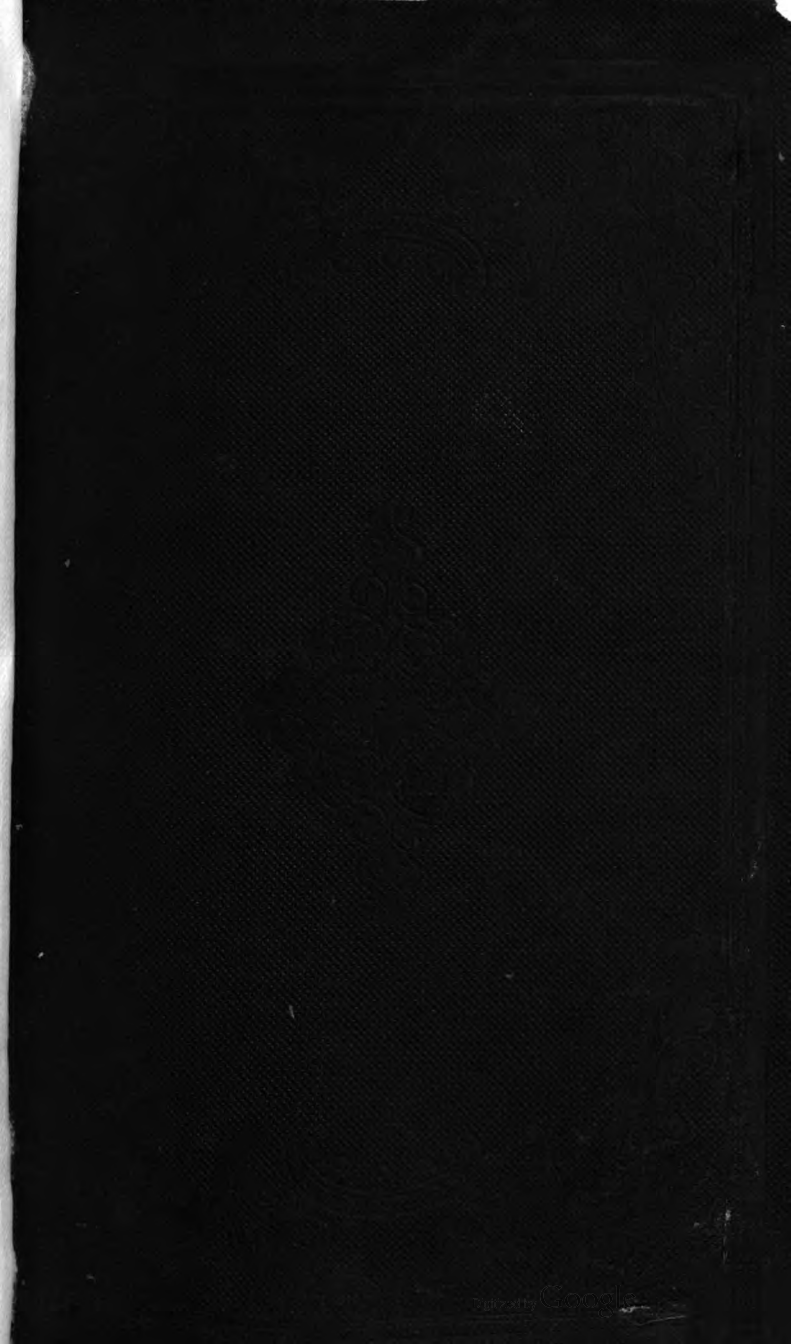

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1454.6.20.

LETTERS BY THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

SIXTY-SIX LETTERS,

FROM THE

REV. JOHN NEWTON,

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LATE

RECTOR OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH, LONDON,

TO A

CLERGYMAN AND HIS FAMILY,

Between the Years 1791 and 1801.

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

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"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." 3 Ep. John 2.

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PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH this is a day of 'many books,' still the surviving members of the 'family' alluded to in the following letters, believe that no apology is necessary for this addition to the number. The writings of the REV. JOHN NEWTON have been, for many years, most acceptable to christians of every name. By them minds have been enlightened and hearts comforted, as the practical wisdom and rich experience of the writer were applied by the Holy Spirit.

The correspondence which is now for the first time presented to the public, was commenced under very interesting circumstances. Our revered and beloved

parents were first awakened to a sense of the importance of vital religion, through the instrumentality of some of Mr. Newton's works, which had been kindly lent for their perusal.

Under much concern for their past ignorance, and hardly knowing what to think or do, they, in the fulness of their hearts, addressed their benefactor though personally unknown to him, and stated, without reserve, the new position in which they found themselves, as light from the Sun of Righteousness dawned upon them. The letter commencing the series, will shew how their communication was received, and how prompt and ready this servant of God was, to come in and aid with his experience, his spiritual children. An intimate and sanctified friendship was quickly formed, which continued till the death of Mr. Newton, in 1807.

Our parents always felt themselves under a deep debt of obligation to their attached friend, for his counsel and love: as the difficulties of a consistent christian profession became increasingly apparent, the great knowledge which Mr. Newton had of the human heart, rendered him a most valuable counsellor. The following correspondence shews, that, in his instruc-

tions to a younger clergyman becoming desirous to preach Christ and him crucified;—in his administrations of comfort to those who were unnecessarily cast down;—and in his advice upon the duties and relations of the domestic circle;—the writer gave equal evidence that he was taught of God, and was watchfully anxious that “his children should walk in the truth.”

These letters, it is believed, will appear more important, when it is remembered that they contain Mr. Newton’s matured thoughts and experience; for they were written several years after his *Omicron* and *Cardiphonia*, and may therefore be said to put the seal of his faith and approbation, on what he had so long taught and preached.

It may be right to add, that our parents survived their honoured friend many years; and that our father was permitted to be an instrument of good to many, as he faithfully and affectionately preached the gospel of Christ. If any love to the Saviour has existed, or does exist, among the junior branches of the ‘family,’ their early and happy connexion with Mr. Newton, is gratefully remembered, and associated with subsequent parental instruction, pious example, and fervent prayers.

In the publication of these letters, it may be that some responsibility is incurred. Fears have been entertained lest the parties more directly concerned should have looked on them with too partial an eye ; and lest the public might question the propriety of thus making known the concerns of a single private family. But on the other hand, it was also felt, that responsibility was incurred in keeping back the letters of one whose former productions had been so well received, and on which the divine blessing had so evidently rested. Christian friends had long urged their publication, and they now come forth, it is known, accompanied by many a wish and prayer, that God may graciously bless them in these days of error and sin. Some sentiments may probably be remarked to which christians, from different tastes and judgments, may feel disposed to take exception ; and most cheerfully is that liberty conceded. But it was considered only the path of uprightness to print what had been written, after omitting some family details which would have been altogether uninteresting to the general reader. Mr. Newton was a man of no party ; for while he had his own convictions, and acted on them, his house was open, and his heart glowed with love, to

all who loved the Lord Jesus. It was "fruit of the Spirit" which made him write and speak, unshackled by the frown or smile of man: he wrote from the *heart*, and his works have been therefore valued and enjoyed by the various sections of the church of Christ.

May it not be said, here is an example worthy of imitation, because no change of times or circumstances can destroy the *relationship* of the people of God; and if they are really "sons and daughters," how should the *brethren* of Christ sympathize in his own prayer. "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." *John xvii. 23.*

If this little volume shall be permitted to counteract some of the evils which are amongst us;—if error shall in any measure be exposed and checked, by its contrast with the simple evangelical statements found in the writings of John Newton;—if the way of a sinner's salvation through faith in the blood and righteousness of Christ, without the deeds of the law, or works, or ordinances, shall more clearly appear to be the mind of God;—if christians shall *feel*, that in the midst of a jarring world, and alas! a divided

church, that their hearts burn with a holier love to Jesus; and if they, as his disciples, shall see more than they have done, the immense importance of separating indeed from the spirit of the world, but of more closely uniting with one another; and, lastly, if the Bible shall be more esteemed as the fountain of all heavenly truth, and the source of all authority, before which individuals and churches are alike called to bow;—if to this sacred book, broken hearts and contrite spirits shall be directed, as the means in the hand of the Holy Ghost, for instructing, consoling, and making wise unto salvation,—then, good will have been accomplished, and God shall have all the glory.

Launceston, September, 1844.

LETTERS TO A CLERGYMAN AND HIS FAMILY.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR MADAM,

So, from the perusal of your letter, I can address you ; though otherwise unknown, I have already formed an acquaintance, a friendship with you of years.

When I received your favor I was just setting out on a little journey. I brought it with me, determined that an answer to it should be the first letter I would write. Thus you may judge how readily I comply with your first request. To your second, I cannot engage myself further than that my inclination is good, but I know not what a day may bring forth. I ought to be mindful that every letter I write may possibly be *my last* ; but every new day brings new business with it. I have so little leisure that I can be but a poor correspondent : letters like yours, which, though from an utter stranger,

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well deserve and require an immediate answer, frequently come to my hands, and then my dearest and oldest friends must wait till *they* are first served. Some of these have cause to be displeas'd that I do not write to them perhaps in a twelvemonth, and yet I cannot bear to put you off for a single week. My church is shut up to be repaired and cleaned, and I shall probably have a vacation of about three months. I think I shall be very little in London, not above two or three days at a time till towards October; but when I am settled at home I hope to be duly mindful of your third request, to call and see your dear child, and to tell him where he will always find a welcome when he has a holiday, or leave to go abroad. I feel for you on his account; but trust in the Lord, Madam, commit your child to him; he is the good Shepherd who gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom. He is more compassionate than the tenderest mother; but his way is in the sea, and his path in the deep waters. He often accomplishes his purposes in our favor, by the most unlikely methods; and we are ready like Jacob, in the case of Joseph, to say, "All these things are against me," when they are the very steps by which he is promoting our best desires. *I also* had a tender and pious mother; I remember but little of her, but I doubt not she often mentioned me in prayer, and those prayers the Lord answered long after her removal. I was permitted to run wild in early youth, "no one cared for my soul:" the consequences you have read. Had my mother lived to know the evil courses I took, and the misery I brought upon myself, how must she have grieved! But if she was living now, she would not say

that the Lord had rejected her prayers. Had you known me, Madam, you would not have thought so much apology necessary for writing. Indeed, I am not a person of such mighty consequence as you may suppose ; when you write again, think of the poor wretch who wandered at the plantations, without shoe, shirt, or friends ; think of one who, like the man possessed by the legion, was a perpetual torment to himself, and mischievous to all about him ; and correct the opinion you may at present form of me, with these ideas. For I am the same person still ; and though the Lord has dealt bountifully and wonderfully with me since, I have still equal reason to lie low in the dust before him, with my hand upon my mouth, and to say, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner." I was much affected with the manner in which you expressed your kind sympathy for my late bereavement ; it drew many tears from my eyes. Many of my friends who knew my strong, I ought to say my idolatrous, attachment to my late dear partner, were apprehensive that even if the Lord were pleased to give me some measure of submission to his will, yet my feelings would be so strong, that I should be overwhelmed by the stroke. But in this respect, as well as in many others, my case has been extraordinary. The affliction which brought her down was long ; her sufferings were great ; the dispensation was well suited, and seemed designed to rebuke us both, for expecting too much happiness from creature comforts, and to shew us the folly and ingratitude of admitting idols into the temple of our hearts, where he alone ought to reign supreme ; but while he corrected he shewed his mercy. I felt *much*, but I was supported. Neither

her long illness nor her death prevented me from preaching a single sermon ; not even while she lay in the house unburied : and I was enabled to preach her funeral sermon myself, from *Habk.* iii. 17, 18. Indeed she was truly valuable to me ; my first regard for her was truly a *passion*, strong as ever writers of romance imagined. Neither absence, nor distance, nor the unhappy scenes of profligacy in which I was too long engaged, could extinguish it ; and from the moment I had a prospect of gaining her, it sprung up with renewed force. At length the Lord gave her to me : we lived together more than forty years in harmony, and, if possible, with increasing affection,

‘ Enamour’d more, as more remembrance swell’d
With many a proof of recollected love.’

