bed, and would have slept longer, but that one of the midshipmen (an old companion) came down, and between jest and earnest, bade me rise. As I did not immediately comply, he cut down the hammock in which I lay, which forced me to dress myself. I was very angry, but dared not resent it. I was little aware how much his caprice affected me, and that this person, who had no design in what he did — was the messenger of God's providence. I said little, but went upon deck, where I that moment saw a man putting his clothes into a boat, who told me he was going to leave us.

Upon inquiring, I was informed that two men from a Guinea ship, which lay near us, had entered on board the Harwich, and that the commodore had ordered the captain to send two others in their place. My heart instantly burned like fire. I ran to the lieutenants, and entreated them to intercede with the captain that I might be dismissed. Upon this occasion, though I had been formerly on ill terms with these officers, and had disobliged them all in their turns — yet they had pitied my case, and were ready to serve me now. The captain, who, when we were at Plymouth, had refused to exchange me — though at the request of admiral Medley, was now easily prevailed on. I believe, in a little more than half an hour from my being asleep in my bed, I saw myself discharged, and safe on board another ship!

This was one of the many critical turns of my life, in which the Lord was pleased to display his providence and care, by causing many unexpected circumstances to concur in almost an instant of time. These *sudden opportunities* were several times repeated — and each of them brought me into an entire new scene of action. They were usually delayed to almost the last moment in which they could have taken place.

The ship I went on board of was bound to Sierra Leone, and the adjacent parts of what is called the Windward Coast of Africa. The commander, I found, was acquainted with my father. He received me very kindly, and made fair professions of assistance, and I believe he would have been my friend. But without making the least advantage of former mistakes and troubles — I pursued the same evil course; nay, if possible, I acted much worse!

On board the Harwich, though my principles were totally corrupted — yet, as upon my first going there I was in some degree serious, the remembrance of this made me ashamed of breaking out in that notorious manner I could otherwise have indulged. But now, entering among *strangers*, I could appear without disguise. I well remember, that while I was passing from the one ship to the other, this was one reason why I rejoiced in the exchange, and one reflection I made upon the occasion, namely, that I now might be as *abandoned to sin* as I pleased, without any control. From this time, I was exceedingly vile indeed, little if anything short of that animated description of an almost irrecoverable state, which we have in 2 Peter 2:14, "They commit adultery with their eyes, and their desire for sin is never satisfied. They lure unstable people into sin, and they are well-trained in greed. They live under God's curse!" I not only sinned with a high hand myself, but made it my study to tempt and seduce others upon every occasion — sometimes to my own hazard and hurt.

One natural consequence of this behavior was, a loss of the favor of my new captain. Not that he was at all religious, or disliked my wickedness, any further than it affected his interest — but I became careless and disobedient. I did not please him — because I did not intend it; and, as he was a man of a bad temperament likewise — we the more easily disagreed. Besides, I had a little of that unlucky wit, which can do little more than multiply troubles and enemies to its possessor. Upon some imagined affront, I made a song, in which I ridiculed his ship, his designs, and his person — and soon taught it to the whole ship's company. Such was the ungrateful return I made for his offers of friendship and protection. I had mentioned no names, but the allusion was plain — and he was no stranger either to the intention or the author.

I shall say no more of this part of my story; let it be buried in eternal silence. But let me not be silent from the praise of that *grace* which could pardon, that *blood* which could expiate such sins as mine! Yes, "the Ethiopian may change his skin, and the leopard his spots," since I, who was the willing slave of every evil, possessed with a legion of unclean spirits, have been spared, and saved, and changed — to stand a monument of his Almighty power forever.

Thus I went on for about six months, by which time the ship was preparing to leave the coast. A few days before she sailed, the captain died. I was not upon much better terms with his mate, who now succeeded to the command, and had upon some occasions treated me badly. I made no doubt, but, if I went with him to the West Indies, he would put me on board a man-of-war; and this, from what I had known already, was more dreadful to me than death. To avoid it, I determined to remain in Africa, and amused myself with many golden dreams, that here I should find an opportunity of improving my fortune.

There are still upon that part of the coast, a few white men settled, whose business it was to purchase *slaves*, and sell them to the ships at a higher price. One of these, who at first landed in my indigent circumstances, had acquired considerable wealth — he had lately been in England, and was returning in the vessel I was in, of which he owned a quarter part. His example impressed me with hopes of the same success — and upon condition of entering into his service, I obtained my discharge. I had not the precaution to make any terms, but trusted to his generosity. I received no compensation for my time on board the ship — but a bill upon the owners in England, which I never paid; for they failed before my return. The day before the vessel sailed, I landed upon the island of Benanoes, with little more than the clothes upon my back, as if I had escaped shipwreck.

I am, dear Sir, yours, January 17, 1763.

LETTER 5.

Dear Sir,

There seems an important instruction, and of frequent use, in these words of our dear Lord, "My hour has not yet come." The two following years, of which I am now to give some account, will seem as an absolute blank in a very short life — but as the Lord's hour of grace was not yet come, and I was to have still deeper experience of the dreadful state of the heart of man, when left to itself; I have seen frequent cause since, to admire the mercy of the Lord in banishing me to those distant parts, and almost excluding me from human society, at a time when I was big with mischief, and, like one infected with a *pestilence*, was capable of spreading a *taint* wherever I went. Had my affairs taken a different turn; had I succeeded in my designs, and remained in England — my sad story would probably have been worse.

Worse in myself — indeed, I could have hardly been; but my wickedness would have had greater scope. I might have been very hurtful to others, and multiplied irreparable evils! But the Lord wisely placed me where I could do little harm. The few I had to converse with, were too much like myself, and I was soon brought into such abject circumstances, that I was too low to have any influence. I was rather *shunned* and *despised* — than *imitated*; there being few even of the negroes themselves, during the first year of my residence among them, but thought themselves too good to speak to me. I was as yet an "outcast lying in my blood," (Ezekiel 16.) and to all appearance exposed to perish.

But the Lord beheld me with mercy — he did not strike me to Hell, as I justly deserved; "he passed by me when I was in my blood, and said unto me live." But the appointed time for the manifestation of his love, to cover all my iniquities with the robe of his righteousness, and to admit me to the privileges of his children — was not until long afterwards. I can only ascribe it to his *secret upholding power* — that what I suffered in a part of this interval, did not bereave me either of my life or senses. Yet as by these *sufferings*, the force of my evil example and inclinations was lessened, I have reason to account them among my *mercies*.

It may not, perhaps, be amiss to digress for a few lines, and give you a very brief sketch of the geography of the circuit I was now confined to, especially as I may have frequent occasion to refer to places I shall now mention; for my trade afterwards when the Lord gave me to see better days, was chiefly to the same places, and with the same people, where and by whom I had been considered as upon a level with their meanest slaves.

From Cape De Verd, the most western point of Africa, to Cape Mount, the whole coast is full of rivers: the principal are Gambia, Rio Grande, Sierra Leone, and Sherbro. Of the former, as it is well known, and I was never there, I need say nothing. The Rio Grande, like the Nile, divides into many branches near the sea. On the most northerly, called Cacheo, the Portuguese have a settlement. The most southern branch, known by the name of Rio Nuna, was the usual boundary of the white men's trade northward. Sierra Leone is a mountainous peninsula, uninhabited, and I believe inaccessible, upon account of the thick woods, excepting those parts which lie near the water. The river is large and navigable. From hence, about twelve leagues to the south-east, are three contiguous islands, called the Benanoes, about twenty miles in circuit: this was about the center of the white men's residence. Seven leagues farther the same way, lie the Plantanes — three small islands, two miles distant from the continent at the point which forms one side of the Sherbro. This river is more properly a *sound*, running within a long island, and receiving the confluence of several large rivers, "rivers unknown to song," but far more deeply engraved in my remembrance than the Tyber. The southernmost of these has a very peculiar course, almost parallel to the coast; so that in tracing it a great many leagues upwards, it will seldom lead one above three miles, and sometimes not more than half a mile from the sea-shore.

Indeed I know not, but that all these rivers may have communications with each other, and with the sea in many places, which I have not known. If you cast your eyes upon a large map of Africa, while you are reading this, you will have a general idea of the country I was in; for though the maps are very incorrect, most of the places I have mentioned are inserted, and in the same order as I have named them.

My new master had formerly resided near Cape Mount, but he now settled at the Plantanes — upon the largest of the three islands. It is a low sandy island, about two miles in circumference, and almost covered with palm trees. We immediately began to build a house, and to enter upon trade. I had now some desire to retrieve my lost time, and to exert diligence in what was before me; and he was a man with whom I might have lived tolerably well, if he had not been soon influenced against me. But

he was much under the direction of a black woman, who lived with him as a wife. She was a person of some consequence in her own country, and he owed his first rise to her influence. This woman, (I know not for what reason,) was strangely prejudiced against me from the first; and what made it still worse for me, was a severe fit of illness, which attacked me very soon, before I had opportunity to show what I could or would do in his service.

I was sick when he sailed in to Rio Nuna, and he left me in her hands. At first I was taken some care of; but, as I did not recover very soon, she grew weary, and entirely neglected me. I had sometimes not a little difficulty to procure a cup of cold water, when burning with a fever. My bed was a mat, spread upon a board, and a log of wood was my pillow. When my fever left me, and my appetite returned, I would gladly have eaten — but there was no one gave me food. She lived in plenty herself, but hardly allowed me sufficient to sustain life, except now and then, when in the highest good spirits, she would send me victuals in her own plate, after she had dined. This, (so greatly was my pride humbled,) I received with thanks and eagerness, as the most needy beggar does an alms.

Once, I well remember, I was called to receive this *bounty* from her own hand; but, being exceedingly weak and feeble, I dropped the plate. Those who live in plenty can hardly conceive how this loss touched me; but she had the cruelty to laugh at my disappointment; and though the table was covered with food-filled dishes, (for she lived much in the European manner,) she refused to give me any more. My distress has been at times so great, as to compel me to go, by night, and pull up roots in the plantation, (though at the risk of being punished as a thief,) which I have eaten raw upon the spot, for fear of discovery.

The roots I speak of are very wholesome food, when boiled or roasted — but as unfit to be eaten raw in any quantity. The consequence of this diet, which, after the first experiment, I always expected, and seldom missed — was the that I always vomited it up; so that I often returned as empty as I went — yet necessity urged me to repeat the trial several times. I have sometimes been relieved by strangers — even the *chained slaves* secretly gave me victuals (for they dared not be seen to do it,) from their own slender pittance.

Next to pressing poverty, nothing sits harder upon the mind than scorn and contempt — and of this likewise I had an abundant measure.

When I was very slowly recovering, this woman would sometimes pay me a visit — not to pity or relieve, but to insult me. She would call me worthless and indolent, and compel me to walk, which when I could hardly do, she would set her attendants to mimic my motions, to clap their hands, laugh, throw limes or stones at me. But when she was out of sight, I was rather pitied than scorned, by the meanest of her slaves.