The length of time did not make separation more easy, but it convinced me, that instead of giving way to grief that we must part at last, it became me to be thankful that she was spared to me so long, especially as I had deserved to forfeit her every day of my life. She was likewise the main hinge upon which all the principal events of my life had turned. And besides all this, she was an excellent wife. She discharged every relation of life with great propriety. She managed every thing for me,—like Potiphar, while Joseph was in his house, I knew little more of my temporal concerns but the bread which I ate. She was my faithful friend, my judicious counsellor, *we had but one heart between us*. Judge ye then of my loss ! I feel it no less now than the first day. I never expect to

feel it less while I remain here. I have lost my right hand, and miss it continually : but through mercy I am not uncomfortable. I gather easily from your letter that the Lord has made you and Mr. — happy in mutual affection. I need not tell you that one or the other of you has this trial before you which I have been brought through, for it is not probable that you will be both called away at the same time. But I can tell you, that if you seek the Lord, and walk with him *now*, he will be with you *then*. I can tell you not only from what I have read, but from my own experience, that he is all sufficient,—that he can, as he has promised, make our strength equal to our day, and give us shoes of iron and brass, when the roughness of the road would otherwise hurt our feet. He can enable us, when our gourds, our vines, and fig trees all wither, to rejoice in him as the God of our salvation, and teach us to say from our hearts, not only when he gives, but when he takes away, “He hath done all things well ; Blessed be the name of the Lord !”

I think you judge rightly of the methodists. They are numerous, and among such a number there are too many enthusiasts, who have more zeal than judgment. But upon the whole, they are a people separated from the world, and the Lord owns them and makes them useful, especially to stir up many who were once careless to inquire after the truth. The indiscretions observable among the methodists have, in part, given the world occasion to fix the name as a stigma of reproach upon all serious characters. I say in part, for nonconformity to the world is the grand cause of offence. I and many of my brethren are branded with this name,

and the pulpits almost every where shut against us as pestilent fellows, though we are strictly conformable to the rubric of the established church. It must be so while human nature remains in its present state, for it is written, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Through the Lord's mercy the bitter spirit in this land is restrained. We are not called to resist unto blood, nor even to endure stripes and imprisonments; and therefore may be more easily reconciled to the sneers and contempt of those who know not what they do; especially when we consider *whose we are, and whom we serve*. The Captain of our salvation submitted to endure reproach and contempt, to be buffeted and spit upon for us; if he gives us grace not to be ashamed of him *now*, he will not be ashamed of us when he shall appear in glory. Happy they to whom he will say, when the great, the wise, and the gay of this world, shall call in vain upon the rocks and mountains to hide them from his presence, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom." For myself, I have no cause to complain of the cross; I owe all the consideration I have in life to the despised gospel. But for this gospel I should have passed through life in obscurity; and you, Madam, who have made so many apologies for writing to me, would perhaps have scrupled to admit me into your kitchen. Here again I can speak from experience, that if the Lord makes us willing to espouse his cause, we may depend upon him to espouse ours. I once was a poor abandoned, without a shilling in my pocket. Now I am it seems somebody, I have a place in his church. I have many friends. I have need of nothing neces-

sary to the comfort of life. *Deus nobis hæc otia fecit.*
 Mr. — will tell you the meaning of these words, or I
 should not have troubled a lady with Latin. I am now
 nearly 66 years of age. I am favoured with a perfect
 state of health. My dearest will not return to me, nor
 do I wish she should; but I shall ere long go to her.
 May I and mine, Mr. — and you and yours, if we
 see not each other upon earth, meet before the throne
 of glory. Then all shall be well. . . .

That the Lord may bless you and all your connex-
 ions abundantly, is the sincere prayer of,

Dear Madam,

Your very affectionate friend and servant,

JOHN NEWTON.

Mildrith, Cambridgeshire,

22nd June, 1791.

LETTER II.

MY DEAR SIR AND MADAM,

YOU are both my correspondents, but I consider you
 as one. At present, however, I must write you to-
 gether were it only for want of time. Your letter
 found me at C—, from whence I came hither on
 Saturday. I hope to be at home to-morrow, but not
 knowing what business may demand my attention
 during the two or three days I may stay there, I will
 try and write you a sort of letter from hence, to take

to town with me, as a proof that I am unwilling to delay.

I thank you for your cordial invitation. My fellow traveller is an adopted daughter, a child of a brother of my dear Mrs. Newton's. She was left an orphan at the age of five years, and has lived with us ever since; she is now turned of twenty-two, her name is Catlett. She would be nearly as glad as myself to wait upon you, were it practicable, but it is not.

By this time I hope you know something of my other child, my dear Eliza. Having no children of my own, the Lord was pleased to send me two, to bring up for him, and he has paid me good wages. One of them rejoices my heart, or should do so whenever I think of her: she is numbered with the blessed—she is already arrived where neither sin nor sorrow can ever reach her. The other is reserved to me, and is the greatest temporal comfort I could desire or hope for, to alleviate my late loss. From my attention to these children I derived something of the feelings of a parent, and become qualified to feel for you and your child. My friend Mr. Gambier, rector of this parish, thinks that Mr. — was of the same college with him, (Sidney Sussex, Cambridge,) and if so he has some remembrance of him. However he rejoices to hear of him in the character of a fellow labourer, and a fellow disciple in the school of the cross. Fear not, my dear sir; if the Lord enables you to declare openly on his side, he will assuredly let you know that he is on your side. They may fight, but they shall not prevail

against you, for he will be with you to deliver you. As to my advice, such as it is, you will be always welcome to it, when any *dignus vindice nodus* occurs, which you may think proper to mention. But I can point you to one advice, which is *instar omnium*. You may collect it from such passages as these, *Psalm xxxvii.* 3, 7. *Proverbs* iii. 5, 6. *Luke* xxi. 13. *James* i. 5. and *Joshua* i. 8. In a word, yield yourself to the Lord ; devote your all to his service : intreat him to do all for you, in you, and by you ; ask counsel of him by prayer, and then act to the best of your judgment as circumstances direct. It is usually best to do nothing hastily, when the business will admit of deliberation. I shall be sixty-six if I live till Thursday, the 4th of August ; for I was born when the old style was in fashion. Should you attain to my age, and from that term look back to the present day and the intermediate years, you will perceive that you have made some mistakes, but you will perceive likewise that those mistakes were as guides to you in future, and probably preservations from greater mistakes. I believe true practical wisdom is seldom acquired by rules and resolves. Experience is necessary ; we must pay something for what we learn and then it becomes more properly our own. The main thing is to have a single eye, an upright aim, and a humble spirit before the Lord. A humble dependant spirit we cannot possess but in proportion as we know ourselves ; nor can we know ourselves merely by theory, by what we read or hear ; we must feel ourselves to be weak, and frail, and fallible, and prone to evil, or we cannot be duly sensible how truly and how much we are so. These lessons are mor-

tirying and painful, but they are necessary to wean, or to preserve us from self-will, self-dependance, and self-complacence. Many of the promises in scripture are suited to the hours of affliction and darkness, and we must at times be in the situation to which they are adapted, or we cannot have full proof of their certainty and sweetness. However, if the heart be upright all will be overruled for good; do as well as you can to-day, and perhaps to-morrow you will be able to do better. I would advise you, Sir, to feel the ground under you as you advance, not to go faster than your light and conviction go before you, nor to aim at too much at once. But then, so far as you see the path of duty clear, pray for grace that you may be firm and faithful, and not shrink from it. Leave consequences with the Lord, the cause is not so much yours as his; he knows where you are, and what you are to meet with, and he will care for you. *Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*, is an excellent maxim. The servants of him who wept over his enemies and prayed for his murderers, cannot be too *gentle*; but while they serve him in such a world as this, they cannot be too *determined*.

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Difficulties and opposition you must expect from those who hate to be reformed. But if you preserve your temper, if you watch to return good for evil, and to overcome evil with good; if you show a love and good will to the persons of those whose conduct you are constrained to disapprove,—by an habitual consistency of conduct in this way, you will gradually over-

come your opponents, and put them to shame and to silence. 1 *Peter* iii. 13, 14.

And now, dear Madam, let me turn to you a moment, though, after the answer I have been forced to give to your kind invitation, I find little to notice in your part of the letter, but to express my concern for Mr. ——'s indisposition, and yours also. But you are in safe hands. The Lord is an infallible physician; you shall not suffer more than he sees needful, nor I trust suffer in vain. Were health at all times and in all respects best for those who fear him, they would not feel a moment's illness. But the promise of strength according to the day, and that all things shall work together for good, may make us easy. He prescribes all our afflictions, in number, weight, and measure, and season, exactly according to what our case requires. All his people who are now in glory, all who are upon earth, and all who shall rise up after we have left the world, have said, or shall have reason to say, "It was good for me that I was afflicted;" trust in him, therefore, and submit to his will, and he will surely do you good.

Miss C —— joins with me in respects and best wishes to you both; remember us in prayer. To minds there is but the distance of a thought between L—— and London. May the Lord bless you and yours.

I am,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

Langley, Maidstone,

1st August, 1791.

LETTER III.

MY DEAR SIR AND MADAM,

I HOPE you will believe your affairs are in the Lord's hands, and that he will order all things for the best to those who put their trust in him.

I am writing in a pretty summer house, which affords a beautiful and extensive prospect. Fine hills and woodlands on three sides, on the fourth Southampton River, with a distant view of the Isle of Wight. Oh! how I love the retirement, the beauty, and the quietness of the country: often I repeat a line of my friend Cowper's,—

'God made the country, and man made the town.'

But my post, my church, and my dear people, are in London, and therefore, though an enthusiast for rural scenes, through mercy I can say, oh! how I love London! To be sure it is the seat of noise, and smoke, and dirt, but I would not exchange my situation for the most delightful sequestered spot upon the face of the earth. I have not your letter before me at present, and therefore confine myself to such parts as I best remember. I thought I had sent you every thing I have printed, but I believe I forgot one entitled *Apologia*, in which I gave the reasons for my preferring the Church of England to joining with the dissenters, which surprised many of my friends on that side, as I was once much connected with them. I likewise

designed to send the *Christian Character Exemplified*, of which I wrote only the preface, and for that reason can recommend it (though it appears in my name) more strongly and with a better grace than any of my publications; but as Mrs. — says nothing of it I am dubious. I likewise published *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*. This has been some time out of print, but if I can procure a copy, I will supply that or any other omissions I have made in due time, perhaps before you have read all those you have received. Pray give my love to your sprightly Miss —, and tell her I pray and hope that the Lord will make her as '*monstrously good*' as she thinks my dear Eliza was. Indeed Eliza was a beautiful girl, of the sweetest disposition, ingenious and ingenuous beyond most I ever saw. It was a trial to part with such a child. But she lived long enough; she lived to see that every accomplishment was of small value compared with the knowledge of Jesus Christ and him crucified. Tell Miss — that I request, yea I charge her, to put in for that prize. The Saviour who made himself known to Eliza is equally near to her; and if she will heartily and honestly seek him, he will be found of her likewise. Tell her that in his providence he sends the *Monument* expressly to her, to invite her and to encourage her to seek his face, and to shew her that he is graciously disposed to hear the prayers even of children. Tell her likewise, that I hope to see Eliza again before long, and I am sure she will not say that she was religious too soon. For as religion made her comfortable in sickness and at the approach of death, so she now well knows, that without religion she must have been miserable

here, had she lived to old age. Do, dear Miss — seek the Lord now, before the evil days come. Be assured there is a peculiar blessing and privilege annexed to early piety.

Now I *have* your letter before me. I believe Miss C — is very willing to accept Mrs. —'s kind offer of correspondence, if she can pluck up resolution. I will try to encourage her; but I think she must not be expected to write the first letter. You enquire of her concerning the worm that was commissioned to destroy my gourd, but *I* will answer,—it was a *cancer*. The Lord mercifully and wonderfully shielded her from the excruciating pain usually attendant on that malady, (though she never took opiates,) but in other respects the trial was heavy. Before I had any apprehension of what was coming, I once trembled at a remark I made when preaching from *Exodus* vii. 18. The Egyptians not only preferred the waters of the Nile to any other, but they worshipped the river. I observed, for a caution to others, that if the Lord's people indulged an idolatrous regard to creature comforts, he could, and often did, make their idols their punishment. While I was speaking to the people, conscience spoke to me, "Thou that teachest others, teachest thou not thyself? Thou art the man." What could I plead but guilty? In the course of that year my trial began. She never was dearer to my heart than in the lowest stages of her illness; but it was an awful and affecting change. I mention this the rather to you, as I observe with pleasure from your letters, that the Lord has united you, not only in wedlock but in love. It is an unspeakable mercy, the greatest temporal blessing, to be so united:

but think of me and beware of idolatry. I have smarted for it.

At the first setting out in the christian life, there will be doubts and fears, such as you mention: they have their use for a time, but they who are sincere, gradually out-grow them. The gospel is too plain to be understood, and too good to be believed, at the first proposal. We want to find something in ourselves to recommend us to the Lord, although the remedy is fully equal to the worst case. It only says, ask, and receive. Look, and live. Touch, and be healed. Believe, and be saved. If the Lord required some hard thing, we would try and do it. But it speaks of no ifs or buts, only—behold the Lamb of God! These terms are so simple we know not how to trust them. We want to be *something*, and it takes some time to be willing to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all.