At length my master returned from his voyage; I complained of ill usage, but he could not believe me; and, as I did it in her hearing, I fared no better for it. But in his second voyage he took me with him. We did pretty well for a while, until a brother trader he met in the river, persuaded him that I was unfaithful, and stole his goods in the night, or when he was on shore. This was almost the only vice I could *not* be justly charged with. The only remains of a good education I could boast of, was what is commonly called honesty — and, as far as he had entrusted me, I had always been true. Though my great distress might, in some measure, have excused it, I never once thought of defrauding him in the smallest matter. However, the charge against me was believed, and I condemned without evidence. From that time he likewise treated me very hardly; whenever he left the vessel — I was locked upon deck, with a pint of rice for my day's allowance; and if he stayed longer, I had

no relief until his return. Indeed, I believe I should have been nearly starved, but for an opportunity of catching fish sometimes.

When birds were killed for his own use, I seldom was allowed any part but the entrails, to bait my hooks with. At the changing of the tides, when the current was still, I used generally to fish, (for at other times it was not practicable,) and I very often succeeded. If I saw a fish upon my hook, my joy was little less than any other person may have found, in the accomplishment of the scheme he had most at heart. Such a fish, hastily broiled, or rather half burned, without sauce, salt, or bread — has afforded me a delicious meal. If I caught none, I might, if I could, sleep away my hunger until the next changing of the tides, and then try again.

Nor did I suffer less from the inclemency of the weather and the lack of clothes. The rainy season was now advancing — and my whole wardrobe was a shirt, a pair of trousers, a cotton handkerchief instead of a cap, and a cotton cloth about two yards long, to supply the lack of upper garments. Thus clothed, I have been exposed for twenty, thirty, perhaps near forty hours together, in incessant rains, accompanied with strong gales of wind, without the least shelter, when my master was on shore. I feel to this day some faint returns of the violent pains I then contracted. The excessive cold and wet I endured in that voyage, and soon after I had recovered from a long sickness — quite broke my physical constitution and my spirits; the latter were soon restored, but the effects of the former still remain with me, as *a needful memento of the service and the wages of sin.*

In about two months we returned, and then the rest of the time I remained with him was chiefly spent at the Plantanes under the same regimen as I have already mentioned. My haughty heart was now brought down, not to a wholesome repentance, not to the language of the prodigal; this was far from me; but my spirits were sunk, and I lost all resolution, and almost all reflection. I had lost the *fierceness* which fired me when on board the Harwich, and which made me capable of the most desperate evils. But I was no further changed than a tiger tamed by hunger — remove the hunger, and he will be as wild as ever!

One thing, though strange, is most true. Though destitute of food and clothing, depressed to a degree beyond common wretchedness — I could sometimes collect my mind to mathematical studies. I had bought Barrow's *Euclid* at Portsmouth, and it was always with me. I used to take it to remote corners of the island by the sea side, and draw my diagrams with a long stick upon the sand. Thus I often beguiled my sorrows, and almost forgot my feelings — and thus, without any other assistance, I made myself, in good measure, master of the first six books of Euclid.

I am, yours as before. January 17, 1763.

LETTER 6.

Dear sir,

There is much piety and spirit in the grateful acknowledgment of Jacob, "I am not worthy of all the unfailing love and faithfulness you have shown to me, your servant. When I left home and crossed the Jordan River, I owned nothing except a walking stick. Now my household fills two large camps!" [Genesis 32:10](#). They are words which ought to affect me with a peculiar emotion. I remember that in some of those mournful days, to which my last letter refers, I was busied in planting some lime or lemon trees. The plants I put into the ground were no longer than a young gooseberry bush; my master and his mistress passing by the place, stopped a while to look at me. "Who knows," said he, "who knows but by the time these trees grow up and bear — that you may go home to England, obtain the command of a ship, and return to reap the fruits of your labors; we see strange things sometimes

happen!" This, as he intended it, was a *cutting sarcasm*. I believe he thought it fully as probable, that I should live to be king of Poland! Yet it proved a prediction, and they (one of them at least) lived to see me return from England in the capacity he had mentioned, and pluck some of the first limes from those very trees!

How can I proceed in my narrative, until I raise a monument to the divine goodness, by comparing the circumstances in which the Lord since placed me — with what I was at that time! Had you seen me, Sir, then go so depressed and solitary — in the dead of night to wash my one shirt upon the rocks, and afterwards put it on wet, that it might dry upon my back, while I slept! Had you seen me so poor a figure, that when a ship's boat came to the island, shame often constrained me to hide myself in the woods, from the sight of strangers! Especially, had you known that my conduct, principles, and heart, were still darker than my outward condition — how little would you have imagined that I was reserved to be so peculiar an instance of the providential care and exuberant goodness of God.

There was, at that time, but one earnest desire in my heart, which was not contrary and shocking both to religion and reason; that one desire, though my vile licentious life rendered me peculiarly unworthy of success, and though a thousand difficulties seemed to render it impossible, the Lord was pleased to gratify. But this favor, though great, and greatly prized, was a small thing compared to the blessings of his grace. He spared me, to give me the knowledge of himself, in the person of Jesus Christ. In love to my soul he delivered me from the pit of corruption, and cast all my heinous sins behind his back! He brought my feet into the paths of eternal peace. This is indeed the chief article, but it is not the whole.

When he made me acceptable to himself in the beloved — he also gave me favor in the sight of others. He raised up new friends, protected and guided me through a long series of dangers, and crowned every day with repeated mercies! To him I owe it, that I am still alive — and that I am not still living in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and the want of all things. Into that state I brought myself — but it was he who delivered me. He has now given me an easy situation in life, some experimental knowledge of his gospel, a large acquaintance among his people, and a friendship and correspondence with several of his most honored servants. But it is as difficult to enumerate my present advantages — as it is fully to describe the evils and miseries of the preceding times.

I do not exactly know how long things continued with me thus, but I believe nearly a year. In this interval I wrote two or three times to my father; I gave him an account of my condition, and desired his assistance, intimating at the same time, that I had resolved not to return to England, unless he was pleased to send for me. I have likewise wrote letters to Mary in that dismal period — so that at the lowest ebb, it seems I still retained a hope of seeing her again. My father applied to his friend in Liverpool, of whom I have spoken before, who gave orders accordingly to a captain of his, who was then setting out for Gambia and Sierra Leone.

Sometime within the year, as I have said, I obtained my master's consent to live with another trader, who dwelt upon the same island. Without his consent I could not be taken, and he was unwilling to do it sooner, but it was then brought about.

This was an alteration much to my advantage. I was soon decently clothed, lived in plenty, was considered as a companion, and trusted with the care of all his domestic effects, which were to the amount of some thousand pounds. This man had several factories and white servants in different places, particularly one in Kittam, the river I spoke of which runs so near along the sea coast. I was soon appointed to go there, where I had a share in the management of business, jointly with another of his servants. We lived as we pleased, business flourished, and our employer was satisfied. Here I began to be wretch enough to think myself happy.

There is a significant phrase frequently used in those parts, that *such a white man is grown black*. It does not intend an alteration of complexion — but disposition. I have known several, who, settling in Africa after the age of thirty or forty, have at that time of life been gradually assimilated to the temperaments, customs, and ceremonies of the natives, so far as to prefer that country to England. They have even become dupes to all the pretended charms, amulets, and divinations of the blinded negroes, and put more trust in such things than the wiser sort among the natives. A part of this spirit of infatuation was growing upon me; and in time, perhaps, I might have yielded to the whole.

I entered into closer engagements with the inhabitants, and would have lived and died a wretch among them — if the Lord had not watched over me for good. Not that I had lost those ideas which chiefly engaged my heart to England, but despair of seeing them accomplished, made me willing to remain where I was. I thought I could more easily bear the disappointment in this good situation, than nearer home. But, as soon as I had fixed my connections and plans with these views — the Lord providentially interposed to break them in pieces, and save me from ruin, in spite of myself!

In the mean time, the ship that had orders to bring me home, arrived at Sierra Leone. The captain made inquiry for me there, and at the Benanoes; but understanding that I was at a great distance in the country, he thought no more about me. Without doubt the hand of God directed my being placed at Kittam just at this time; for, as the ship came no nearer than the Benanoes, and stayed but a few days — if I had been at the Plantanes, I could not perhaps have heard of her until after she had sailed. The same must have certainly been the outcome, had I been sent to any other factory, of which my new master had several upon different rivers.

But though the place I was at, was a long way up a river, much more than a hundred miles distant from the Plantanes — yet, by the peculiar situation which I have already noticed, I was still within a mile of the sea coast. To make the interposition more remarkable, I was at that very juncture going in quest of trade to a place at some distance directly from the sea, and would have set out a day or two before, but that we waited for a few articles from the next ship that came, to complete the assortment of goods I was to take with me.

We used sometimes to walk to the beach, in expectation of seeing a vessel pass by, but this was very precarious, as at that time the place was not at all resorted to by ships for trade. Many passed in the night, others kept at a considerable distance from the shore. In a word, I do not know that any one had stopped while I was there, though some had before, upon observing a signal made from the shore. In February, 1747 (I know not the exact day,) my fellow servant walking down to the beach in the forenoon, saw a vessel sailing past, and made a smoke signal in token of trade. She was already a little beyond the place, and, as the wind was fair, the captain was in some demur whether to stop or not. However, had my companion been half an hour later, she would have gone beyond recall — but he soon saw her come to anchor, and went on board in a canoe. This proved the very ship I have spoken of!

One of the first questions my companion was asked — was concerning me; and when the captain understood that I was so near, he came on shore to deliver his message. Had an invitation from home reached me, when I was sick and starving at the Plantanes — I would have received it as life from the dead; but now, for the reasons already given, I heard it at first with indifference. The captain, unwilling to lose me, told a story altogether of his own framing: he gave me a very plausible account, how he had missed a large packet of letters and papers, which he should have brought with him; but this, he said, he was sure of, having had it from my father's own mouth, as well as from his employer — that a person lately dead had

left me £400 per annum; adding further, that if I was any way in debt — he had express orders to pay my debt, though it should cost one half of his cargo.

Every particular of this was false; nor could I myself believe what he said about the estate. But, as I had some expectations from an aged relation, I thought a part of it might be true. But I was not long in suspense — for though my father's care and desire to see me had very little weight with me, and would have been insufficient to make me leave my prosperous retreat — yet the remembrance of Mary, the hopes of seeing her, and the possibility, that accepting this offer might once more put me in a way of gaining her hand — prevailed over all other considerations.

The captain further promised (and in this he kept his word,) that I would lodge in his cabin, dine at his table, and be his constant companion, without expecting any service from me. And thus I was suddenly freed from a captivity of about fifteen months. I had neither a thought nor a desire of this change one hour before it took place! I embarked with him, and in a few hours lost sight of Kittam.

How much is their blindness to be pitied, who can see nothing but *chance* in events of this sort! So blind and stupid was I at that time — that I made no reflection at all. I sought no direction in what had happened. Like a wave of the sea driven with the wind, and tossed about — I was governed by present appearances, and looked no further. But he, who is eyes to the blind — was leading me in a way that I knew not.