Could you take the Lord's word as you would take mine, when he promises to do all for you, and by you, and in you, your fears would be at an end. This is the shorter way, but he usually leads his people round about, to humble and prove them, and shew them what is in their hearts. But keep waiting patiently upon him, and all shall be well, he will teach you as you are able to bear it. The Sandemanian scheme has an unhappy tendency to narrow the heart, and what is worse, to promote a notional religion, and to dry up the springs of christian experience. It speaks well of the work of Christ without us, but depreciates the work of the Holy Spirit within us; these God has joined, and they ought not to be separated. But I hope you will take your religion from the bible, and leave controversies to those

who have leisure for them. I think a visit to — would have been as pleasant to us as to you, but it was not practicable, and therefore could not be necessary on either side. We have the same fountain of life and truth in London and at — . I trust we shall meet at last, if not here ; and notwithstanding the distance, if the Lord saw it needful for us to see each other, he knows how to bring us together. Submission to his will, and dependance upon him for our all, are the main things. My paper is full and my time expired. We join in love to you both, and to your children. I commend you all to the care of the good shepherd,

And remain,

Your very affectionate friend and servant,

JOHN NEWTON.

*Portswood Green, Southampton,
September 14th, 1791.*

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR SIR,

THE good providence of the Lord brought us safely home on the 30th ult. In a route of about 750 miles we were preserved not only from hurt, but from the least appearance of danger. We found all well at home. Some go out to return no more ; others, when

they return, find awful calamities have visited their families in their absence. It has not been so with us. The Lord made both our *going out* and our *coming in* comfortable. What reasons for thankfulness! What cause for humiliation, that my feelings of gratitude are so faint, so disproportionate to the benefits I daily receive!

I wished at the time, it could have been practicable for me to accept your kind invitation, but I have since thought it may be better that I could not. Your friendly and open avowal of *me* might possibly have involved you in difficulties and opposition too soon. I hope you will get forward, and in due time be able to make the apostle's words your own, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." But the gradual and gentle way is usually the best: it is generally the least offensive and the most stable. There is an analogy between the works of God in nature and in grace; the dawn precedes the day; the acorn takes a long time to become a tall and spreading oak; so, is the kingdom of grace in the world, and in the heart. I wish you therefore to feel your ground as you go along, and not to be hurried faster than as light and conviction open upon your mind. *Nullus dies sine linea* (*no day without a line,*) will carry us a great way in time. Only I pray that you may be faithful to God and conscience, and that where you have scripture authority for what you should do, or for what you should forbear, you may then be inflexible as an iron pillar. It is a degree of high treason to hesitate for a moment, whether we should obey God or man, where their commands interfere. Yet the Lord has few servants who have not been thus

guilty for a season. How justly might he be ashamed of us, but he will not, for he is gracious, though we, too often, have been ashamed of him. No man can serve two masters. The Lord Christ, and the world that crucified him, are competitors for our hearts. We must serve one, we cannot serve both. Too many vainly attempt to halve it between them, but they will find it as easy to walk upon the water, or to fly in the air like a bird. But oh, how different are the services, in their nature, wages, and end! I trust he has determined your choice. You are invited to count the cost, for his service will cost you something. You may expect opposition more or less. Your character will run a little hazard. They who have respected you as a man of sense and a scholar, will pity or despise you, and think you are going out of your wits. These things are not pleasant, but Jesus suffered more for us. And the Lord whom you serve will stand by you. His smile will well compensate for the frowns of worms. A blessing upon his word will raise you up new and true friends, who will love you and esteem you very highly for the truth's sake. You will soon perceive that you gain more than you lose. His people upon earth, his saints in glory, his holy angels, are all engaged with you in the same cause. My love to Mrs. —, to your children, and to the good lady with you. May the Lord be your guide and guard.

Ever your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

6, *Coleman Street Buildings*,
5th October, 1791.

LETTER V.

MY DEAR MADAM,

As I have lately been treated with Mr. ——'s company, I devote this sheet (if I have time to fill it) to chatting with you.

.

Your little boy is very well. Dr. S—— called for him on Wednesday, but as he did not seem in haste to leave us, I begged to keep him a little longer. He acquires new friends daily; we took him with us this afternoon where we drank tea. There was an old lady and a young one; he had kisses, and his head was stroked more than once, and they desired that the first time he came to us, he would be sure to visit them in his new dress. He is really a pretty engaging child, sensible and obliging, and easily ruled. I hope and pray that the Lord may bless him. You may be assured that whatever is in our power to render his situation more agreeable, shall not be wanting. Miss C—— is much pleased with considering him under her care and charge when he is with us, and will, at least wish and endeavour, in some measure, to supply his mamma's place. I suspect he will often draw her to ——

I should have been very sorry to part with Mr. —— so soon, had he not been going to you. But when my imagination suggested the pleasure which I hope he and

you will have in meeting to-morrow, I gave up my own petty interest in him the more cheerfully ; or rather, I shall share with you both in your pleasure, especially when I hear you have received him safely.

The above last night. I hope you can say this morning with me, "I laid me down in peace and awoke in safety, for the Lord sustained me." Some did not lie down through the night, and some who did could not sleep ; sickness, pain, anxiety, or terrors from disordered nerves, or a guilty conscience, have kept many awake. Some, perhaps, have been awakened by the alarm of fire, to flee for their lives, leaving their all behind, and possibly some have perished in the flames. Some upon opening their eyes may have been terrified by the sight of a ruffian by the side of their bed, with a pistol or a poniard in his hands. What scenes of family distress have been known to-night ! The wife watching the agonies of a dying husband ; the parent almost sinking upon a departing child ! But through the same hours I, and I hope you, have slept in peace. I know not whether we have most cause to be thankful for our positive or comparative mercies. For those, of which we may, if duly attentive, make a long inventory at home ; or those which we infer, if we look round on the circumstances of others, whom we must allow (though partial judges of our own case) are less indulged, and more afflicted than ourselves. Let us be thankful for both, and keep both in mind ; thus *our* lighter crosses will seem still lighter. I told Mr. — the trying situation in which my dearest lay in the last months of her illness. I could not tell him my feelings, but I was helped to consider the alleviations also. Her spirits

were good, her patience exemplary. She could sleep, and seldom had extreme pain. She was carefully attended by those who loved her ; nothing in the power of money to procure was wanting. I saw something of the value of these mercies. Blessed be the Lord these mournful hours are passed, to return no more. May a sense of his goodness to us under them, when nature if left to itself, must have sunk, be ever gratefully upon my mind.

You have a trial in parting with your child, but there are considerations to sweeten it. He is in health and safety ; he is not friendless, and I trust he is gone from you for a season, that you may receive him again for ever. Therefore be of good courage, Madam ; put your trust in the Lord, and he will do you good.

Mr. — was not idle during his short stay. He will have much to tell you. He saw many of our respectable friends. An open avowal of the gospel will cost us something ; some will oppose and despise us : some who professed to love us will drop off ; but others will espouse and esteem us. Worldly friends may be compared to half-pence or counters ; christian friends to guineas. A hundred of the latter are worth thousands of the former. See how the Apostle states the comparison, 2 *Cor.* vi. 8, 9, 10, I have lost nothing by the gospel. I owe all my chief temporal comforts to it. If the Lord had not called me into his vineyard, I should have passed through life unknown and unnoticed. Now his goodness has raised me,—I have a name and a place among his people,—I have friends who love me for his sake ; some of them are persons of distinction and influence. No doubt many think slightly

of me, and call me a methodist, with as little just reason as they call you one; but few are rude to my face, and what is said behind my back I do not hear, and therefore gives me no trouble. Even in an outward view I am a gainer. But what a mercy and honor it is to be engaged in that cause which the Almighty is engaged to support! Yes, we are of the strongest side. It will appear so to the world, to angels, and men, in that day when the Lord shall come to make up his jewels, if we have grace to be faithful. If we are not ashamed of him now, he will not be ashamed of us then.

.

Now my time is nearly finished, and the paper nearly filled. Towards evening my mind will step to be witness of the joy of the whole family upon Mr. ——'s return. If you find him well, and if he finds all well at home, I believe you will not only be joyful but thankful. Formerly when I travelled alone, I had likewise a *dear* to welcome my return: of late, and henceforth, I enter as it were an empty house; yet a house, every room of which fills me with ideas, which sometimes, and for a few minutes, draw forth an involuntary sigh. She seemed as necessary to me as the light of the sun. Yet upon the whole I am comfortable and satisfied, and can say with the *Shunammite*, "It is well." I am still enabled to preach the gospel,—this ought to over balance all earthly comfort. I hope Mr. —— did not perceive that I was dejected. For the most part I can chat and be cheerful with my friends, as though nothing had happened, but she is never out of my thoughts. May

you live long to be helpmates and comforts to each other; and may grace prepare you for, and support you under that hour, which sooner or later *must come*. Nay, neither of you can be completely happy until it *does come*. My Betsy joins with me in love to you both, and to your children; remember me particularly to Miss J——. I long to see her, and should I live, I may see the day when you will come up to ——, and then I shall be very glad if you can bring her with you, up your abode at No. 6. Pray for us, my am, and believe me to be,

Your and Mr. ——'s very affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

Coleman Street Buildings,
28th October, 1791.

LETTER VI.

MY DEAR SIR,

I THANK Mrs. —— for her last, but my present answer must be to you. . . .

. . . .

I shall be glad if the books may afford either pleasure or profit. The writings of good men undoubtedly have their use, when read with caution, (for the best are fallible) and with moderation. Mr. Locke's general advice I think exceedingly good in divinity, *study the*

text. These good men have filled us many cisterns ; let us thankfully use them, but let us remember likewise, that we have the same ways of access to the *fountain* which they had, and are not obliged to get all our supplies at second hand. The scripture was able to make men wise unto salvation, and thoroughly furnished for every good work before any of our great books were written. You will certainly do well to preach your own sermons. The diffidence you have in yourself will be no disadvantage to you, but a confidence in the Lord and his promises. You are to magnify *your office*, and to think highly of it. You have the charge of a flock, and though once, perhaps, you knew not how to feed them, it is otherwise now. The things that are new to us are not so to the Lord. He placed you where you are, and the steps by which you have been led to your present views were under his direction and appointment. Now therefore up, and be doing. He will be with you. Cheerfully and confidently expect from him whatever may be necessary for the due discharge of your ministry : but expect it in the use of means, and in the exercise of diligence. *Habenti dabitur*, (To him that hath it shall be given.) Make the best of your talents and they will grow. The more you compose and preach, the easier you will find it. By degrees, not at once, nor at first, your heart will teach your mouth. You will begin perhaps by writing your sermons at full length ; then you will retrench more and more, till you have little to write but a syllabus of the points you mean to enlarge on from the pulpit ; and in time it may be, you will do without that. They talk of learning to swim, but I suppose

there is no rule or art, to make the body specifically lighter than it is. To learn to swim, is little more than to learn to overcome the fear of sinking. Thus, when a man has a proper call, and a competent fund of general knowledge, he learns to preach, by learning to acquire a confidence, not in himself, but in his cause, and in him in whose name he speaks. He may begin with papers and notes, as boys do with corks and bladders; and like the boys, make them less and less, till he finds he can swim without them. However, feel your ground for yourself; you may get help by a hint from a friend, but you are not bound to follow any person's advice or example implicitly. Your shoe must be fitted to your own foot. Only trust the Lord, and he will teach and qualify you. Luther's maxim, *Bene precdsse est bene studuisse*, (To have prayed well is to have studied well) is a good one; there is no knowledge or ability, like that which we acquire by reading the bible with prayer, and in the school of experience. The Lord will make all within you and around you to forward your desires for promoting his service. Some of the lessons set us in this school are not pleasant to the flesh, but all conduce to our profit; and every minister thus taught will be an *original*. Situation, constitution, disposition, the help of friends, and the opposition of enemies, shall all be sanctified to fit him for that particular line of service to which he is called. But it is a progressive work,—as they say, Rome was not built in a day.

When Mr. Scott and I began to agree about every thing else, there was one point in which he seemed fixed. He thought it impossible that he could ever

preach extempore. At that time he had not confidence to pray even with his wife in their chamber, without a book; he is now I think the readiest and the fullest man among us in the extempore walk. I advise you to preach a sermon to yourself from *Exodus* iv. 10, 12.