Now that I am in some measure enlightened, I can easily perceive that it is in the adjustment and concurrence of these *seemingly fortuitous circumstances* — that the ruling power and wisdom of God is most evidently displayed in human affairs. How many such casual events may we remark in the history of Joseph, which had each a necessary influence in his ensuing promotion! If he had not dreamed — or if he had not told his dream; if the Midianites had passed by a day sooner or later; if they had sold him to any person but Potiphar; if his mistress had been a better woman; if Pharaoh's officers had not displeased their him; or if any or all these things had occurred in any other manner or time than they did — then all that followed had been prevented! The promises and purposes of God concerning Israel, their bondage, deliverances, and settlement — must have failed. And, as all these things tended to, and centered in Christ, the promised Savior — the desire of all nations would not have appeared; mankind would have all perished in their sins, without hope — and the counsels of God's eternal love in favor of sinners defeated.

Thus we may see a connection between Joseph's first dream — and the death of our Lord Christ, with all its glorious consequences. So strong, though secret — is the concatenation between the greatest and the smallest events! What a comfortable thought is this to a believer to know — that amidst all the various interfering designs of men, the Lord has one constant design which he cannot, will not miss — namely, his own glory in the complete salvation of his people; and that he is wise, and strong, and faithful, to make even those things, which seem contrary to this design, subservient to promote it.

You have allowed me to comment upon my own text — yet the length of this observation may need some apology. Believe me to be, with great respect, dear sir, your affectionate and obliged servant. January 18, 1763.

LETTER 7.

Dear Sir,

The ship I was now on board as a passenger, was on a trading voyage for gold, ivory, dyers' wood, and bees' wax. It requires much longer time to collect a cargo of this sort than of slaves. The captain began his trade at Gambia, had been already

four or five months in Africa, and continued there a year, or thereabouts, after I was with him; in which time we ranged the whole coast, as far as Cape Lopez, which lies more than a thousand miles farther from England than the place where I embarked. I have little to offer worthy your notice, in the course of this tedious voyage. I had no business to employ my thoughts — but my whole life, when awake, was a course of most horrid impiety and profaneness. I know not that I have ever since met so daring a blasphemer as myself. Not content with common oaths and imprecations, I daily invented new ones; so that I was often seriously reprov'd by the captain, who was himself a very profane man. At times I told him of my past adventures in wickedness, and from what he saw of my conduct, and especially towards the close of the voyage, when we met with many disasters — he would often tell me that, to his great grief, he had *a Jonah* on board; that a *curse* attended me wherever I went; and that all the troubles he met with in the voyage, were owing to his having taken me into the vessel. I shall omit any further particulars, and after mentioning an instance or two of the Lord's mercy to me, while I was thus defying his power and patience — I shall proceed to something more worthy your perusal.

Although I lived long in the excess of almost every other extravagance — I never was fond of drinking. My father has often been heard to say, that while I avoided drunkenness — he would still entertain hopes of my recovery from a dissolute life. But sometimes I would promote a drinking-bout for a frolic's sake, as I termed it. For though I did not love the liquor, I abandoned myself to do iniquity, and delighted in mischief. The last abominable frolic of this sort I engaged in, was in the river Gabon; the proposal and expense were my own.

Four or five of us one evening sat down upon deck, to see who could hold out longest in drinking gin and rum alternately; a large sea-shell supplied the place of a glass. I was very unfit for a challenge of this sort, for my head was always incapable of bearing much strong drink. However, I began and proposed the first toast, which, I well remember, was some imprecation against the person who would start first. This proved to be myself. My brain was soon fired with alcohol — I arose and danced about the deck like a madman; and while I was thus diverting my companions, my hat went overboard. By the light of the moon, I saw the ship's life-boat, and eagerly attempted to throw myself over the side to get into her, that I might recover my hat. My sight in that circumstance deceived me, for the life-boat was not within my reach, as I had thought — but perhaps twenty feet from the ship's side. I was, however, half overboard, and would in one moment more have plunged myself into the water, when somebody caught hold of my clothes, and pulled me back.

This was an amazing escape, for I could not swim if I had been sober; the tide ran very strong; my companions were too much intoxicated to save me; and the rest of the ship's company were asleep. So near I was, to appearance, of perishing in that dreadful condition, and sinking into eternity under the weight of my own curse!

Another time, at Cape Lopez, some of us had been in the forest, and shot a buffalo. We brought a part of it on board, and carefully marked the place (as I thought) where we left the remainder. In the evening, we returned to fetch it; but we set out too late. I undertook to be their guide; but night coming on before we could reach the place, we lost our way. Sometimes we were in swamps up to our waist in water — and when we recovered dry land, we could not tell whether we were walking towards the ship, or wandering farther from her. Every step increased our uncertainty.

The night grew darker, and we were inextricable entangled in the forest, where perhaps the foot of man had never trod before. That part of the country is entirely abandoned to wild beasts, with which it prodigiously abounds. We were indeed in a terrible case, having neither light, food, nor arms — and expecting a tiger to rush

from behind every tree. The stars were clouded, and we had no compass to form a judgment which way we were going. Had things continued thus, we had probably perished; but it pleased God that no beast came near us; and after some hours perplexity, the moon arose and pointed out the eastern quarter. It appeared then, as we had expected, that instead of drawing near to the sea side, we had been penetrating into the forest; but by the guidance of the moon, we at length came to the water side, a considerable distance from the ship. We got safely on board, without any other inconvenience than what we suffered from fear and fatigue.

Those and many other deliverances, were all, at that time, entirely lost upon me. The *admonitions of conscience*, which, from successive repulses, had grown weaker and weaker — at length entirely ceased. For a space of many months, if not for some years — I cannot recollect that I had a single check of conscience. At times I have been visited with sickness, and have believed myself near to death — but I had not the least concern about the consequences. In a word, I seemed to have every mark of final impenitence and reprobation — as neither judgments nor mercies made the least impression on me.

At length, our business finished, we left Cape Lopez, and after a few days stay at the island of Annibona, to take on provisions, we sailed homeward about the beginning of January 1748. From Annabona to England, without touching at any intermediate port, is a very long navigation, perhaps more than seven thousand miles, if we include the circuits necessary to be made on account of the trade-winds. We sailed first westward, until near the coast of Brazil, then northward, to the banks of Newfoundland, with the usual variations of wind and weather, and without meeting anything extraordinary. On these banks we stopped half a day to fish for cod. This was then chiefly for diversion, as we had provisions enough, and little expected those fish (as it afterwards proved) would be all we would have to exist on. We left the banks on the first of March, with a hard gale of wind, westerly, which pushed us fast homewards.

I should here observe, that, with the length of this voyage, in a hot climate, the vessel was greatly out of repair, and very unfit to support stormy weather; the sails and cordage were likewise very much worn out, and many such circumstances concurred to render what followed more dangerous. I think it was on the ninth of March, the day before our catastrophe, that I felt a thought pass through my mind, which I had long been a stranger to. Among the few books we had on board, one was "*The Imitation of Christ*" by Thomas a Kempis; I carelessly took it up, as I had often done before, to pass away the time. But I had still read it with the same indifference as if it was entirely a romance. However, while I was reading this time, an involuntary suggestion arose in my mind: *What if these things should be true?* I could not bear the force of the inference, as it related to myself; and therefore shut the book immediately. My conscience witnessed against me once more, and I concluded that, true or false, I must abide the consequences of my own choice. I put an abrupt end to these *reflections* — by joining in with some vain conversation or another.

But now the Lord's time was come, and the *conviction* I was so unwilling to receive — was deeply improved upon me by an awful dispensation. I went to bed that night in my usual carnal security and indifference, but was awakened from a sound sleep by the force of a violent wave, which broke upon the ship — and the cabin I lay in, was filled with water. This alarm was followed by a cry from the deck, that the ship was going down! As soon as I could recover myself, I tried to go upon deck — but I was met upon the ladder by the captain, who told me to bring a knife with me. While I returned for the knife, another person went up in my place, who was instantly washed overboard! We had no time to lament him, nor did we expect to survive him long; for we soon found the ship was filling with water very fast. The sea had torn away the upper timbers on one side, and made a wreck of the ship in a

few minutes. I shall not attempt to describe this disaster in marine dialect, which would be understood by few; and therefore I can give you but a very inadequate idea of it.

Taking in all circumstances, it was astonishing, and almost miraculous — that any of us survived to relate the story. We had immediate recourse to the pumps — but the water increased against our efforts. Some of us were set to baling in another part of the vessel — that is, to empty it out with buckets and pails. We had but eleven or twelve people to sustain this service; and, notwithstanding all we could do, she was full, or very near it. With a common cargo, the ship must have sunk; but we had a great quantity of bees' wax and wood on board, which were specifically lighter than the water; and as it pleased God that we received this shock in the very crisis of the gale, towards morning we were enabled to employ some means for our safety, which succeeded beyond our expectations. In about an hour's time, the day began to break, and the wind abated. We expended most of our clothes and bedding to stop the leaks (though the weather was exceedingly cold — especially to us, who had so lately left a hot climate). Over these we nailed pieces of boards, and at last perceived the water abate.

At the beginning of this hurry, I was little affected. I pumped hard, and endeavored to animate myself and my companions. I told one of them, that in a few days, we would talk about this storm with a glass of wine — but he being a less hardened sinner than myself, replied, with tears, "No! It is too late for us now." About nine o'clock, being almost spent with cold and labor, I went to speak with the captain, who was busied elsewhere, and just as I was returning from him, I said almost without any meaning, "If this will not do — the Lord have mercy upon us." This (though spoken with little reflection) was the first desire I had breathed for mercy for the space of many years. I was instantly struck with my own words; and, as Jehu said once, "what have you to do with peace!" so it directly occurred, "*What mercy can there be for me?*"

I was obliged to return to the pump, and there I continued until noon, almost every passing wave breaking over my head — but we tied ourselves fast with ropes, that we might not be washed away. Indeed, I expected that every time the vessel descended in the sea, she would rise no more — and though I dreaded death now, and my heart foreboded the worst, if the Scriptures, which I had long since opposed, were indeed true — yet still I was but half convinced, and remained for a space of time in a sullen frame, a mixture of despair and impatience. I thought, if the Christian religion was true — that I could not be forgiven; and was, therefore, expecting, and almost, at times, wishing, to know the worst of it!

I am yours, January 19, 1763.

LETTER 8.

Dear Sir,

The tenth of March is a day much to be remembered by me, and I have never allowed it to pass wholly unnoticed since the year 1748. On that day the Lord sent from on high, and delivered me out of the deep waters. I continued at the pump from three in the morning until near noon, and then I could do no more. I went and lay down upon my bed, uncertain and almost indifferent, whether I should rise again or not. In an hour's time I was called, and not being able to pump, I went to the helm, and steered the ship until midnight. Here I had a small interval for reflection. I began to think of my former religious professions; the extraordinary turns in my life; the calls, warnings, and deliverances I had met with; the licentious course of my conversation, particularly my unparalleled blasphemy in making the Scriptures

(which I could not now be sure was false, though I was not yet assured it was true) the constant subject of profane ridicule. I thought, allowing the Scripture premises — that there never was nor could be such a sinner as myself. Then, comparing the *advantages* I had broken through — I concluded, at first, that my sins were too great to be forgiven. The Scripture likewise seemed to say the same; for I had formerly, been well acquainted with the Bible, and many passages, upon this occasion, returned upon my memory, particularly those awful passages, [Proverbs 1:24-31](#), [Hebrews 6:4, 6](#), and [2 Pet 2:20](#) — which all seemed so exactly to suit my case and character. Thus, as I have said, I waited with fear and impatience to receive my inevitable *doom*.

Yet, though I had thoughts of this kind, they were exceeding faint and disproportionate. It was not until long after (perhaps several years,) until I had gained some clear views of the infinite righteousness and grace of Christ Jesus, my Lord — that I had a deep and strong apprehension of my sinful state by nature and practice; and, perhaps, until then, I could not have borne the sight. So wonderfully does the Lord proportion the discoveries of sin and grace; for he knows our frame, and that if he was to put forth the greatness of his power — a poor sinner would be instantly overwhelmed, and crushed as a moth.

But to return: When I saw, beyond all probability, there was still hope of respite, and heard, about six in the evening, that the ship was freed from water, there arose a gleam of hope. I thought I saw the hand of God displayed in our favor, and I began to pray. I could not draw near to a reconciled God, and call him *Father*. My prayer was like the cry of the ravens, which yet the Lord does not disdain to hear. I now began to think of that Jesus whom I had so often derided. I recollected the particulars of his life and of his death — a death for sins not his own — but, as I remembered, for the sake of those who, in their distress, would put their trust in him. And now I chiefly wanted evidence. The *comfortless principles of infidelity* were deeply riveted — and I rather *wished* than *believed* these things were real facts.

You will please to observe, Sir, that I collect the strain of the reasonings and exercises of my mind in one view; but I do not say that all this passed at one time. The great question now was: How I could gain an assurance that the Scriptures were of divine inspiration, and a sufficient warrant for the exercise of trust and hope in God.

One of the first helps I received, (in consequence of a determination to examine the New Testament more carefully,) was from [Luke 11:13](#). I had been sensible, that to profess faith in Jesus Christ, when in reality I did not believe his history — was no better than a mockery of the heart-searching God. But here I found a Spirit spoken of, which was to be communicated to those who ask. Upon this I reasoned thus: If this book is true, the promise in this passage must be true likewise; I have need of that very Spirit, by which the whole was written, in order to understand it aright. He has engaged here to give that Spirit to those who ask. I must therefore pray for the Spirit, and, if it is of God, he will make good his own word. I concluded that though I could not say from my heart that I believed the gospel — yet I would, for the present take it for granted; and that by studying it in this light, I would be more and more confirmed in it.

If what I am writing could be perused by our modern infidels, they would say, (for I too well know their manner,) that I was very desirous to persuade myself into this opinion. I confess that I was, and so would they be — if the Lord should show them, as he was pleased to show me at that time — the absolute necessity of some expedient to interpose between a righteous God and a sinful soul. Upon the gospel scheme I saw, at least, a perhaps of hope — but on every other side I was surrounded with black unfathomable despair.

The wind was now moderate, but continued fair, and we were still drawing nearer to our port. We began to recover from our consternation, though we were greatly alarmed by our circumstances. We found that the water having floated all our moveables in the hold — all the casks of provision had been beaten to pieces by the violent motion of the ship. On the other hand, our livestock, such as pigs, sheep, and poultry, had been washed overboard in the storm. In effect, all the provisions we had, were now gone — except the *fish* I have mentioned above, and some corn which used to be given to the hogs (and there was but little of this left). The sails, too, were mostly blown away, so that we advanced but slowly, even while the wind was fair. We imagined ourselves about a hundred leagues from the land, but were in reality much further. Thus we proceeded with an alternate prevalence of hope and fear. My leisure time was chiefly employed in reading and meditating on the Scriptures, and praying to the Lord for mercy and instruction.

Things continued thus for four or five days, or perhaps longer, until we were awakened one morning, by the joyful shout of the watch upon deck, proclaiming the sight of land! We were all soon raised at the sound. The dawning was uncommonly beautiful, and the light (just strong enough to discover distant objects) presented us with a gladdening prospect. It seemed to be a mountainous coast about twenty miles from us, terminating in a cape or point, and a little farther, two or three small islands, as if just rising out of the water. The appearance and position seemed exactly answerable to our hopes, resembling the north-west extremity of Ireland, which we were steering for. We gladly congratulated each other, making no doubt but that if the wind continued, we would be in safety and plenty the next day.

The small remainder of our brandy (which was reduced to little more than a pint) was, by the captain's orders, distributed among us; he adding at the same time, "We shall soon have brandy enough!" We likewise ate up the residue of our bread for joy of this welcome sight, and were in the condition of men suddenly relieved from death.

While we were thus celebrating, the mate with a graver tone than the rest, sunk our spirits by saying that, "he wished it might prove to be land at last." If one of the common sailors had first said so, I know not but the rest would have beat him for raising such an unreasonable doubt. It brought on, however, warm debates and disputes whether it was land or not. But the case was soon unanswerably decided; for the day was advancing fast and in a little time, one of our imagined islands began to grow red, from the approach of the sun, which soon arose just under it. In a word, we had been prodigal of our bread and brandy too hastily — our land was nothing but clouds, and in half an hour more, the whole illusion disappeared!

Seamen have often known deceptions of this sort, but in our extremity we were reluctant to be undeceived. However, we comforted ourselves, that though we could not see the land — yet we should soon, the wind hitherto continuing fair. But, alas! we were deprived of this hope likewise. That very day, our fair wind subsided into a calm, and the next morning the gales sprung up from the southeast, directly against us, and continued so for more than two weeks afterwards! Thus we were driven still further from our port. In a word, our station was such as deprived us of any hope of being relieved by other vessels. It may, indeed, be questioned, whether our ship was not the very first that had been in that part of the ocean, at the same season of the year.

Provisions now began to grow very short — half of a salted cod was a day's subsistence for twelve people. We had plenty of fresh water, but not a drop of strong liquor. We had no bread, hardly any clothes, and very cold weather. We had incessant labor with the pumps, just to keep the ship above water. Much labor and little food, wasted us fast — and one man died under the hardship. Yet our sufferings were light in comparison of our just fears. We could not survive on this

bare allowance much longer — but had a terrible prospect of being either starved to death, or reduced to feed upon one another. Our expectations grew darker every day, and I had a further trouble peculiar to myself.

The captain, whose temper was quite soured by distress, was hourly reproaching me (as I formerly observed) as the *sole cause* of the calamity, and was confident that if I was thrown overboard, and not otherwise — they would be preserved from death. He did not intend to make the experiment, but continual repetition of this in my ears gave me much uneasiness, especially as my conscience seconded his words. I thought it very probable, that all that had befallen us was on my account. I was, at last, found out by the powerful hand of God, and condemned in my own bosom.

However, proceeding in the method I have described, we began to conceive hopes greater than all our fears — especially, when at the time we were ready to give up all for lost, and despair was taking place in every bosom — we saw the wind come about to the very point we wished it, so as best to suit that broken part of the ship which must be kept out of the water, and to blow so gently as our few remaining sails could bear; and thus it continued without any observable alteration or increase, though at an unsettled time of the year, until we once more were called up to see the land, and were convinced that it was land indeed!

We saw the island Tory, and the next day anchored in Lough Swilly, in Ireland; this was the eighth of April, just four weeks after the damage was sustained from the sea. When we came into this port, our very last victuals were boiling in the pot; and before we had been there two hours, the wind, which seemed to have been providentially restrained until we were in a place of safety — began to blow with great violence, so that if we had continued at sea that night in our shattered, enfeebled condition — we must, in all human appearance, have gone to the bottom! About this time I began to know that there is a God who hears and answers prayer. How many times has he appeared for me since this great deliverance! Yet, alas! how distrustful and ungrateful is my heart unto this, hour!

I am, dear sir, your obliged humble servant. January 19, 1763.

LETTER 9.

Dear Sir,

I have brought my history down to the time of my arrival in Ireland in 1743; but before I proceed, I would look back a little, to give you some further account of the state of my mind, and how far I was helped against inward difficulties, which beset me at the time I had many outward hardships to struggle with. The straits of hunger, cold, weariness, and the fears of sinking and starving — I shared in common with others; but besides these, I felt a heart-bitterness, which was properly my own. No one on board, but myself, was impressed with any sense of the hand of God in our danger and deliverance, at least not awakened to any concern for their souls. *No temporal dispensations can reach the heart, unless the Lord himself applies them.* My companions in danger were either quite unaffected, or soon forgot it all; but it was not so with me. Not that I was any wiser or better than they, but because the Lord was pleased to grant me peculiar mercy — otherwise I was the most unlikely person in the ship to receive a spiritual impression, having been often before quite stupid and hardened in the very face of great dangers, and always up to this time I had hardened my neck still more and more after every reproof. I can see no reason why the Lord singled me out for mercy, but this, "that so it seemed good to him" — unless it was to show, by one astonishing instance, that with him "nothing is impossible."

There were no people on board to whom I could open myself with freedom, concerning the state of my soul — none from whom I could ask advice. As to books, I had a New Testament, and a volume of bishop Beveridge's sermons, one of which, upon our Lord's passion, affected me much. In perusing the New Testament, I was struck with several passages, particularly that of the fig-tree, Luke 13. The case of the apostle Paul, 1 Timothy 1. But particularly the prodigal, Luke 15 — a case, I thought, that had never been so nearly exemplified, as by myself. And then the goodness of the father in receiving, nay, in running to meet such a son, and this intended only to illustrate *the Lord's goodness to returning sinners* — this gained upon me. I continued much in prayer; I saw that the Lord had interposed so far to save me, and I hoped he would do more.

The outward circumstances helped in this place to make me still more serious and earnest in crying to him, who alone could relieve me. Sometimes I thought I could be content to die, even for lack of food — just so that I might but die a believer. Thus far I was assured, that before we arrived in Ireland, I had a satisfactory evidence in my own mind of the truth of the gospel, as considered in itself, and its exact suitableness to answer all my needs. I saw that, by the way they are pointed out, God might declare not his *mercy* only, but his *justice* also — in the pardon of sin on the account of the obedience and sufferings of Jesus Christ.

My judgment, at that time, embraced the sublime doctrine of "God manifest in the flesh, reconciling the world to himself." I had no idea of those *theological systems* which allow the Savior no higher honor than that of an upper servant, or, at the most, a demi-God. I stood in need of an *Almighty* Savior, and such a one I found described in the New Testament. Thus far the Lord had wrought a marvelous thing! I was no longer an infidel. I heartily renounced my former profaneness. I had taken up some right notions, was seriously disposed, and sincerely touched with a sense of the *undeserved mercy* I had received, in being brought safe through so many dangers. I was sorry for my misspent life, and purposed an immediate reformation. I was quite freed from the habit of swearing, which seemed to have been deeply rooted in me, as a second nature. Thus, to all appearance, I was a new man.

But though I cannot doubt that this change, so far as it prevailed, was wrought by the Spirit and power of God — yet still I was greatly deficient in many respects. I was in some degree affected with a sense of my more enormous sins — but I was little aware of the *innate evils of my heart*. I had no apprehension of the spirituality and extent of the law of God. I had no apprehension of the *hidden life of a Christian*, as it consists in communion with God by Jesus Christ, and a continual dependence on him for hourly supplies of wisdom, strength, and comfort — this was a mystery of which I had as yet no knowledge.