Lady C— Murray has given me the bishop's charge which you left in my study, and promises to send you another.

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Mrs. Althans, the heroine of the 'Christian Character,' was a heroine indeed, but I would remind Mrs. — that she was not always so. The fountain from which she was supplied is open for us also, and if the Lord works in us to *will*, he will enable us to *do* likewise. But she also was taught in the school of the cross. There is no other way of learning. Vide Olney Hymns, book 3, hymn 36. But if she count the cost, she will find the gain will make amends for all.

Miss Catlett must write next. In the mean time we unite in love to you both, and to Misses J—, A—, C—, and the little boys. Our servants love you, and wish you to know and believe it. Now may the Lord bless you in your house, heart, and ministry. Amen.

I am,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

3rd December, 1791.

LETTER VII.

MY DEAR SIR,

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I TRUST you are in the right track, and therefore I leave you to go on as the Lord shall lead you. Put your trust in him, open your mouth wide, and he will fill it. Why should not *you* be an extempore preacher, as well as another? Only desire it, pray for it, direct your aim towards it, and I have little doubt of your success. But a cheerful confidence of succeeding is one half of the business. If we hang down our hands, are dispirited, and say there is a lion in the way, it is no wonder if we cannot get forward. However, if the Lord enables you to be humble and faithful, I care not whether you write or speak. The latter I know has its advantages, but it is not necessary; yet if you will strive for it, you will attain it. Begin with expounding the scriptures in your own family, and perhaps this will lead you further and sooner than you expect.

I am not without hopes that your friends may one day think better of Mr. Scott's book, than they do at present: they seem to feel. I wish your expectations may be answered, of a better reception from your other friend, but it may be otherwise. Gospel truth (like Ithuriel's spear) shews things as they are, detects what

lies hidden in the heart, and sometimes makes characters, apparently amiable, start up in a formidable shape. I think you do well to use time and caution, that you may not prejudice your friends and people, by a too early, or a too great intimacy with dissenters. Yet in a certain degree, the servants of the same Lord ought to acknowledge each other. There is need both of simplicity and prudence in this matter, or rather, I may say, simplicity is the best prudence. Poor Mrs. —; I feel for you both, but tell her, as I tell you, that she is in safe hands. I hope to remember her often.

St. Mary expects me and I must go. Miss C——'s love, she will write soon.

I am,

Yours indeed,

JOHN NEWTON.

January 11th, 1792.

LETTER VIII.

MY DEAR SIR,

I BELIEVE I must put you off for once, with a short letter.

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On Tuesday next, if the Lord pleases, I leave London.

My leading object is to visit my old folks at Olney, whom I have not seen these four years, and whom, perhaps, I shall see no more in the flesh. But I shall enlarge our circle, when abroad, to take in Leicester and Melton-Mowbray; and if — was within 80 miles of any part of my road, I would strive hard to stretch the line even to you also. But though there are bounds beyond which my body cannot pass, my mind is not bound. I am, and hope I shall be often, with you in spirit, and I trust we shall meet at last, (if not sooner) in a better world. Then all will be well. Direct your letters as usual, they will be forwarded to me.

You have but begun to sow, and you expect to reap already? Read *James* v. 7. *Eccles.* xi. 1, 4, 5, 6. Read likewise *Isaiah* lv. 10, 13. Here likewise prayer and patience are necessary. Moses travelled in this path before you. When he was sent to deliver Israel, he seems to have expected that Pharaoh would have released them at the first word; but when he found, in consequence of his message, their burdens and afflictions were increased, he said, Why hast thou sent me at all? But Moses succeeded at last; Israel was brought out with a high hand; and the opposition and difficulty only tended to make the power of God, and his favour to Israel, more conspicuous. Try again, and again, and again; be not discouraged. *Mark* viii. We may lose something *for* Christ, but we shall not be losers *by* him. I trust you will be no loser in the long run, for your faithfulness to the old lady. I think it time you heard from me, and therefore I will send what I have written, only adding my best prayers and wishes for you and Mrs —, and the good old lady, your friend,

with a tender of Miss C——'s sincere respects, and my own.

I am,
Your affectionate brother and friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

June 2nd, 1792.

LETTER IX.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I RECEIVED yours of the 19th of June, at Leicester, and though I have been at home more than a fortnight and have thought of you daily, I could not well begin an answer before; so many things of daily occurrence have called for my attention. The Lord favoured us with a safe and pleasant excursion, and we found all in peace on our return. The purposes made by many within the time of my absence, have doubtless been retarded and frustrated; but nothing was permitted to prevent the accomplishment of mine. I was abroad five Sundays; the first I spent with Mr. Langston, at Little Harwood, Bucks; the second at Leicester, with Mr. Robinson, (who inquired for you;) the third with Dr. Ford, at Melton-Mowbray; the last two at Olney. I had opportunities of preaching four or five times in a week, so that I was not quite idle. It is probable I

have taken my final leave of all my dear friends in these parts, where my circuits chiefly lay for near 16 years. Many pleasant hours I have formerly had among them, but they are now gone like the years before the flood.

I have a lively idea of —, and of Mrs. — in particular. I suppose neither of them is quite correct; but I have little hope of comparing them with the originals. But if we cannot meet in C—, I hope we shall ere long in a better world. But who knows but I may live to see Mrs. — in London; should she ever come to No. 6, she will find every body in it disposed to make it as much like home to her as possible. I long to hear how she is, as the time you hinted at (six or seven weeks) must be near at hand: may the Lord give her faith, strength, and patience, in the hour of trial. If the Lord gives you one, or two, or more, he can enable you to be pleased with his appointment, and to depend upon his care. Remember me to the lady you speak of: if she seeks the Lord she will surely find him; if she trusts him he will certainly stand by and support her. He will either remove difficulties, or overrule them for her good. In the situation you mention, she has need of what one apostle calls, the *mekness of wisdom*, *James* iii. 13, and which is described by another, *1 Peter* iii. 1, 2, 3, 4. I am glad both for her sake and his own, that her husband was not disgusted at St. Mary's; it may encourage him to hear the gospel again, when he has opportunity. She may live, and I hope she will, to see him of one mind with herself.

Although a passable churchman, I cannot undertake

to vindicate every expression in our baptismal service. Our Reformers, though they did great things, yet they only made a beginning; if permitted, they would probably have done much more. Some persons who had a share in church councils in Edward 6th's time, though they could not wholly prevent the Reformation, had influence sufficient to impede and embarrass it. They would not accept the scriptures alone, as the sufficient rule of faith and practice, but prevailed to superadd the Fathers of the first six centuries. Afterwards, Elizabeth, with her *semper eadem*, forbade all further alterations. But the gospel purity was soon corrupted, and some of the Fathers were but mothers (old women) in divinity. However, their authority gave sanction to several expressions and sentiments which the scripture does not warrant, particularly with regard to baptism. The sacraments are of divine institution, but I do not think either of them confers grace *ex opere operato*, (from the mere administration of the rite.) The rubric tells us gravely that those who die in infancy, may be saved if baptized: I believe they may be and are saved, whether baptized or not; for I cannot think that the salvation of a soul depends upon a negligent or drunken minister, who cannot be found when wanted to baptize a dying infant. In the homilies however they speak more to the purpose. The Fathers, or some of them, did indeed speak of baptism, and regeneration or the new birth, as synonymous; but while scripture, experience, and observation contradict them, I pay little regard to their judgment.

I have learnt from what I have written myself, not to judge of others by what they write. Saying, or writing,

and *doing* are two things. Alas! how different do I appear to others in my books, from what I feel myself to be in my study. Your complaints are mine, or I might justly say, 'I more;' yet I do not complain as I otherwise might, because I believe that Christ died—there is my whole hope. I cannot, will not doubt, but that he has made me willing to be saved; nor will I doubt his ability to save me. For the rest, the more sick I am, the more need I have to apply to such a great, compassionate, infallible physician. I cannot heal myself, and why should I wish I could, when he has undertaken my case. Depend upon it, our hearts are all alike. To know that they are deceitful and desperately wicked, and to look to Jesus for mercy, help, and salvation, are, I think, the greatest attainments we can rise to in this imperfect state.

Saturday next will be my birth-day, if I am spared to see it. Pray for me that while I do live, I may live to him. I will try and repay you in kind. My love and Miss C——'s to Mrs. —— and your children.

I am,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

July 31st, 1792.

LETTER X.

MY DEAR SIR,

THE length of my letter to Miss — must be my apology for brevity to you. I have sealed her's, because I thought she would like to have the breaking it open to be her own act and deed. Mrs. —'s letter made me sorry and glad alternately, as she changed the scene : sorry that you have both been so ill, glad for her and your amendment. So it is and must be ; this life is a chequered state. It would be dismal indeed if it was all trial ; and were it all pleasant and comfortable, it would be hurtful and dangerous to our best concerns, for with such hearts as ours, we could not bear uninterrupted prosperity. My reason for not writing is a very simple one—I have not time. I shall soon if possible have less. I have a large quantity of my correspondence with my dear Mary, which I am going to re-peruse, and to make extracts to the amount of a Cardiphonia volume, which I mean to leave as a legacy to husbands and wives. This is a task in which no one can assist me. I must judge for myself what is proper to be selected, and if I do it not, it must remain undone. I mean to begin next week ; and until it is finished, my letters must be as brief and as few as possible, or I shall make no progress amidst my other unavoidable engagements. If any thing occurs *de novo* requiring an answer, I shall make a point of writing presently. But I hope to hear

often from you when your eyes are good, and from Mrs. —, when she has leisure.

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Give my love to all your children, particularly to the little stranger. I am duly sensible of the honor you have done me, in incorporating my name with your own. May the name of Newton be to him as a lighthouse upon a hill, as he grows up, to warn him against the evils I ran upon in my youth, and on which (without a miracle of mercy) I should have suffered a fatal shipwreck.

I find Mrs. — is still expecting ripe fruit in spring, and wondering that bodily indisposition should affect the mind. But we cannot alter the established course of causes and effects. I hope she will be thankful for what she has already received of the Lord, and patiently wait upon him for more. Mushrooms spring up quickly, but the growth of an oak is slow. If Mrs. D— comes this way we shall be glad to see her, for your sakes and for her own. With our love to her, Mrs. W— and Mrs. —, I must hasten to subscribe myself,

Your friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

29th September, 1792.

LETTER XI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

When I put my last into the counting-house, I found yours on the table. I can do little more than thank you for it and enclose you my Fast sermon.

I am sorry for the poor accounts you give of Mrs. ——'s health, but she is in the Lord's hands, yea, the everlasting arms are underneath her. I hope she will live to sing the *Psalm* xl. 1—4, and I should rejoice to hear her sing it at No. 6.

Our love to Mrs. L——: the Lord will do well for her if she lives, and still better when he shall call her home.

I trust the French will not be permitted to set foot in C——, but at any rate, you and all that put their trust in the Lord, shall be encompassed round with mercy. They cannot break a pane of glass without his leave, and he will give his people strength according to their day. Because the Lord loves you and Mrs. ——, he appoints you trials. Like most efficacious medicines, they are neither pleasant to the taste, nor in their operation, when first taken, but afterwards they yield the peaceful fruits of righteousness. He sends them not for his own pleasure, but for our profit. How gladly would we relieve each other; and we ought if we could, but we cannot. He could in a moment, but he does not: the plain inference is, that 'it is good, it is

best for us to be afflicted.' It is easy to write thus; but though I am now smoking my pipe quietly by the fire-side free from pain and trouble, I *have had* my trials, and I can from experience bear testimony to his all sufficiency and faithfulness. He does all things well. How can he who is infinitely wise and good do otherwise? Mrs. Neale and all your friends would be glad to see you again; through mercy we are all continued in health, and all join in love.

I am,

Your affectionate and obliged,

JOHN NEWTON.

March, 1793.

LETTER XII.

. . . ON this day, forty-six years ago, I was pumping for life, and expecting every minute that the ship would sink, or the next wave would wash me overboard. Yet by help obtained of the Lord, I continue to this day. What has God wrought!

JOHN NEWTON.

March 21st, 1793.

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LETTER XIII.

MY DEAR SIR,

WE had the pleasure of Dr. W——'s company yesterday; it was a pleasure indeed. Mrs. ——'s letter came just before him. Who knows the consequence of taking out the church window? I think a journey to London might be serviceable to you, both soul and body. If you can come I shall be glad: if you can manage to bring Mrs. —— with you, I shall be doubly and trebly glad, and so will Miss C——. I have company with me, and am going to church soon. I can write but a line, but was not willing to lose time. I have often told you already, how sincerely

I am,

Yours affectionately,

JOHN NEWTON.