I acknowledged the Lord's mercy in pardoning what was *past*, but depended chiefly upon my own resolution to do better for the time to come. I had no Christian friend or faithful minister to advise me, that my strength was no more than my righteousness. Though I soon began to inquire for serious books — yet not having spiritual discernment, I frequently made a wrong choice, and I was not brought in the way of evangelical preaching or conversation (except a few times when I heard, but understood not) for six years after this period. Those things the Lord was pleased to reveal to me gradually. I learned them here a little and there a little — by my own painful experience, at a distance from the common means and ordinances, and in the midst of the same course of evil company and bad examples I had been conversant with for some time.

From this period I could no more make a mock at sin, or jest with holy things. I no more questioned the truth of Scripture — or lost a sense of the rebukes of *conscience*. Therefore I consider this as the beginning of my return to God, or rather

of his return to me. But I cannot consider myself to have been a believer (in the full sense of the word) until a considerable time afterwards.

I have told you that, in the time of our distress, we had fresh water in abundance; this was a considerable relief to us, especially as our spare diet was mostly salt fish, without bread. We drank plentifully, and were not afraid of lacking water — yet our stock of this likewise was much nearer to an end than we expected. We supposed that we had six large casks of water on board, and it was well that we were safe arrived in Ireland, before we discovered that five of them were empty, having been damaged by the violent agitation of the storm. If we had found this out while we were at sea — it would have greatly heightened our distress, as we must have drank more sparingly.

While the ship was refitting at Lough Swilly, I went to Londonderry. I lodged at an exceeding good house, where I was treated with much kindness, and soon recruited my health and strength. I was now a *serious professor*, went twice a day to the prayers at church, and determined to receive the sacrament the next opportunity. At length the day came; I arose very early, was very particular and earnest in my private devotion; and, with the greatest solemnity, engaged myself to be the Lord's forever, and only his. This was not a mere formality — but a *sincere* surrender, under a warm sense of mercies recently received. Yet, for lack of a better knowledge of myself and the subtlety of Satan's temptations — I was seduced to forget the vows of God that were upon me. Upon the whole, though my views of the gospel salvation were very unclear — I experienced a peace and satisfaction in the ordinance that day, to which I had been hitherto a perfect stranger.

The next day I was abroad hunting with the mayor of the city and some other gentlemen. I climbed up a steep bank, and pulling my gun after me, as I held it in a perpendicular direction, it went off so near my face, as to burn away the corner of my hat! *Thus, when we think ourselves in the greatest safety, we are no less exposed to danger, than when all the elements seem conspiring to destroy us! The divine providence, which is sufficient to deliver us in our utmost extremity — is equally necessary to our preservation in the most peaceful situation.*

During our stay in Ireland I wrote home. The vessel I was in had not been heard of for eighteen months, and was given up for lost long ago. My father had no more expectation of hearing that I was alive, but he received my letter a few days before he left London. He was just going out of York Fort, in Hudson's bay, from whence he never returned. He sailed before I arrived in England, or he had purposed to take me with him; but God designing otherwise, one hindrance or other delayed us in Ireland until it was too late. I received two or three affectionate letters from him — but I never had the pleasure of seeing him again. I had hopes, that in three more years I would have had an opportunity of asking his forgiveness for the uneasiness my disobedience had given him; but the ship that was to have brought him home, came without him. According to the best accounts we received, he was seized with a sudden malady when bathing, and drowned a little before her arrival in the bay. Excuse this digression.

My father, willing to contribute all in his power to my satisfaction, paid a visit before his departure to my friends in Kent, and gave his consent to the union which had been so long talked of. Thus, when I returned to Kent, I found that I had only the consent of one person to obtain — and with her I as yet stood at as great an uncertainty, as on the first day I saw her.

I arrived at in the latter end of May, 1748, about the same day that my father sailed, but found the Lord had provided me another father, in the gentleman whose ship had brought me home. He received me with great tenderness, and the strongest expressions of friendship and assistance — yet not more than he has since made

good; for to him, as the instrument of God's goodness, I owe my all. Yet it would not have been in the power, even of this friend, to have served me effectually, if the Lord had not met with me on my way home, as I have related. Until then I was like the man possessed with the legion. No arguments, no persuasion, no views of self-preservation, no remembrance of the past, or regard to the future — could have constrained me within the bounds of common prudence. But now I was in some measure restored to my senses.

My friend immediately offered me the command of a ship; but, upon mature consideration, I declined it for the present. I had been hitherto always unsettled and careless, and therefore thought I had better make another voyage first, and learn to *obey*, and acquire a farther insight and experience in business — before I ventured to undertake such a charge. The mate of the vessel I came home in, was advanced to the command of a new ship, and I engaged to go in the station of mate with him. I made a short visit to London, etc. which did not fully answer my views. I had but one opportunity of seeing Mary, of which I availed myself very little, for I was always exceeding awkward in pleading my own cause orally, rather than in writing. But after my return to L_____, I put the question in such a manner, by *letter*, that she could not avoid (unless I had greatly mistaken her) coming to some sort of an explanation. Her answer, though penned with abundance of caution, satisfied me — as I collected from it, that she was free from any other engagement, and not unwilling to wait the outcome of the voyage I had undertaken. I would be ashamed to trouble you with these little details, if you had not yourself asked me.

I am, yours, January 20, 1763.

LETTER 10.

Dear Sir,

My connections with sea affairs have often led me to think, that the varieties observable in Christian experience may be properly illustrated from the circumstances of a voyage. Imagine to yourself a number of vessels, at different times, and from different places, bound to the same port; there are some things in which all these would agree — the compass steered by, the port in view, the general rules of navigation, both as to the management of the vessel and determining their astronomical observations — would be the same in all. In other respects they would differ; perhaps no two of them would meet with the same distribution of winds and weather.

Some we see set out with a prosperous gale; and, when they almost think their passage secured, they are checked by adverse blasts. After enduring much hardship and danger, and frequent expectations of shipwreck — they just escape and reach the desired haven.

Others meet the greatest difficulties at first; they put forth us a storm, and are often beaten back; at length their voyage proves favorable, and they enter the port with a rich and abundant entrance.

Some are hard beset with pirates and enemies, and obliged to fight their way through. Others meet with little remarkable in their passage.

Is it not thus in the spiritual life? All true believers walk by the same rule, and mind the same things.

The Word of God is their compass.

Jesus is both their polar star and their sun of righteousness.

Their hearts and faces are all set Zion-ward.

Thus far they are as one body, animated by one spirit. Yet their experience, formed upon these common principles — is far from being uniform.

The Lord, in His first call, and His following dispensations, has a regard to the situation, temper, and talents of each — and to the particular services or trials which He has appointed them for. Though all believers are tried at times — yet some pass through the voyage of life much more smoothly than others. But he "who walks upon the wings of the wind, and measures the waters in the hollow of His hand," will not allow any of whom He has taken charge, to perish in the storms — though, for a season, perhaps, many of them are ready to give up all hopes.

We must not, therefore, make the experience of others, in all respects — a rule to ourselves. Nor are we to make our own experience — a rule to others. Yet, these are common mistakes, and productive of many more.

As to myself, every part of my experience has been extraordinary. I have hardly met a single instance resembling it. Few, very few, have been recovered from such a dreadful state. The few that have been thus favored, have generally passed through the most severe convictions. And after the Lord has given them peace — their future lives have been usually more zealous, bright, and exemplary, than common.

Now, as on the one hand, my convictions were very moderate, and far below what might have been expected from the dreadful review I had to make. On the other hand, my first beginnings in a religious course were as faint as can be well imagined. I never knew that season alluded to, [Jeremiah 2:2](#). [Rev. 2:4](#) — usually called the time of the first love. Who would not expect to hear, that, after such a wonderful unhoped-for deliverance, as I had received, and, after my eyes were in some measure enlightened to see things aright — I would immediately cleave to the Lord and his ways, with full purpose of heart, and consult no more with flesh and blood? But, alas! it was far otherwise with me: I had learned to pray, and I set some value upon the Word of God, and was no longer a libertine — but my soul still cleaved to the dust.

Soon after my departure from L_____, I began to intermit, and grow slack in waiting upon the Lord — and I grew vain and trifling in my conversation. Though my heart smote me often — yet my armor was gone, and I declined fast. By the time I arrived at Guinea, I seemed to have forgotten all the Lord's mercies, and my own engagements, and was (profaneness excepted) almost as bad as before. The enemy prepared a train of temptations, and I became his easy prey. For about a month, he lulled me asleep in a course of evil, of which, a few months before, I could not have supposed myself any longer capable. How much propriety is there in the apostle's advice, "Take heed lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin!" O, who can be sufficiently upon their guard! *Sin first deceives — and then it hardens us.*

I was now fast bound in chains — and had little desire, and no power at all to recover myself. I could not but at times reflect how it was with me — but, if I attempted to struggle with it, it was in vain. I was just like Samson, when he said, "I will go forth and shake myself as at other times" — but the Lord was departed, and he found himself helpless in the hands of his enemies.

By the remembrance of this interval, the Lord has often instructed me since, *what a poor helpless creature I am in myself — incapable of standing a single hour without continual fresh supplies of strength and grace from Jesus, the fountain head.*

At length the Lord, whose mercies are infinite, interposed in my behalf. My business in this voyage, while upon the coast, was to sail from place to place to

purchase slaves. The ship was at Sierra Leone, and I was then at the Plantanes, the scene of my former captivity, where everything I saw might seem to remind me of my ingratitude. I was in easy circumstances, courted by those who formerly despised me. The lime trees I had planted were grown tall, and promised fruit the following year — by which time I had expectations of returning with a ship of my own.

But none of these things affected me, until, as I have said, the Lord again interposed to save me. He visited me with a violent fever, which broke the *fatal chain*, and once more brought me to myself. But, O what a prospect! I thought myself now summoned away to death! My past dangers and deliverances, my earnest prayers in the time of trouble, my solemn vows before the Lord at his table, and my ungrateful returns for all his goodness — were all present to my mind at once. Then I began to wish that the Lord had allowed me to sink into the ocean, when I first besought his mercy. For a little while I concluded the *door of hope* to be quite shut — but this did not continue long.

Weak, and almost delirious, I arose from my bed, and crept to a retired part of the island; and here I found a renewed liberty to pray. I dared make no more *resolutions* — but cast myself before the Lord, to do with me as he should please. I do not remember that any particular text, or remarkable discovery, was presented to my mind; but in general I was enabled to hope and believe in a crucified Savior. The burden was removed from my conscience, and not only my peace of soul, but my health was restored. I cannot say instantaneously, but I recovered from that hour; and so fast, that when I returned to the ship, two days afterwards, I was perfectly well before I got on board.

From that time, I trust — I have been delivered from the *power* and *dominion* of sin. Though, as to the effects and conflicts of sin dwelling in me, I still "groan, being burdened." I now began again to wait upon the Lord. And though I have often grieved his Spirit, and foolishly wandered from him since, (when, alas! shall I be more wise!) yet his powerful grace has hitherto preserved me from such black declensions as this I have last recorded; and I humbly trust in his mercy and promises, that he will be my guide and guard to the end.

My business in the long-boat, during the eight months we were upon the coast, exposed me to innumerable dangers and perils — from burning suns, and chilling dews, winds, rams, and thunder-storms; and on shore — from long journeys through the woods, and the threat of the natives, who are, in many places, cruel, treacherous, and watching opportunities for mischief. Several boats in the same time were sunk. Several white men were poisoned — and, in my own boat, I buried six or seven people with fevers.