May 29th, 1793.

LETTER XIV.

I HOPE, my dear Madam, this will come just about in time to congratulate you and Mr. — upon your reunion. I rejoice in your satisfaction. I am a tolerable judge of it. I can remember that often my regrets at taking leave of *many* kind friends abroad, has been sweetly overpowered by the thoughts that I had *one* waiting at home to receive me. Well, I hope she is waiting for me now, and that I shall go home to her before long, once for all.

You might have saved yourself many anxieties, if you could have firmly believed that your husband was no less safe under the Lord's eye, than if you had been looking at him yourself from morning till night. I pity you but I cannot blame you, at least, not without taking shame to myself; for I have often stood, if I may so say, in your shoes. When *I* had a dear I was not without trials, and some of them were sharp; but I believe upon the whole, I suffered more, and more frequently, from imaginary than from real troubles. It was but now and then that I could say, the thing that I feared is come upon me. But through the Lord's goodness I often had cause to say, my fears and apprehensions were needless. I believe, in our present imperfect state, while there is so much unbelief in our hearts, and while the attachment to our creature comforts is so prone to exceed its proper bounds, these

anxieties are a tax, which must be paid by those who are happy in a sincere affection for each other.

I long to hear that you are entered into the peace and liberty of the gospel. I trust you will in time ; and I am sure you would while you are reading this letter, if you could but take the Lord's word as readily and as cordially as you do mine. From the kind things you say of me, I cannot doubt but that if you thought I was able to save you to the uttermost, you would be satisfied of my good will. Why then will you not believe him, who has both promised and is able also to perform ? Why will you rather listen to an enemy who grudges your peace, and who you know before hand was a liar from the beginning ? If you were wrong he would try to flatter you, and persuade you that you were right ; but because he sees you are right in the main, he aims to distress you. The chief point of the gospel is very simple and plain,—it is only to believe that Jesus died and rose again, and is now preparing a place in his kingdom ; and that all he did and suffered, with all the blessed effects of his atonement and mediation, is for your sake, if you put your trust in him. But you want to be better first. Depend upon it you never will till he makes you so, and then you will think yourself worse. You are, as we say, putting the cart before the horse. I should think the more sick you are, the more thankful you should be that you are invited to an infallible physician. You do indeed apply, but then you would tell him how to prescribe to you. I suppose Dr. W—— would not long attend upon a patient who should insist upon choosing his own medicines, especially if he should object to every medicine that was

either unpleasant to the taste or in its operation, for there are few efficacious medicines that are otherwise. Dangerous and inveterate diseases are seldom cured by cakes and comfits.

But though I now know that there is a shorter way from Egypt than that by which I came, and can point it to you, I believe you must be content to come round-about, through the wilderness, as others have done before you. The christian life is a warfare to others, and you must not expect an exemption from the service. The Captain of our salvation trod a thorny path, and we must trace his bloody footsteps, and not think to walk to heaven upon a carpet. If we could, what need should we have of shoes of iron and brass? They who are now reaping in joy, sowed in tears when they were here: and why should not we? The way to heaven is through much tribulation; if we did not meet with such things, we might justly suspect we had mistaken the road. Go on, and you shall know that the Lord is with you. I trust he will in due time shame you out of your unbelief.

What Dr. W. — was, I know no more than the little he has told me of himself. What he is now we all see, and join the angels of God in rejoicing over him. Do not think, much less say, that he has met with a disappointment: there is no such word in the christian dictionary. What the world call by that name, is in our language an intimation of the Lord's will. The Lord saw consequences depending upon his removal to London, which we could not see, and therefore he would not permit him to succeed to his hurt; perhaps hereafter those consequences might not follow.

When the right thing and the right time come, I will be answerable for his success : he sees it himself in this light. Give my love to all your olive branches, and tell Miss J—— I shall be obliged to her for a letter. I long to see her and you in London, and so does Miss C——, who joins me in love to you all. Perhaps the time *may* come, if we all live ; but I shall be sixty-eight soon, and must not look far forward in this world. But I have a glimpse of a better, where I hope we shall all meet. Give my love to Mr. C——. I hope he will go quietly on as the Lord shall lead him, and keep his ears stopped from hearing what cavillers say, and his mouth shut, so as not to take the trouble of answering them. The Lord will plead his cause ; but he must not be surprised if the enemy sows tares, when he sees the good seed springing up. I have with difficulty squeezed a little time to send this letter, to be present at your meeting. I can add no more but my prayers and assurances that

I am,

Your affectionate brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

June 27th, 1793.

LETTER XV.

MY DEAR SIR,

IT is high time to thank you and Mrs. — for your letters ; but I have somehow lost or mislaid yours, and therefore cannot answer particulars. We were all glad to hear that you were again united in peace and safety. May the blessing of the Lord rest upon your hearts and house.

.

I am sorry I cannot find your letter, it might have helped me to eke out mine. I am glad you had an opportunity of preaching in your way. You may perhaps rejoice in the effects of your sermons hereafter, if you should know nothing of them while you are here. I believe the gospel is never preached in vain, when it is preached in a spirit of prayer and dependance. Now I have found your letter,—I have no doubt you think others better than yourself: thus far you are conformed to the scripture rule, *Phil.* ii. 3. You should not therefore be displeased with yourself on that account. I shall not contradict you. But some of those you deem so, were planted in the Lord's garden many years before you ; why then should you complain that you are not so tall, nor your branches so wide, nor

your root so deep, in two years growth, as others who have been growing twenty or thirty years? Should a little sapling, just springing up from an acorn, ask why am not I as large as the stoutest oak in the wood? You would know how to answer it. I want you to teach Mrs. C—— a lesson, but you must first learn it yourself. Do not let Satan impose a false humility upon you. Depend upon it there is more of self and self-righteousness in these complaints, than we are usually aware of. It is better to be thankful for what you have received, than impatient because you have no more. If you can make yourself better, do it by all means; but if you cannot, wait simply the Lord's time, at the Lord's feet. If your heart is upright, you have only to attend to the means and precepts of grace. The Lord must do the rest, and he will, otherwise it can never be done. Try to be thankful; it is both a *utile* and a *dulce*. You cannot be too humble, or think too little of yourself; but these views need not break your peace. You are to be strong and to rejoice, not in yourself but in Christ Jesus the Lord, and in the power of his might. One view of the brazen serpent will do you more good than poring over your own wounds for a month.

Nothing yet has occurred to break my expectation of leaving London the 8th of August, before which day I hope my letters will be out of the press, but I think not ready for publication till after I am gone. I have a set for you and Mrs. —— in my mind.

We sensibly miss dear Mrs. Gardiner; but this is a changeable state. Meeting always implies parting in

this world, but they that meet above shall part no more. Let us look upward and forward. Time, which is short in itself, passes swiftly away. Like passengers in a coach, whether we sleep or wake, we are lessening our distance from home every minute. Our coach will not stop, or make a moment's delay, till it brings us to our journey's end ; and the hills and dales we have already travelled over, are out of sight and gone. The trials of yesterday are no more to us now, than those of the Antediluvians. And to morrow shall be as to day ; when once past it will return no more. O for more faith, which is the evidence of things not seen. The vail of flesh and blood, and unbelief, conceal them from us ; but they are not distant. I believe we now live in the midst of them. Ere long these vails will be removed ; we shall awake from this dream of life, and be satisfied by his likeness. With Miss. C——'s and Miss. G——'s love, and the respects of your friends below stairs,

I remain,

My dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

July 24th, 1793.

LETTER XVI.

MY DEAR SIR,

I THANK you for yours of the 13th, and I begin my answer in Mr. Taylor's summer house, which affords me a prospect very different from what I can have in Cheapside, or at No. 6. I believe I attempted to describe it before. We left London the 8th instant, as I proposed, and spent a very agreeable week with Mr. Serle, the author of the 'Christian Remembrancer,' and some other tracts, which I think Lady Catherine presented you with; and likewise of the *Horæ Solitariae*, in two volumes, octavo; he was once under secretary of state, when Lord Dartmouth was in the American department. He is a first rate man, not only for solid experimental religion, but for natural and acquired abilities, and general information. We arrived in safety here the 16th. You will find Mr. Glascot answers your expectations. I must not blame him for being irregular, for I am now reduced to be a house preacher myself. They will not let me enter a pulpit at Southampton, and I should be quite silent, if my friend Mr. Taylor did not open his house to me, when I preach three or four times a week to as many as the place will hold; that is, about a hundred, or rather more. The Lord could easily procure me a pulpit, but I would be thankful for the opportunity I have here; perhaps he sees that some in this neighbourhood are men sensible of

the value of the gospel, and will hear it more thankfully than many in the town. I have, as you say, passed another mile-stone on the road of life, and cannot be far distant from my journey's end. I am trying to give up the when, and the where, and the how to the Lord. It is his concern, and not mine. I have only to pray (and you will kindly help me) that I may be found ready. I seem to have lived long enough for myself; but as I am not my own but his, I ought to be equally willing to go or stay, as he shall appoint. But it is only his grace can make or keep me so—*unsustained by him I fall.*

I congratulate you on the honor of bearing the cross for his sake. They who do not love *him*, cannot be expected to love *you*, now you declare openly on his side. But his will be found the strongest side at last. Yea, even now, he will be your best friend, a guide, a guard, a counsellor, a helper, a provider, all sufficient, always near. He can save you from trouble, support you under it, and deliver you out of it; make the bitter sweet, and the hard easy. All his promises are sure; yea and amen. Why then shall we either fear, or depend upon men, who are as grass, and whose breath is in their nostrils? In many cases they cannot help us if they would; in others they will not if they could. I am sure they cannot make a sick bed easy, nor a dying pillow soft, but he can; and after death, he will not be ashamed of them who have grace not to be ashamed of him now. "Fear not then the reproach of men." I believe you will not wilfully or needlessly provoke them; but if they will slight you for your faithfulness to him, I hope you will count such disgrace

your glory. I am concerned for the account you give me of Mrs. ——'s health.

I mean to enclose for her perusal a letter (to be returned,) from a dear friend in London, whom I judge to be as gracious and spiritual a woman as most whom I know. I have been acquainted with her about seven years; have often seen her full of peace and comfort, and always gentle, humble, and exemplary. But since January last, she has been sitting in the valley of the shadow of death, within a single step of absolute despair. Such is the power of temptation when the Lord permits, especially over persons of a nervous habit. She has been so formerly and found relief; I doubt not but she will be relieved again; but in her present state of mind she finds it almost impossible to preserve a ray of hope; and all that I can say to her, except just for the moment while I am speaking, is like talking to the east wind. I believe I told you of another, (Mrs. A.) who had been even worse than this for three years, who could not even bear that I should pray with her; yet she had been comfortable for many years before, and is now relieved and comfortable again. Perhaps if Mrs. —— knows how many of the Lord's people have fared before her, it may convince her that her own case is not, as she is ready to suppose, quite singular. As to her thinking that she does not believe even the chief truths of the gospel, she can hardly be more distressed upon this head than my dear Mrs. N—— was for about a fortnight in her last illness. She had lost all idea of truth, but through mercy she recovered it again before she went. The Lord has wise reasons for permitting those whom he loves, and who

love him, to be thus exercised ; we cannot discern them all, but he has told us the ultimate design is to humble and to prove them, to *shew them what is in their hearts*, that he may do them good at their latter end. Tell her from me, that if she is a sinner, she has no right to make terms with the Lord, or to insist upon being speedily comforted. Though she should walk in darkness many years, she will have cause to praise him, if she is comforted at last. But I hope the time of trial will not be long. He has declared, "that him that cometh to him, he will in *no wise* cast out." The sooner she can believe that he means what he says, and is able to make his word good, the sooner she will have peace. In the mean time her part is to wait *upon* him, and to wait *for* him. Instead of wishing to participate of these soul troubles, I hope you will be thankful that you are exempted from them. Though they often accompany a work of grace, they do not at all belong to it. They are no better than a compound of the unbelief of our hearts, and the malice of our worst enemy.

How pleasant is it when those who love, meet again in peace after a short absence! How would my heart beat if I could expect to meet my dear in a fortnight! Yet I hope, I do not wish it even possible. I have many reasons for thankfulness that it was appointed for me to be the survivor. I trust I shall meet her to unspeakable advantage by and by ; but the flesh will feel. My feelings are much the same, as in the first week after she left me. Blessed be the Lord, I can eat and sleep, and talk and preach, enjoy my friends and my many comforts, and carry it outwardly as if nothing

was the matter. But there is seldom a minute in the day, in which she is not present to my thoughts, almost in as lively a manner, as if I could see her with my eyes : the more shame for me. I should be the first christian in the kingdom, if my thoughts were as frequently and as closely attached to the Lord Jesus, as to her ; and yet she was not crucified for me. Dearly as she loved me, she could not, she durst not have suffered for me, as he did, though there had been no other way to save me from perishing. Human love has bounds. One creature could not venture to meet the wrath of God for another. But Jesus did this, I trust for me, though I was an enemy and a blasphemer. What a wretch am I, if I think of her more than I do of him ! Lord pity and pardon.

I only add my prayers that the Lord may bless your soul, family, ministry and all your connexions.

Think of me as being, sincerely

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

*Portswood Green,
August 24th, 1793.*

LETTER XVII.

MY DEAR SIR,

I AM glad Mrs. — prevailed on you to lay aside your book. Go on in the Lord's strength. I hope, by and by, to hear you lay aside your book in the pulpit likewise. But remember you are a soldier; you must fight your way through difficulties, and win your ground by inches. You must not look back, now you are setting your hand in good earnest to the plow. Satan will do all he is permitted to discourage and distress you. If you would have him flee from you, resist him. If he was visible at your elbow, tempting you to adultery or murder, would you not start at the proposal? Do the same when he would dissuade you from trusting the Lord in the path of duty. Do not give way to him; speak and pray as well as you can, and in time you will find it more easy. It little signifies what you think of yourself, nor even what others think of you, if the Lord is pleased to own you. It is much better that you should be ashamed of your performances, than that you should overrate them. I have trodden your ground; your complaints were once mine,—yea they are so to this day; only I am enabled, with more confidence than you, to rest in the gospel as a dispensation of grace, which you still look to as a law. We cannot have too much humiliation; but there is no cause of distress, if it be

true that Christ lived and died, and rose and reigns. Nor will you ever possess solid peace and comfort, till you derive it simply and solely from this source. You will attain to this in time ; till then, you have need of patience. The evils which you complain of are inseparable from our fallen nature ; you never will be free from them in this world. Paul felt them no less than you, perhaps more, because he was more advanced in grace. They ought to humble us, but nothing need break our peace, which has not the consent of the will. Why should you confess to the Lord, that you are a poor helpless unworthy sinner, if you did not feel yourself to be one ! Read *Romans* vii. 14, *ad finem*. It comprises all you can say of yourself ; and it was said before you were born. The atonement, power, and grace of Christ, is a sufficient answer for all. You only want more faith in the Saviour ; and in waiting upon him you will graciously obtain it, but still in the way of conflict. As your obligations to him are infinite, you will never think yourself sufficiently thankful while you retain a right sense of them. Think kindly of the Lord,—he well deserves it. Do not consider him as a severe judge, who is strict to mark what is amiss, but as a compassionate physician, who knows your frame, pities your infirmities, and is taking the best method for your relief. He is about to employ you, to honor you, and to make you useful ; and perhaps he sees that without these inward exercises, you would be in danger of being exalted above measure. Any thing is a mercy ; even a messenger from Satan, if it preserves us from this evil. Aim to serve him with a cheerful spirit. Praise him for what he has done, and he will

do more. You are a leader; let not those who follow you think you are a coward. Be afraid of letting your hearers suspect, from what they see in you, that religion is a gloomy, uncomfortable affair. This would be like bringing up a bad report of the good land. Put the best face upon things you can, and not only tell them, but prove to them, by your own example, that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness. I believe the advice I offer is scriptural, and good both for you and Mrs. —. I wish I could follow it better myself, but indeed I likewise am one of the poor creatures.

Dear Madam,—if you will persist in putting the cart before the horse, how can you get forward? If you were better you would believe, but you must believe first or you cannot be better. Surely you know that Christ did not come into the world to save the righteous, but sinners. The only question then is, are you a sinner? If you are not, the gospel can do you no good; but if you are a sinner, and feel your need of mercy, Jesus says, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” He does not invite you, to raise your desires, and then to disappoint them. I doubt not but if you thought *I* could save, you would depend upon my good will. He both can, and he has promised he will; but he will not allow you the honor of contributing to save yourself: when you desist from the attempt, you will find peace. I feel for your family afflictions, but the submission the Lord gives you both to his will, makes me amends. I can perceive that he is with you, whether you perceive it or not. I have heard of a cockney, (a mere Londoner) who, when he first went into the country, which was to him a new world, when

the people he was with admired the beauty of an adjacent wood, wished them to shew it to him. They pointed to it ; but he said, I cannot see it, there are so many trees in the way. Apply this story to yourselves. The best evidence of a work of grace, are the very things which prevent you from perceiving what the Lord has already done for you. You have much cause for praise, none for complaint. May the great physician heal your minds and your children's bodies. Put all into his hands. Has he not said, "I will surely do you good." Believe his word, and you shall prosper.

I am,

Your very affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

October 17th, 1793.

LETTER XVIII.

MY DEAR SIR, OR MADAM, OR BOTH,

Now the *letters to a wife* are abroad, they must take their course. They were not transcribed and published without thought and prayer ; yet, when they came out, I felt some palpitation of

heart. I did not much care what the unfeeling and licentious might say ; but I was afraid lest better judges might charge me with egotism and impertinence, in troubling the public with such a detail of my own concerns. But I still hope the book may be useful in some instances, by the Lord's blessing ; and I am thankful for some tokens of its acceptance already, to prepare me for the censure of critics and reviewers. It is certainly an original in its way, and carries upon the face of it peculiar marks of authenticity. I suppose it will be more pleasing to wives than to the generality of husbands, of whom I fear scarcely one in a hundred will understand it.

The mention of husbands reminds me to thank Mrs. ——— for her kind wishes in favor of Miss ———. You may dream of her marriage as often as you please, but I would not have you *pray* for it ; for we often know not what we ask. Though she is the chief comfort of my old age, if I know my own heart, I could willingly part with her to-morrow, even to live in ———, (when I could never expect to see her more,) if the Lord was to appoint and provide a suitable man. A man of sense, character, and grace, who loved her, and who could gain her heart, would easily have my consent. I would rather she should marry such a one, though he had not a shilling, than the first nobleman in the kingdom without all, or any of these qualifications. But I have so indifferent an opinion of my own sex, that I advise her, and I believe she is willing to take my advice, not to let matrimonial thoughts perplex her, till the Lord, by his providence, shall open a fair prospect. I doubt not, but he will do this in the best time, if he sees that the

marriage state will be best for her in the best sense.

As to my seeing her settled before I die, I hope I could cheerfully leave her to the Lord, in whom I trust she has believed. He can bless her and settle her without my help; nor ought I ever to think her settled in such a world as this, for who can know what changes a single day may bring forth? I trust we shall meet again in a better state, and as to the uncertain interval of separation, *the Lord will provide*. I am sorry, Madam, you are still burdened with unbelief and temptation; but here, as in every thing else, we must wait the Lord's time. I believe much of your complaint is constitutional.

Think as little, and pray as much as you possibly can; avoid musing by yourself, and reasoning. This is Satan's own ground, and we give him great advantage, if we venture to meet him upon it. Keep to the sword of the Spirit, the good word of God: if you resist him with this, he will flee from you; all other weapons are to him as straw and rotten wood. I enclose you a book which I think suits your case; but after all, the Lord keeps the key of comfort in his own hand. Your help must come from him,—though it tarry, wait for it. If you meet with those who say they are exempted from conflicts, you may take it for granted that they know not their own hearts. St. Paul does not talk so; he says, "Without were fightings, and within were fears." And he speaks of the warfare between flesh and spirit, as the common experience of all believers, *Galatians* v. 17.

Now I return to Mr. ——. I hope your diffidence gives way to practice and habit. If you can be content with

doing your best, without being solicitous about the judgment of your fellow worms, you will soon find every thing easy. You are right to think lowly of yourself, but you may magnify your office, and you ought. I am in no doubt but your fund and abilities are sufficient to qualify you for an acceptable extempore preacher, whenever you can get the better of your feelings for yourself; and the attempts you make in your own house, will be the best means of fitting you for public service. The great aim of preaching should be to make an *impression*; and this is more likely to be effected by *speaking* to your hearers than by *reading* to them. May you mount the pulpit with a deep impression upon your own heart of the evil of sin, the worth of souls, the love of Jesus, and the uncertainty of opportunities; and I warrant you will find something to say to your people. When you look round the congregation, it may be well to think, here is probably some one or more present, who are come to hear their last sermon; nor can I be sure, that this will not be the last day of my preaching. This thought will suggest, if not the most logical accuracy of method, or the most nicely turned period, yet such a pointed and earnest manner of address, as is best suited to reach the heart. And if you are useful to one soul, it will pay you for the scoffs of a hundred cavillers. If you are sometimes a little confused, yet be not discouraged. Such painful feelings may be necessary to keep you humble, and to remind you that your strength is not your own. I have been quite stopped in the pulpit, more than once, but I do not know that I am the worse for it now, or the worse thought of. I am per-

sueded you are competent, if you can learn to lean less upon your own preparations (which are proper in their place) than upon the Lord, who says to his ministers, "Lo, I am with you always." Meditate upon *Exodus* iv. 10, 11, 12, and remember Luther's maxim, *Bene precdsse est bene studuisse*. I advise you by all means to keep close to the *atonement*. The doctrine of the cross is the sun in the system of truth. It is seen by its own light, and throws light upon every other subject. This will soften hearts that will stand it out against threatenings. This opens a door of hope to the vilest—to despairing sinners. The strictness and sanction of the law must be preached, to shew sinners their danger; but the gospel is the only remedy, and suggests those motives, which are alone able to break off the sinner from the love of his sins, and to enable him to overcome the world. I pray the Lord to bless you and yours, and request a continuance of your prayers for me and mine.

I am,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

December 28th, 1793.

LETTER XIX.

MY DEAR SIR AND MADAM,

WE should be careful what habits we establish. I have been so long in the habit of writing frequently to —, that it seems a great while to myself since I wrote last, though your two letters before me are both dated since the year began.

I have only known Mr. — in the pulpit, and occasionally in the parlour, and but seldom in either. He bears a very good character amongst us, but I never lived with him. Your visit was not in vain. If you were not pleased with it, he was. He has spoken of you, I find, to more than one, and not to your disadvantage. Perhaps you expected too much, and you were baulked, to forward you in that difficult lesson, "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

I hope you will tell your friends that the print in the pocket book resembles any of them as much as it does me. But it is no great matter. The name at the bottom explains for whom it was intended. So I have sometimes been at a loss to decypher a country sign, till I read under it in plain letters, 'This is the Red Lion or the Bear.'

As to yourself, you have much cause for thankfulness, and you will always have need of patience. I advise you to believe as much, and to complain as little as possible. Complaining (unless to

him who is able to help us) is like stirring a fire, which, if left to itself, would die away. And the sum total of all only amounts to saying, I am yet sick. If you were not sick, you would neither apply to the physician nor prize him; for the *whole* see no need of him. Do not account it a small thing that he has opened your eyes, and shewn you what you are, what you want, and where to look for help. Be thankful for what you have, ask for more, go on in the plain path of duty, and wait quietly upon him; and in proportion as you are more sensible of your weakness, your real strength will increase.

On the fast-day I preached from *Jonah* iii. 9, and *Job* xxxiv. 29. The former sermon I wrote at length, and read it boldly in the face of the congregation. It is now in the press, or rather just coming out, and I suppose will be published the beginning of next week.

I cannot help Mrs. — because she will not believe the word of God, and therefore no wonder she will not believe me. He says, "I will in no wise cast out!" Why will she contradict him? If she could see that this flat opposition to the words of him, who is faithful and true, is the very worst of all her sins, and confess it as such, she would soon be relieved. She will not believe, because she is such a sinner; whereas, he came to save none but such as feel and own themselves to be chief sinners. Christ died on purpose that the vilest might have hope. However though she believes not, he is faithful; he cannot deny himself. He will by and by deliver her, and she will see better days. I cannot say when, but at the best

time. If her hour be not yet come, she must wait for it. It is as sure to come, as the sun to rise to-morrow.

I had but two silent Sabbaths. My leg is now sufficiently well for all necessary purposes. I can walk a mile or more without pain; but it will be sometime yet before I shall be able to run. A false step is easily made, but the effects are not so quickly surmounted. This is equally true of body and soul. I have need to pray daily, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." The Lord bless you, and make you a blessing to many. Go on sowing the good seed patiently, and trust the Lord for the crop. Some seed perhaps may spring up after your sowing time is over, and you will not know every instance in which you are now made useful.

Believe me to be,

Your very affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

March 14th, 1794.