When going on shore, or returning from it, in their little canoes, I have been more than once or twice overset by the violence of the surf — and brought to land half dead (for I could not swim.) An account of such escapes as I still remember, would swell to several sheets, and many more I have perhaps forgotten. I shall only select one instance, as a specimen of that wonderful *providence* which watched over me for good, and which, I doubt not, you will think worthy of notice.

When our trade was finished, and we were near sailing to the West Indies, the only remaining service I had to perform in the boat, was to assist in bringing the wood and water from the shore. We were then at Rio Cestors. I used to go into the river in the afternoon, with the sea breeze, procure my loading in the evening, and return on board in the morning, with the land wind. Several of these little voyages I had made — but the boat was grown old, and almost unfit for use.

One day having dined on board, I was preparing to return to the river, as formerly. I had taken leave of the captain, received his orders, was ready in the boat, and just going to let go of our ropes and sail from the ship. In that instant, the captain came up from the cabin, and called me on board again. I went, expecting further orders; but he said he has "taken it in his head" (as he phrased it,) that I should remain that day in the ship, and accordingly ordered another man to go in my place. I was surprised at this, as the boat had never been sent away without me before; and asked him the reason. He could give me no reason, but as above, that so he would have it.

Accordingly, the boat went without me — but returned no more. She sunk that night in the river, and the person who had supplied my place was drowned. I was much struck when we received news of the event the next morning. The captain himself, though quite a stranger to religion, so far as to deny a particular providence, could not help being affected; but he declared, that he had no other reason for countermanding me at that time, but that it came suddenly into his mind to detain me. I wonder that I omitted it in my eight letters, as I have always thought it one of the most extraordinary circumstances of my life!

I am, dear sir, your humble servant. January 21, 1763.

LETTER 11.

Dear Sir,

A few days after I was thus wonderfully saved from an unforeseen danger — we sailed for Antigua, and from thence proceeded to Charleston, in South Carolina. In this place there are many serious Christians — but I knew not how to locate the. Indeed, I was not aware of a difference — but I supposed that all who attended public worship were good Christians. I was as much in the dark about preaching, not doubting but whatever came from the pulpit must be very good. I had two or three opportunities of hearing a dissenting minister, named *Smith*, who, by what I have known since — I believe to have been an excellent and powerful preacher of the gospel. There was something in his manner that struck me — but I did not rightly understand him. *The best words that ministers can speak are ineffectual — until explained and applied by the Spirit of God, who alone can open the heart.* It pleased the Lord for some time, that I should learn no more than what he enabled me to collect from my own experience and reflection.

My conduct was now very inconsistent. Almost every day, when business would permit, I used to retire into the woods and fields (for these, when at hand, have always been my favorite places for private devotions;) and I trust I began to taste the sweets of communion with God, in the exercises of prayer and praise — and yet I frequently spent the evening in vain and worthless company. Indeed, *my relish for worldly diversions* was much weakened, and I was rather a spectator, than a sharer in their pleasures; but I did not as yet see the necessity of an absolute forbearance from them. Yet, as my compliance with custom and company was chiefly owing to lack of light, rather than to an obstinate attachment, and the Lord was pleased to preserve me from what I knew was sinful — I had, for the most part, peace of conscience, and my strongest desires were towards the things of God. As yet I knew not the force of that precept, "Abstain from all appearance of evil," but very often ventured upon the brink of temptation. But the Lord was gracious to my weakness, and would not allow the enemy to prevail against me. I did not break with *the world* at once (as might, in my case, have been expected,) but I was gradually led to see the sinfulness and folly of one thing after another — and, when I saw it, the Lord strengthened me to give it up. But it was some years before I was set quite at liberty from occasional compliance in many things in which, at this time, I dare by no means allow myself.

We finished our voyage, and arrived in L_____. When the ship's affairs were settled, I went to London, and from thence (as you may suppose) I soon repaired to Kent. More than seven years were now elapsed since my first visit. No views of the kind could seem more delusive, or could exist under great discouragements, than mine had done. Yet, through the over-ruling goodness of God, while I seemed abandoned to myself, and blindly following my own passions — I was guided, by a hand that I knew not, to the accomplishment of my wishes. Every obstacle was now removed. I had renounced my former follies, my employment was established, and friends on all sides consenting — the point was now entirely between ourselves, and after what had passed, was easily concluded. Accordingly, our hands were joined on the first of February 1750.

The satisfaction I have found in this union, you will suppose, has been greatly heightened by reflections on the former disagreeable contrasts I had passed through — and the views I have had of the singular mercy and providence of the Lord in bringing it to pass. If you please to look back to the beginning of my sixth letter, I think that you will allow that *few people have known more, either of the misery or happiness, of which human life is capable* — as myself. How easily, at a time of life when I was so little capable of judging (but a few months more than seventeen,) might my affections have been fixed where they could have met with no return — or where *success* would have been the heaviest disappointment. The *long delay* I met with was likewise a mercy — for, had I succeeded a year or two sooner, before the Lord was pleased to change my heart, we must have been mutually unhappy, even as to the present life. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all my days!

But alas! I soon began to feel that my heart was still hard and ungrateful to the God of my salvation. This crowning mercy, which raised me to all I could ask or wish in a temporal view, and which ought to have been an animating motive to obedience and praise — had a contrary effect. I rested in the *gift* — and forgot the *Giver*. My poor narrow heart was satisfied. A cold and careless frame, as to spiritual things, took place, and gained ground daily. Happy for me, the season was advancing, and in June I received orders to repair to L_____. This roused me from my dream.

I need not tell you, that I found the pains of absence and separation from Mary — fully proportioned to my preceding pleasure. It was hard, very hard, to part — especially as conscience interfered, and suggested to me how little I *deserved* that we should be spared to meet again. But the Lord supported me. I was a poor faint idolatrous creature — but I had now some acquaintance with the way of access to a throne of grace, by the blood of Jesus — and peace was soon restored to my conscience.

Yet, through all the following voyage, my irregular and excessive affections were as *thorns in my eyes* — and often made my other blessings tasteless and insipid. But He, who does all things well, over-ruled this likewise for good. This separation from Mary became an occasion of quickening me in prayer — both for her and myself. This increased my indifference for company and amusement — and habituated me to a kind of voluntary self-denial, which I was afterwards taught to improve to a better purpose.

While I remained in England, we corresponded on every occasion; and all the while I used the sea afterwards, I constantly kept up the practice of writing two or three times a week (if weather and business permitted,) though no conveyance homeward offered for six or eight months together. My packets of letters were usually heavy — and as not one of them at any time miscarried, I have to the amount of nearly two hundred sheets of paper now lying in my bureau of that correspondence.

I mention this little relief I had contrived to soften the intervals of absence from Mary, because it had a good effect beyond my first intention. It habituated me to think and write upon a great variety of subjects; and I acquired, insensibly, a greater readiness of expressing myself, than I would have otherwise attained. As I gained more ground in religious knowledge, my letters became more serious, and, at times, I still find an advantage in looking them over, especially as they remind me of many providential incidents, and the state of my mind at different periods in these voyages, which would otherwise have escaped my memory.

I sailed from L_____ in August 1750, as the commander of a good ship. I have no very extraordinary events to recount from this period, and shall, therefore, contract my memoirs, lest I become tedious. I am willing to give you a brief sketch of my history down to 1755, the year of my settlement in my present situation. I had now the command and care of thirty people on the ship — I endeavored to treat them with humanity, and to set them a good example. I likewise established public worship, according to the liturgy, twice every Lord's day, officiating myself. Farther than this, I did not proceed, while I continued in that employment.

Having now much leisure time, I prosecuted the study of the Latin with good success. In short, in the space of two or three voyages, I became tolerably acquainted with the best classics. At length I conceived a design of becoming a Latin scholar myself, and thought it would be a fine thing indeed to write pure and elegant Latin. I made some attempts towards it, but by this time, the Lord was pleased to draw me nearer to himself, and to give me a fuller view of the "pearl of great price" — the inestimable treasure hid in the field of the holy Scriptures. And, for the sake of this, I was made willing to part with all my newly acquired riches.

I began to think that life was too short (especially *my* life) to admit of leisure for such *elaborate trifling*. Neither poet nor historian could tell me a word about Jesus, and I therefore applied myself to those who could. The classics were at first restrained to one morning in the week, and at length they were laid aside altogether. I was weary of cold philosophic truths, which can neither warm nor amend the heart — but rather tend to aggrandize self. I found no traces of this *wisdom* in the life of Jesus, or the writings of Paul. I do not regret that I have had some opportunities of knowing the first principles of these things; but I see much cause to praise the Lord, that he inclined me to stop in time; and that while I was "spending my labor for that which is not bread" — he was pleased to set before me "wine and milk, without money and without price!"

My first voyage was fourteen months, through various scenes of danger and difficulty — but nothing very remarkable. As I intend to be more particular with regard to the second voyage, I shall only say that I was preserved from every harm. Having seen many fall on my right hand and on my left, I was brought home in peace, and restored to where my thoughts had been often directed, on November 2, 1751.

I am, yours, etc. January 22, 1763.

LETTER 12.

Dear Sir,

I almost wish I could recall my last sheet, and retract my promise. I fear I have engaged too far, and shall prove a mere egotist. What have I more that can deserve your notice? However, it is some satisfaction that I am now writing to yourself only; and I believe, you will have candor to excuse, what nothing but a sense of your kindness could extort from me.

Soon after the period where my last letter closes, that is, in the interval between my first and second voyage after my marriage — I began to keep a sort of diary, a practice which I have found of great use. I had, in this interval, repeated proofs of the ingratitude and evil of my heart. A life of ease, in the midst of my friends, and a full satisfaction of my wishes — was not favorable to the progress of grace, and afforded cause of daily humiliation. Yet, upon the whole, I gained ground.

I became acquainted with books, which gave me a further view of Christian doctrine and experience, particularly Scougal's *Life of God in the Soul of Man*, Hervey's *Meditations*, and the *Life of Colonel Gardiner*. As to preaching, I heard none but of the common sort, and had hardly an idea of anything better — neither had I the advantage of Christian friendships. I was likewise greatly hindered by a cowardly reserved spirit — I was afraid of being thought too precise; and, though I could not live without prayer, I dared not propose it, even to my wife, until she herself first put me upon it. So far was I from those expressions of zeal and love — which seemed so suitable to the case of one who has had much forgiven.

In a few months, the returning season called me abroad again, and I sailed from L_____ in a new ship in July 1752.

A sea-faring life is necessarily excluded from the benefit of public ordinances and Christian communion; but, as I have observed, my loss upon these heads was at this time but small. In other respects, I know not any calling that seems more favorable, or affords greater advantages to an awakened mind, for promoting the life of God in the soul, especially to a person who has the command of a ship, and thereby has it in his power to restrain gross sins in others, and to dispose of his own time to spiritual advantage — and still more so in *African* voyages, as these ships carry a double proportion of men and officers than most others, which made my voyage very easy; and, excepting the hurry of trade, etc. upon the coast, which is rather occasional than constant, afforded me abundance of leisure time.

To be at sea in these circumstances, withdrawn out of the reach of innumerable temptations, with opportunity and a turn of mind disposed to observe the wonders of God in the great deep, with the two noblest objects of sight — the expanded heavens, and the expanded ocean — continually in view; and where evident interpositions of Divine Providence, in answer to prayer, occur almost every day; these are *helps* to quicken and confirm the life of faith, which, in a good measure, supply to a religious sailor the lack of those advantages which can be only enjoyed upon the shore.

And, indeed, though my knowledge of spiritual things (as knowledge is usually estimated) was, at this time, very small — yet I sometimes look back with regret upon those scenes. I never knew sweeter or more frequent hours of divine communion than in my two last voyages to Guinea, when I was either almost secluded from society on ship-board, or when on shore among the natives. I have wandered through the woods, reflecting on the singular goodness of the Lord to me, in a place where, perhaps, there was not a person who knew him for some thousand miles around me! Many a time, upon these occasions, I have contemplated these beautiful lines full of comfort and propriety in the mouth of a believer:

In desert woods with you, my God,
Where human footsteps never trod,
How happy could I be!

In the course of this voyage, I was wonderfully preserved in the midst of many obvious unforeseen dangers.

At one time there was a *conspiracy* among my own people to turn *pirates*, and take the ship from me. When the plot was nearly ripe, and they only awaited a

convenient opportunity, two of those concerned in it were taken ill one day; one of them died, and he was the only person I buried while on board. This suspended the affair, and opened the way to its discovery — or the consequence might have been fatal.

The slaves on board were likewise frequently plotting insurrections, and were sometimes upon the very brink of mischief; but it was always disclosed in due time. *When I have thought myself most secure — I have been suddenly alarmed with danger! And when I have almost despaired of life — as sudden a deliverance has been given me.* My stay upon the coast was long, and the trade very precarious; and, in the pursuit of my business, both on board and on shore — I was in deaths often. Let the following instance serve as a specimen.

I was at a place called Mana, near Cape Mount, where I had transacted very large concerns, and had, at the time I am speaking of, had some debts and accounts to settle, which required my attendance on shore, and I intended to go the next morning. When I arose, I left the ship according to my purpose; but when I came near the shore, the surf ran so high, that I was almost afraid to attempt landing. Indeed I had often ventured at a worse time, but I felt an inward hindrance and backwardness, which I could not account for: the surf furnished a pretext for indulging it; and after waiting and hesitating for about half an hour, I returned to the ship, without doing any business; which I think I never did but that morning, in all the time I used that trade. But I soon perceived the reason of all this. It seems the day before I intended to land, a scandalous and groundless charge had been laid against me which greatly threatened my honor and interest, both in Africa and England, and would perhaps, humanly speaking, have affected my life, if I had landed according to my intention.

I shall, perhaps, enclose a letter, which will give a full account of this strange adventure; and therefore shall say no more of it here, any further than to tell you, that an attempt aimed to destroy either my life or my character, and which might very probably, in its consequences have ruined my voyage — passed off without the least inconvenience. The person most concerned owed me about a hundred pounds, which he sent to me in a huff; and otherwise, perhaps, would not have paid me at all. I was very uneasy for a few hours, but was soon afterwards comforted. I heard no more of my accusation until the next voyage, and then it was publicly acknowledged to have been a malicious calumny, without the least shadow of a ground.

Such were the vicissitudes and difficulties through which the Lord preserved me. Now and then, both faith and patience were sharply exercised, but suitable strength was given; and as those things did not occur everyday, the study of the Latin, of which I gave a general account in in last, was renewed, and carried on from time to time, when business would permit. I was mostly very regular in the management of my time.

I allotted about eight hours for sleep and meals, eight hours for exercise and devotion, and eight hours to my books; and thus, by diversifying my engagements, the whole day was agreeably filled up, and I seldom found a day too long, or an hour to spare. My studies kept me employed, and so far it was well; otherwise they were hardly worth the time they cost, as they led me to an admiration of false models and false maxims; an almost unavoidable consequence, I suppose, of an admiration of classic authors.

From the coast, I went to St Christopher's; and here my idolatrous heart was its own punishment. The letters I expected from Mary were, by mistake, forwarded to Antigua, which had been at first proposed as our port. As I was certain of her punctuality in writing, if alive, I concluded, by not hearing from her, that she was

surely dead. This fear affected me more and more. I lost my appetite and rest — I felt an incessant pain in my stomach, and in about three weeks time I was near sinking under the weight of an imaginary stroke. I felt some severe symptoms of that mixture of pride and madness, which is commonly called a broken heart.

How often do the potsherds of the earth presume to contend with their maker — and what a wonder of mercy is it, that they are not all broken! However, my complaint was not all grief — conscience had a share. I thought my unfaithfulness to God had deprived me of her, especially my backwardness in speaking of spiritual things, which I could hardly attempt even to her. It was this thought, that I had lost invaluable, irrecoverable opportunities, which both duty and affection should have engaged me to improve — which chiefly stung me. I thought I could have given the world to know that she was living, that I might at least discharge my engagements by writing, though I were never to see her again. This was a sharp lesson, but I hope it did me good. After I had thus suffered some weeks, I thought of sending a small vessel to Antigua. I did so, and she brought me several packets of mail from Mary, which restored my health and peace, and gave me a strong contrast of the Lord's goodness to me, and my unbelief and ingratitude towards him.

In August, 1753, I returned to L_____. My stay was very short at home that voyage, only six weeks — and in that space of time nothing very remarkable occurred. I shall therefore begin my next letter with an account of my third and last voyage. And thus I give both you and myself hopes of a speedy end to these memoirs, which begin to be tedious and minute, even to myself; only I am animated by the thought that I write at your request, and have therefore an opportunity of showing myself, your obliged servant. January 31, 1763.

LETTER 13.

Dear Sir,

My third voyage was shorter and less perplexed than either of the former. Before I sailed, I met with a young man, who had formerly been a midshipman and my intimate companion, on board the Harwich. He was, at the time I first knew him, a sober youth — but I found too much success in my unhappy attempts to infect him with infidel principles. When we met at L_____, our acquaintance renewed upon the ground of our former intimacy. He had good sense, and had read many infidel books. Our conversation frequently turned upon religion, and I was desirous to repair the mischief I had done him. I gave him a plain account of the manner and reason of my change, and used every argument to persuade him to relinquish his infidel schemes; and when I sometimes pressed him so close that he had no other reply to make, he would remind me that I was the very first person who had given him an idea of infidelity. This occasioned me many mournful reflections. He was then going as a shipmaster to Guinea himself — but before his ship was ready, his merchant became a bankrupt, which canceled his voyage.

As he had no further expectations for that year, I offered to take him with me as a companion, that he might gain a knowledge of the coast; and the gentleman who employed me promised to provide for him upon his return. My view in this was not so much to serve him in his business, as to have opportunity of debating the point with him at leisure; and I hoped, in the course of my voyage, my arguments, example, and prayers, might have some good effect on him. My intention in this step was better than my judgment, and I had frequent reason to repent it. He was exceedingly profane, and grew worse and worse. I saw in him, a most lively picture of what I had once been — but it was very painful to have it always before my eyes. Besides, he was not only deaf to my remonstrances himself, but labored all that he could to counteract my good influence upon others. His spirit and passions were

likewise exceeding high, so that it required all my prudence and authority to hold him in any degree of restraint. He was as a *sharp thorn* in my side for some time; but at length I had an opportunity upon the coast of buying a small vessel which I supplied with a cargo from my own, and gave him the command, and sent him away to trade on the ship's account. When we parted, I repeated and enforced my best advice.

I believe that his friendship and regard were as great as could be expected — where principles were so diametrically opposite. He seemed greatly affected when I left him — but my words had no weight with him. When he found himself at liberty from under my eye, he let loose to every vile appetite; and his violent irregularities, joined to the heat of the climate, soon threw him into a malignant fever, which killed him off in a few days. He died convinced, but not changed.

The account I had from those who were with him was dreadful; his rage and despair struck them all with horror, and he pronounced his own fatal doom before he expired, without any appearance that he either hoped or asked for God's mercy. I thought this awful contrast might not be improper to give you — as a stronger view of *the distinguishing goodness of God* to me the chief of sinners.

I left the coast in about four months, and sailed for St. Christopher's. Hitherto I had enjoyed a perfect state of health, equally in every climate, for several years; but, upon this passage, I was visited with a fever, which gave me a very near prospect of eternity.

I have taken the liberty to enclose three or four letters, which will more clearly illustrate the state and measure of my experience, at different times, than anything I can say at present. One of them you will find was written at this period, when I could hardly hold a pen, and had some reason to believe I would write no more. I had not that full assurance which is so desirable at a time when flesh and heart fail; but my hopes were greater than my fears, and I felt a silent composure of spirit, which enabled me to wait the outcome without much anxiety.

My trust, though weak in degree, was alone fixed upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus; and those words, "He is able to save to the uttermost!" gave me great relief. I was for a while troubled with a very singular thought. Whether it was a temptation, or that the fever disordered my faculties, I cannot say — but I seemed not so much afraid of wrath and punishment, as of being lost and overlooked amidst the myriads that are continually entering the unseen world. What is my soul, thought I, among such an innumerable multitude of beings? And this troubled me greatly. Perhaps the Lord will take no notice of me. I was perplexed thus for some time, but at last a text of Scripture, very appropriate to the case, occurred to my mind, and put an end to the doubt; "The Lord knows those who are his." In about ten days, beyond the hopes of those about me, I began to amend; and by the time of our arrival in the West Indies, I was perfectly recovered. I hope this *visitation* was made useful to me.

Thus far, that is, for about the space of six years, the Lord was pleased to lead me in a secret way. I had learned something of the evil of my heart. I had read the Bible over and over, along with several good books, and had a general view of gospel truths. But my conceptions were, in many respects, confused; not having, in all this time, met with one acquaintance who could assist my inquiries. But upon my arrival at St. Christopher's, this voyage, I found a captain of a ship from London, whose conversation was greatly helpful to me. He was, and is a member of Mr. B_____ 's church, a man of experience in the things of God, and of a lively, communicative turn.

We discovered each other by some casual expressions in mixed company, and soon became (so far as business would permit) inseparable. For nearly a month, we spent every evening together, on board each other's ship alternately, and often prolonged our visits until towards day-break. I was all ears; and what was better, he not only informed my understanding, but his discourse inflamed my heart. He encouraged me to open my mouth in social prayer; he taught me the advantage of Christian converse; he put me upon an attempt to make my profession more public, and to venture to speak for God.

From him, or rather from the Lord, by his means — I received an increase of knowledge; my conceptions became clearer and more evangelical — and I was delivered from a fear which had long troubled me, the fear of relapsing into my former apostasy.

But now I began to understand the security of the covenant of grace, and to expect to be preserved, not by my own power and holiness — but by the mighty power and promise of God, through faith in the unchangeable Savior. He likewise gave me a general view of the state of religion, with the errors and controversies of the times (things to which I had been entirely a stranger,) and finally directed me where to go in London for further instruction. With these newly acquired advantages, I left him, and my passage homewards gave me leisure to digest what I had received. I had much comfort and freedom during those seven weeks, and my sun was seldom clouded. I arrived safely in L_____, August, 1754.