LETTER XX.

MY DEAR SIR,

I AM not sorry that you must give your final determination before you can hear from me. How could I undertake to send you shoes from London, unless I exactly knew the size of your foot! Or how can I pretend to advise in the case before you, unless I was perfectly acquainted with every circumstance! I am willing to take it for granted that you meant in this instance to do what was right, and that you sincerely sought the Lord's direction. We seldom go wrong when we desire his guidance; and if, when our intentions are upright, we are permitted to make a mistake, he will overrule it for good. But when our peace of mind, or our characters are nearly concerned, if we lean not to our own understanding, we may rely on him to direct our paths, for he has promised that he will do so. If therefore you have accepted the new offer, I shall hope that the Lord is calling you to a place, where it will please him to bless you, and make you useful. On the other hand, if, upon mature deliberation, you resolve to remain where you are, I shall not be sorry. I hardly think that the personal comfort either of you or Mrs. — would be increased by an exchange; though the thought of personal ease ought to give way to the Lord's service, if he does indeed require you to

remove. You know the *whole* of your present situation,— of the other you can as yet know nothing. Your habits of life are adapted to L—; at the new living you would be in a new world. Where you are, you have been led on so gradually to preach the gospel, that your people are now prepared, and know what they are to expect; in the other place you would have all to begin over again. In short, while you have any hesitation, whether or not it would be right to go, I think the safest and surest side is to stay, till you obtain satisfaction that it is his will that you should arise and depart. I certainly dare not advise you to retain your present living, if you accept the other, unless you could contrive to be in two places at once. To hold a living for the sake of keeping the gospel in the place by a curate, is very plausible; but if the gospel is preserved there, I think the present incumbent is the most proper person to preserve it. I think our service is no less attached to our persons, than that of a sea captain; and I question if any of them undertake to navigate two ships at one time. Circumstances may excuse this. C— had two small livings at L—, but the place was so unfavourable to his health, that he could not live there; he holds them still, but he has the archbishop's express permission to put in a curate, and the archbishop knows, that so far from drawing a single shilling from a benefice which he does not personally serve, he is yearly out of pocket by his preferment. Pluralities are the great opprobrium of our church; and the earnestness with which they are sought and seized by those, whose care is not for the flock but the fleece, should make faithful ministers very cautious how they countenance

such mercenaries by their example. You would find it very difficult to procure two or three curates to your mind: I believe it would not be in my power to recommend *one* to you: and unless they were right men in their views, and agreeable to you in their dispositions, you would have a heavy burden. In short, from my opinion of your leading motives, I shall hope that if you determine to go, you have done well; but if you are resolved to stay, I shall think you have done better. Your people will love you more, when they know that a bait was thrown in your way to draw you from them, and that you refused to bite at it. A providential opening, as it is called, is sometimes but another name for a temptation, that is, a trial how far we can reduce our theory to practice. As ministers, we preach against the love of money; the Lord permits an occasion to be presented, to shew that we are disinterested, and that we love our charge too well to desert it, for what the world calls an advantage. And though the world may call a man a fool for refusing such advantages, I believe they will secretly respect both him and his profession the better for it. Such an opportunity Mr. F—— had, by declining the living of C——, though it was left him by will, and worth £600. per annum. But the opportunity of approving himself in the sight of the church and the world, was worth much more.

Poor Miss J——! If I was quite sure that I knew what I ask, I would pray earnestly for her recovery. I think I may warrantably pray, that either she may be restored to health, and spared long to your comfort; or that the Lord may give you to see such a gracious change in her, that you may be as willing to resign her, as I was to

part with my dear E. C. Give my love to her, and assure her that she is often upon my mind. My leg is better ; the good Lord preserve us from falls and strains and broken bones, in a spiritual sense. I commend you and yours to his care and blessing.

I am always,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

April 5th, 1794.

LETTER XXI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IF I had not thought your determination would be taken before my letter could reach you, I believe I should have delayed it two or three posts longer. I think Mrs. — said, she was thankful you were not to go, or to that purpose ; and as my judgment and wish rather inclined to your stay, I wrote rather to encourage than direct you, upon the supposition that you had resolved to remain where you are ; but as possibly

you might have changed your mind, I wrote as favorably as I could on the side of a removal. And I seem now not only to hope, but to believe, that you will not repent standing still, when you were not sure it was the Lord's will that you should go forward. I allow that a wife and seven children are eight weighty points which well deserve attention. But a minister is in a peculiar sense, or should be, a man of God, a servant of the Lord. And will such a master expose a faithful and devoted servant to needless difficulties? Your faith may be tried, but it will not be finally disappointed; your patience may be exercised, but you will find it is not in vain to wait upon him. I think it will not be said, 'Mr.— gave up a temporal advantage from a sense of duty, and the Lord would not have suffered him to want, *if he had not had a wife and seven children.*' Be of good courage; the silver is his, and the gold is his! He can make you as rich as a lord bishop, if he sees it good for you; or his blessing can make a little go a great way, as in the case of Elijah and the widow. There was never more than a little oil in the cruse, and a little meal in the barrel; but then there was *always* a little, enough for the present occasion. Or he can feed you by ravens; by men, who, if left to themselves, and not constrained to act as his instruments, would be more disposed to pick out your eyes, than to supply your wants. My office at Liverpool afforded me a tolerable competence, and it was what the world calls a certainty. I gave it up when I entered the ministry for a title of £30. per annum, in a place which I had never seen; and when I went to Olney, I had not £30. more in the world. I was unknown, had no

interest, nor any reasonable ground to expect a shilling from any person living. It is true I had no children, but I had a wife whom I tenderly loved. She had been brought up in plenty, and even in delicacy, and knew not, by her own experience, what the words hardship or straitness meant. If my change of life had subjected her to penury, I think I should have felt as much for her as I could have felt for many children. I was not without my apprehensions. She likewise was sensible of the apparent difference, but like Mrs. —, she was willing to venture all consequences, rather than interfere in, what appeared to me, a point of duty. The Lord, who enabled us to trust in him, provided for us means of which we, when we set out, had not the least conception. After I came to St. Mary's, I believe the first day I entered my house at Hoxton, those words occurred strongly to my mind, "When I sent you forth without purse or scrip, lacked you any thing?" I had good reason to answer as the apostles did, "Nothing, Lord!" I had not only been fed but feasted. The poor curate of £30. per annum had lived like a Rector during sixteen years that I was at Olney. Surely it was the Lord's doing. And at length, in placing me here, he has given me the very acme, the summit of my wishes. He made me willing to resign all; he enabled me to trust in his providence, and at length he did for me, without any application or care on my part, much more than, at the time, I could either ask or think. His promises are equally sure to you. Trust him, and he will do you good,—*Probatum est!* A conviction how short sighted I am, and how ignorant of the possible consequences of any step I may, by appearances,

be prevailed upon to take, has generally made me afraid of choosing for myself. The Lord has promised to choose for us, which is much better. We shall do well to believe that our present situation, be it what or where it may, (if we are lawfully there) is, upon the whole, the very best we can be in; and that when it ceases to be so, the Lord will change it, without our contrivance, and so visibly open the door for us, and so thoroughly satisfy our minds, that we shall move with wind and tide in our favor.

I hope the next accounts of Mrs. — will be better. The Lord puts her often in the furnace, that she may be a vessel of holiness, meetened and purified for his service. And he has a view to your benefit. If *you* were quite laid aside, your people would be at a loss, therefore some of your trials, when needful, must come through the medium of her whom you love, for I doubt not but when she suffers, you feel. It was thus with me for about thirty-five years; I had seldom a week's personal illness, yet was seldom well for a whole week at a time, because my dear was so frequently indisposed. But the promise says, "All shall work together for good." In less than an hundred years we shall not much care, who was sick, or who was well on May day, 1794.

The sooner you can break through the ice, with any company you have, the better. It is not needful to teaze them; but let them know plainly that your mind is made up, and that you are resolved, by grace, that whatever others do, you and yours will serve the Lord. This once done will set you at liberty. They will stare at you, or pity you for a season, but they will respect

you the more for your openness. Now and then, what Horace calls *the mollia tempora fandi* (*favourable opportunities for speaking*) will occur; when they do you will improve them. Let them see that your religion makes you cheerful and resigned. You may find a good effect when you least expect it. For you may set it down as a maxim, that every person has a conscience. The Lord bless you and yours.

I am,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

May 1st, 1794.

LETTER XXII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You have reason to think you have been neglected, but indeed you are not forgotten. We have been making a little circuit. Left dear home 27th June, and hope to see it again two days hence. Abroad is pleasant, but I love and long for home. I meet with

much kindness everywhere, but I am distant from No 6, and Mary Woolnoth.

You have the bible in your own hands: so far as Mr. T—— follows the scriptures, I wish you to follow him, but neither him or anybody else a step further. Catch good hints when you can, but call no man master. It seems, as Mr. T—— became more enlightened, he left the apostle Paul far behind. Paul tells us, that the chief points of his preaching were repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and it is probable that he was no less successful in his ministry than Mr. T——, who after he became so much enlightened, though I hope he did some good, I am sure did no little harm. He was much admired by proud, cavilling, censorious and trifling professors, and greatly confirmed them in their wrong spirit. *Hunc tu cavete.* He was a man of abilities, but his great light often led him to forget the gentleman and the christian.

You say, 'If I had been on my death-bed last week &c;' to this I answer, *Non Sequitur.* You were not on your death-bed, and therefore you cannot infer from your feelings then, how you would have felt if you had actually been going to die. What is death? Imagination forms it into a frightful spectre, and arms it with a great dart, but simply it is no more than ceasing to breathe. To a believer death has lost its sting, yea it is a non-entity. A believer cannot die. Our great friend, our head and representative, who is gone before to prepare a place for us, has promised to come again to receive us to himself. The fulfilment of this promise we call death. But as the presence of the sun dispels darkness, so our Lord, when he approaches to receive

us to himself, shines away all doubts, fears and disagreeables. So my dear E—— found it. She was a novice and a child. She had not time to acquire much depths of experience, much strength of grace, or to perform much service. But when the hour arrived, the Lord came, and brought light and glory with him. So that, though in appearance, she suffered much in body, she could say, if this be dying, it is a pleasant thing to die. So that while your thoughts of death are gloomy, I shall take it for granted, that you will not die, but live to declare the works of the Lord. I suppose no good farmer at —— will cut down his corn before it is ripe, nor will he let it stand much longer. Let us live to him now, and leave the time and manner of death to him. In the mean time do not wonder if your bodily illness has an effect upon the mind. When the body, the sole medium of the mind's perception, is vitiated, it cannot be otherwise ; for the Lord will not ordinarily interfere to break the natural connexion which he has established between causes and effects. It is sufficient that he will support us in trouble, or in due time deliver us. Be content to be poor, to be nothing in yourself, and you shall find that he will be all in all to you. You would not be angry with Miss —— and turn her out of doors for being sick ; and you know the Lord pities them that fear him, as a father pities his children, and much more. Mr. —— is a highly nervous man, and therefore variable. He is loud or low, long or short, very excellent, or but so so, by turns, according to the state of his spirits. When he is quite himself, he is one of the best preachers and speakers I know ; uncommonly elegant and accurate in his language, and his

thoughts are original, beautiful and spiritual. But as I said, he is not always alike, not even in the same day. As he is regularly ordained, I think you are not in much danger from the bishop, if you ask him to preach. How far it may suit with the prejudices of your people, you who are upon the spot, are the best judge. It would be a pity to inflame them for the sake of a sermon. If you fear admitting him into your pulpit, he may preach quite as well in an out-house or orchard; but I think you will find him one, whom you will not be unwilling to own as a brother.

I hope the Lord loves Miss ——, and therefore afflicts her. It is often good to bear the yoke in youth; I hope she will find it so. The good Lord bless us all.

I am,

Your affectionate and obliged,

JOHN NEWTON.

July 22nd, 1794.

LETTER XXIII.

SIX weeks have elapsed since I wrote to my good friends at ——. I have waited for an answer till I can wait no longer. As they never delayed so long before, I

fear something has happened ; for though I believe nothing *can* happen to them but what the Lord will overrule for their good, my imagination is fruitful in supposing many things, which for the present, at least, are not joyous but grievous, and they could not suffer without my feeling for them. . . . The Lord brought us home in safety 24th July, and we are much as when you were here ; for though I certainly grow older, I can hardly perceive it by any effects. My personal and family mercies, my home mercies, and my travelling mercies, would make a long list, if they could be all drawn out upon paper. When shall I be more thankful !