My stay at home was intended to be but short, and by the beginning of November, I was again ready for the sea — but the Lord saw fit to over-rule my design. During the time I was engaged in the *slave trade*, I never had the least scruple as to its lawfulness. I was, upon the whole, satisfied with it, as the appointment Providence had marked out for me — yet it was, in many respects, far from acceptable. It is, indeed, accounted a genteel employment, and is usually very profitable — though to me it did not prove so, the Lord seeing that a large increase of wealth could not be good for me. However I considered myself as a sort of jailer — and I was sometimes shocked with an employment that was perpetually conversant with chains, bolts, and shackles. In this view I had often petitioned, in my prayers, that the Lord, in his own time, would be pleased to fix me in a more humane calling, and, if it might be, place me where I might have more frequent converse with his people and ordinances, and be freed from those long separations from home, which very often were hard to bear.

My prayers were now answered, though in a way I little expected. I now experienced another sudden, unforeseen change of life. I was within two days of sailing, and, to all appearance, in good health as usual; but in the afternoon, as I was sitting with Mary, by ourselves, drinking tea, and talking over past events — I was in a moment seized with a *stroke*, which deprived me of sense and motion, and left me no other sign of life than that of breathing. It lasted about an hour, and when I recovered, it left a pain and dizziness in my head, which continued with such symptoms as induced the physicians to judge it would not be safe or prudent for me to proceed on the voyage. Accordingly, by the advice of my friend, to whom the ship belonged, I resigned the command the day before she sailed; and thus I was unexpectedly called from that service, and freed from a share of the future consequences of that voyage, which proved extremely calamitous. The person who went in my place, most of the officers, and many of the crew — died, and the vessel was brought home with great difficulty.

As I was now disengaged from business. I left L_____, and spent most of the following year at London, and in Kent. But I entered upon a new trial. You will easily conceive that Mary was not an unconcerned spectator, when I lay prostrate, and, as she thought, expiring upon the ground. In effect, the blow that struck me

reached her in the same instant. She did not, indeed, immediately feel it, until her apprehensions on my account began to subside. But as I grew better — she became worse. Her surprise threw her into a disorder, which no physicians could define, or medicines remove. Without any of the ordinary symptoms of a consumption — she decayed almost visibly, until she became so weak that she could hardly bear any one to walk across the room she was in. I was placed for about eleven months in what Dr. Young calls,

"The dreadful post of observation,
Darker every hour."

It was not until after my settlement in my present station, that the Lord was pleased to restore her by his own hand, when all hopes from ordinary means were at an end. But before this took place, I have some other particulars to mention, which must be the subject of the following sheet, which I hope will be the last on this subject, from Your affectionate servant, February 1, 1764.

LETTER 14.

Dear Sir,

By the directions I had received from my friend, I soon found out a religious acquaintance in London. I first applied to Mr. B____, and chiefly attended upon his ministry, when in town. From him I received many helps both in public and private; for he was pleased to favor me with his friendship, from the first. His kindness and the intimacy between us have continued and increased to this day; and of all my many friends, I am most deeply indebted to him. The late Mr. H____ was my second acquaintance; a man of a choice spirit, and an abundant zeal for the Lord's service. I enjoyed his correspondence until near the time of his death.

Soon after, upon Mr. W____'s return from America, my two good friends introduced me to him; and though I had little personal acquaintance with him until afterwards, his ministry was exceeding useful to me. I had likewise access to some religious societies, and became known to many excellent Christians in private life. Thus, when at London, I lived at the fountainhead, as it were, for spiritual advantages.

When I was in Kent, it was very different — yet I found some serious people there; but the fine variegated woodland country afforded me advantages of another kind. Most of my time, at least some hours every day, I passed in retirement, when the weather was fair. Sometimes in the thickest woods, sometimes on the highest hills, where almost every step varied the aspect. It has been my custom for many years, to perform my devotional exercises under the open sky, when I have opportunity, and I always find these rural scenes have some tendency both to refresh and compose my spirits. A beautiful diversified aspect gladdens my heart. When I am withdrawn from the noise and petty works of men — I consider myself as in the great temple, which the Lord has built for his own honor. The country between Rochester and Maidstone, bordering upon the Medway, was well suited to the turn of my mind; and was I to go over it now, I could point to many a place where I remember either to have earnestly sought or happily found, the Lord's comfortable presence with my soul.

And thus I lived, sometimes at London, and sometimes in the country, until the autumn of the following year. All this while I had two trials, more or less, upon my mind. The first and principal was Mary's illness — she still grew worse, and I had daily more reason to fear that the hour of her death was at hand. When faith was in exercise, I was in some measure resigned to the Lord's will; but too often my heart rebelled, and I found it hard either to trust or to submit. I had likewise some care

about my future employment — the African trade was overdone that year, and my friends did not care to fit out another ship until mine returned. I was sometime in suspense; but, indeed, a provision of food and clothing has seldom been a cause of great solicitude to me. I found it easier to trust the Lord in this point, than in the former — and accordingly this was first answered. In August I received an account that I was nominated to the office of _____. These places are usually obtained, or at least sought by dint of much interest and application; but this came to me unsought and unexpected. I knew, indeed, my good friend in L_____ had endeavored to procure another post for me, but found it pre-engaged. I found afterwards, that the place I had missed would have been very unsuitable for me, and that this, which I had no thought of, was the very thing I could have wished for — as it afforded me much leisure, and the liberty of living in my own way. Several circumstances, unnoticed by others concurred, to show me that the good hand of the Lord was as remarkably concerned in this event as in any other leading turn of my life.

But when I gained this point of what my employment was to be — my distress concerning Mary was doubled. I was obliged to leave Mary, in the greatest extremity of pain and illness, when the physicians could do no more, and I had no ground of hope that I would see her again alive, but this — that nothing is impossible with the Lord. I had a severe conflict — but faith prevailed. I found the promise remarkably fulfilled, of *strength proportioned to my need*. The day before I set out, and not until then, the burden was entirely taken from my mind. I was strengthened to resign both her and myself to the Lord's disposal, and departed from her in a cheerful frame. Soon after I was gone, she began to amend, and recovered so fast, that in about two months I had the pleasure to meet her at Stone, on her journey to L_____.

And now, I think, I have answered, if not exceeded, your desire. Since October 1755, we have been comfortably settled here, and all my circumstances have been as remarkably smooth and uniform as they were various in former years. My trials have been light and few — not but that I still find, in the experience of every day, *the necessity of a life of faith*. My principal trial is, the body of sin and death, which makes me often to sigh out the apostle's complaint, "O wretched man that I am!" But with him likewise I can say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord."

I live in a barren land, where the knowledge and power of the gospel is very low — yet here are a few of the Lord's people; and this wilderness has been a useful school to me, where I have studied more leisurely the truths which I gathered up in London. I brought down with me a considerable stock of merely *notional* truths — but I have since found, *that there is no effectual teacher but God — that we can receive no further than he is pleased to communicate — and that no knowledge is truly useful to me, but what is made my own by experience*. Many things which I thought I had learned, would not stand in an hour of temptation, until I had in this way learned them over again.

Since the year 1757, I have had an increasing acquaintance in West Yorkshire, where the gospel flourishes greatly. This has been a good school to me. I have conversed at large among all parties — without joining any; and in my attempts to hit the golden mean, I have sometimes been drawn too near the different extremes; yet the Lord has enabled me to profit by my mistakes. In brief, I am still a learner, and the Lord still condescends to teach me. I begin at length to see that I have attained but very little; but I trust in him to carry on his own work in my soul, and, by all the dispensations of his grace and prevalence, to increase my knowledge of him and of myself.

When I was fixed in a house, and found my business would afford me much leisure time — I considered in what manner I should improve it. And now, having reason to close with the apostle's determination, "to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him

crucified," I devoted my life to the prosecution of spiritual knowledge, and resolved to pursue nothing but in subservience to this main design. This resolution divorced me, as I have already hinted, from the classics and mathematics.

My first attempt was to learn so much Greek as would enable me to understand the New Testament and Septuagint; and when I had made some progress this way, I entered upon the Hebrew the following year; and two years afterwards, having surmised some advantages from the Syriac version, I began with that language. You must not think that I have attained, or ever aimed at, a *critical skill* in any of these. I had no business with them but as in reference to something else. I never read one classic author in the Greek. I thought it too late in life to take such a round in this language as I had done in the Latin. I only wanted the signification of scriptural words and phrases; and for this I thought I might avail myself of those who had sustained the drudgery before me. In the Hebrew, I can read the historical books and psalms with tolerable ease; but in the prophetic and difficult parts, I am frequently obliged to have recourse to lexicons, etc. However, I know so much as to be able, with such helps as are at hand, to judge for myself the meaning of any passage I have occasion to consult. Beyond this I do not think of proceeding, if I can find better employment; for I would rather be some way useful to others — than die with the reputation of an *eminent linguist*.

Together with these studies, I have kept up a course of reading of the best writers in divinity that have come to my hand, in the Latin and English tongues, and some French; for I picked up the French at times while I was at sea. But within these two or three years I have accustomed myself chiefly to writing, and have not found time to read many books besides the Scriptures.

I am the more particular in this account, as my case has been somewhat singular; for, in all my literary attempts, I have been obliged to strike out my own path, by the light I could acquire from books, as I have not had a teacher or assistant since I was ten years of age.

One word concerning *my views to the ministry* — and I am done. I have told you, that this was my dear mother's hope concerning me; but her death, and the scenes of life in which I afterwards engaged, seemed to cut off the probability. The first desires of this sort in my own mind, arose many years ago, from a reflection on [Galatians 1:23, 24](#), "They only heard the report: 'The man who formerly persecuted us — is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.' And they praised God because of me."

I could not but wish for such a public opportunity to testify the riches of divine grace. I thought I was, above most living, a fit person to proclaim that faithful saying, "That Jesus Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners;" and as my life had been full of remarkable turns, and I seemed selected to show what the Lord could do — I was in some hopes that, perhaps, sooner or later, he might call me into his service.

I believe it was a distant hope of this which determined me to study the original Scriptures; but it remained an imperfect desire in my own breast, until it was recommended to me by some Christian friends. I startled at the thought, when first seriously proposed to me; but afterwards set apart some weeks to consider the case, to consult my friends, and to entreat the Lord's direction. The judgment of my friends, and many things that occurred, tended to engage me. My first thought was to join the *dissenters*, from a presumption that I could not honestly make the required subscriptions to the Church of England; but Mr. C_____, in a conversation upon these points, moderated my scruples; and preferring *the established church* in some other respects, I accepted a title from him, some months afterwards, and solicited ordination from the late archbishop of York.

I need not tell you that I met a refusal — nor what steps I took afterwards to succeed elsewhere. At present I desist from any applications. My desire to serve the Lord is not weakened — but I am not so hasty to push myself forward as I was formerly. It is sufficient that he knows how to dispose of me, and that he both can and will do what is best. To him I commend myself. *I trust that his will and my true interest, are inseparable.* To his name be glory forever.

And thus I conclude my story, and presume you will acknowledge I have been particular enough. I have room for no more, but to repeat that I am, sir, yours, etc.
February 2, 1764.

Editor's note: Newton lived to the age of 82, and died in 1807.