I am now advanced twenty-six days into my seventieth year ; and as I am willing, if the Lord please, to die at home, I believe without a special providential call of duty, I shall take no more journies beyond a stage or two from London, lest the summons should find me abroad. I do not say that the time of my departure *is* very near, but it becomes me to think it *may be so*. Come when it will, I shall be willing to go, if the Lord is pleased to give me strength according to my day, but not otherwise. It is easy to talk of dying, when death is at a distance, but actually to meet it, and look it in the face, without reluctance or dismay, is quite another thing. But I hope that when I pass through the valley, he will be with me, and then I shall not fear. However, I think I do not wish to live here always, though I have as many comforts pertaining to the outward life, as any *widower* in the kingdom. My path in life, compared with that of thousands, is remarkably smooth and pleasant. The road is not

to be complained of, as it leads to such a *home*, but it would be a poor place to seek a *rest in*. I meet with many things that are amusing, but with very few that are interesting to my heart. If it were not for my ministry and my profession, I think I should be weary of going round and round, like a horse in a mill, repeating the same track from day to day, and yet this is the best of it ; if I had more varieties they must be painful, for I can think of no changes that would improve the pleasant part.

We had a comfortable tour. There is a good work going forward at Cambridge, both in the university and in the town. I preached there four times, and in six other churches in different places. At —, there is a Mr. —. He and his wife are a happy united pair. His income is strait, about £70. per annum, and they have two children. They have both very indifferent health ; and are seldom both tolerably well two days together. He can only preach once in the week, and that once frequently lays him aside for two or three days ; yet they are so resigned and thankful, so well satisfied with their allotment, that it was well worth the journey to see such an instance of the power of grace, and the truth of the promise. At — there is a Mr. — who inquired after you. He is acceptable and useful to the people, but the bishop wants to force him from the curacy, though he is, or to be married, and lately was a fellow of Sidney College. As he is a man of property, of note in the university, and has good connexions, he is advised to put it to trial whether the bishop can legally dismiss him, by his *sic volo, sic jubeo*, without assigning any reason, and against the wish of

the rector, who has been long incapable of duty. Some of these great lords think they can trample upon curates as they please. If the Lord enables Mr. — to stand his ground, it may perhaps prevent similar oppression in other instance. I think you and I have reason to be thankful that we are neither bishops nor curates. Let us daily exchange prayers. I commend you both and your family to our Lord's gracious care,

And remain,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

September 1st, 1794.

LETTER XXIV.

MY DEAR SIR,

. . . . THE money did not come from Mr. T—. It is the Lord who sends both to you and to me, *what and when* he sees fit: men are but his instruments. I am glad you have made acquaintance with —. I only know him by character, and by a volume of his sermons. I trust he is one of the right sort, and that you will be mutually helpful to each

other. Many of Mr. ——'s people have a zeal not according to knowledge. They both dislike and dread calvinism, because they are so taught; and therefore they so teach others. If there be such at ——, they are more likely to hinder Mr. —— than to help him. If he will associate with you, I hope you will counteract any prejudice or error. But I wish you studiously to avoid disputation. Keep close to plain scripture, and plain experience; and if his heart be awakened, it will answer in unison to your own. It is not necessary to be able to explain, or even to understand, every passage in scripture. There are, and will be, hard places, *δυσσινητα*. . . . Some of these gradually become more easy as we advance, and some are always useful to keep us humble, and sensible of our own weakness. But proud self would fain be wise, or at least appear so, and supposes he is competent to clear up every difficulty. The old saying, though not elegant is very true, *Pruritus disputandi, scabies Ecclesiae*. I would say nothing about either Wesley or Calvin; let us search the scriptures, and feel the pulse of our own hearts.

I know not whereabouts in Cardiphonia, I recommended Edwards on Free Will, nor what I said, nor why. I was younger then than I am now. I do not now recommend it to your farmers, nor even to yourself. Mr. E. was an excellent man, but some of his writings are too metaphysical, and particularly that book. If I understand it, I think it rather establishes fatalism and necessity, than calvinism in the sober sense. I could object likewise to his book on Original Sin, though there are many excellent things in it. I

am thankful that the scriptures, which are designed to make us wise unto salvation, and the gospel which is designed for the poor, are not encumbered with metaphysical subtleties. The first Adam brought death and woe into the world by sin; the second Adam repairs all the mischief, with respect to those who believe in his name. These positions are plain, they are revealed by the highest authority, and universally confirmed by fact, experience, and observation. What need we more? Mr. Walker, of Edinburgh, observes somewhere, that *the gospel is too good to be believed, and too plain to be understood*. I think this witness is true.

Now I am grown old, I am cautious of recommending books. I advise every body to study the scriptures with prayer; to draw from the fountain head, and to examine and try the writings of men by the infallible standard; and not to pay too implicit a regard to the sentiments of great authors or preachers. The best are defective, and the wisest may be mistaken. However, if when you write next, you will inform me of the best mode of conveyance, I will send you the works of Mr. Riccaltoun, a Scotch divine, in three volumes, 8vo., which lately came in my way, and which I think have both confirmed and enlarged my views of gospel truth. It is a singular book, and admirably calculated to sweep away the metaphysical cobwebs, which learned men have spun to embellish, or rather, as I think, to disfigure the simple plan of salvation. I am thankful that you have a first fruit farmer to rejoice in. May he prove the earnest of a plentiful harvest! But you must not expect an apple from every blossom. I fear you would get but little

good from acquaintance with —. Be cautious. .
 You *have* your trials: I have had
 them, and perhaps more are waiting us both; but we
 have likewise had our supports. We see others more
 sharply tried than ourselves, and the time is short. It
 shall be well with them that fear the Lord, *Psalm* xlv.
 1, 2, 3, indeed the whole Psalm. I believe this will
 not reach you by Monday; if it does, you will think of
 me. It was on the 15th December that she dropped a
 tear and grasped my hand, &c. ! I still feel,—but she
 is out of reach of alarms from the French, and of all
 anxiety and pain: we shall follow her soon. May
 grace and peace dwell with you and yours.

I am,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

December 12th, 1794.

LETTER XXV.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

. . . . I HOPE by this time you have
 received Riccaltoun's books, which I sent immediately
 to Mr. Mathews, and he said they were in time. I

advise you to read them through in order. I think you will like his 'Essay on the Human Constitution,' though of a metaphysical cast; it seems designed as an antidote to the metaphysics which usually obtain among the learned. However, it is a substratum to the following essays. I wish likewise that neither the author's masterly manner, nor my recommendation of him, may induce you to take him upon trust. Some of his sentiments may, perhaps, appear novel and singular to you, and here and there I hesitate; but as we have the bible, to which he appeals, we may judge for ourselves, as well as he. But upon the whole, I am thankful that I have seen his books, which, though I have but little leisure for reading, I have gone through twice, and have now in hand the third time. It is amazing to me that such a work should have been so long hidden. For the first impression, though more than twenty years ago, was not half sold; and when the copy I received put me upon inquiry, I could find few either in England or Scotland who had heard of the book. I believe I may have been instrumental to the sale of near a hundred copies. I know not if I mentioned to you another book, which, as it has been much talked of, may have found its way into your country,—Fuller's answer to Dr. Priestly. The title at length is, 'The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems compared, as to their tendency on Morals.' The author is a baptist minister, a plain man, unlearned, and even illiterate, when he first set out, but of a strong capacity and application. It is an answer indeed: I think strictly unanswerable, nor have any of the party (I think) attempted a reply. I can recommend

this book with less restriction than the other. It is at once a beautiful summary of christian doctrine, and the best conducted book of controversy that I ever met with. Give my love to Mr. ——. I repeat my advice to him and to you, to read the scriptures with prayer, to keep close to the most important points, of human depravity, regeneration, the atonement, and the necessity of divine teaching. If a man is born again, hates sin, and depends upon the Saviour for life and grace, I care not whether he be an arminian or a calvinist. If he be not born again, he is nothing, let him be called by what name he will. I wish you both likewise to keep your complaints and difficulties to yourselves, as much as you can, and to wear as cheerful a countenance as possible. We must be careful not to confirm people in their common prejudice, that religion is a dull melancholy affair. . . . But above all things, study the bible. It is usually a cause of perplexity to young beginners, if they pore over commentaries and human authors, where they often find *quot homines, tot sententiæ*, and perhaps get a wrong bias at setting out, which they cannot easily out-grow afterwards. Let us think of him who died upon the cross, and now rules in glory for sinners. One heart affecting thought of him will inspire hope and confidence; and these will strengthen our hands, and make us willing to do or to suffer. Whereas living upon dry schemes, spinning distinctions, and splitting hairs; or, on the other hand, indulging desponding complaints, will make us languid and spiritless. God has spoken, let us rejoice. Let us praise him for what he has shewn us, and wait patiently upon him to shew us more. For in effect he is the only

teacher. While he reigns in heaven, he writes with his finger on the hearts of men upon earth. As to success in the ministry, aim at it, long for it, pray for it. You are not responsible for the event; nor are you a proper judge of what is going forward. The husbandman does not sow to day, and expect to reap to-morrow. He knows the seed is in the ground, though he cannot see it, and has long patience till it spring up. It is not what you think, or I think, but what saith the scripture? Besides, if we could calculate the worth of a soul, we should find that to be an instrument of saving one person is worth all the pains we have taken, or can take. Perhaps the sooner you can learn to *talk* with your people in the pulpit, the sooner you will see them more impressed by your sermons. Think as lowly as you please of *yourself*, but by all means magnify *your office* as an ambassador of Christ.

I am glad you have seen Dr. —, and can confirm what I have heard of him. Whatever he is now, he was once dead in trespasses and sins. All that he has he received, and you are invited to the same bountiful donor, who giveth to all liberally. . . . I thank the Lord if he makes my writings useful. I hope they contain some of his truths; and truth, like a torch, may be seen by its own light, without reference to the hand that holds it. As to the dark times, the scriptures (which must be fulfilled) prepare us to expect such. The Lord reigns, and he will overrule all events to his own glory, and the good of the church. He will likewise be a strong hold in the day of trouble to those who trust in him. Let us mourn over the sin and misery which fill the world, and leave the rest to him.

If he careth for us, we need not be anxious for ourselves. Read *Psalm* ii. and xlv. every morning fasting; it is a good prescription to keep the frost of fear out of the stomach. The Lord bless you all, you and your children, and L——. Tell her I pray for her; tell her all will be well by and by.

I am yours indeed,

JOHN NEWTON.

January 23rd, 1795.

LETTER XXVI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I CAN perceive that Mrs. ——— gets forward, whether she can perceive it or not. She is sometimes much alarmed, and sometimes gets a little lift from Mr. Riccaltoun. But I wish her not to lay too much stress either way upon man's judgment. She has the scriptures in her hand. Is she weary and heavy laden? Did our Lord invite such to come to him, and promise them rest? Did he mean what he said? Is he able to make his word good? If these

things are so, she has only to wait upon him, and in due time he will fill her with a peace passing all understanding. A sense of weakness and unworthiness which often discourage her, are the two best evidences of a work of grace that can be produced. For he did not come into the world to help the strong or to save the righteous, but those who see that without him they must perish. So far as we look in ourselves for qualifications, so far we turn from the great point of the gospel, which is set before us without money and without price. If our outward conversation is becoming the gospel, the more sensible we are of our inward vileness the better. But though this should humble us, it ought not to discourage us, any more than a sense of sickness should keep us from applying to a physician. The chief thing is a new birth, which is evidenced by new desires and pursuits. Neither of you can deny, that you now seek what you once slighted, and avoid the things which once pleased you. Be thankful for what the Lord has done, and wait on him in his appointed means, and he will do more. Give my love to —. I pity her a little, but not much, when I consider her present peace and future expectations. She is probably within a few weeks or months of heaven, where all her wounds will be instantly healed, and her tears wiped away. When she joins the assembly before the throne, she will not be an object of pity; and as this is likely to be very soon, I cannot greatly pity her at present, especially as I believe she will find strength equal to every day while she remains here, and to the last step of life. You will find as I told you, that Riccaltoun is not a book for common readers.

His Essays on the Human Constitution, and on *Gal.* ii. 20, have I think added something to me. Some of his sentiments appeared to me singular and rather novel; but we are not bound to receive them further than we think he has proved them by scripture. He writes with a firmness of tone which shews that he is fully persuaded in his own mind: but I would be cautious of swallowing a system by wholesale. I wish to prize a truth if I found it in Hume or Bolingbroke; and not to adopt a mistake, because supported by a man whose writings I approve in the main. I am not sure that Riccaltoun is wrong, when I hesitate to give my full assent to his sentiments; but I must be satisfied that he is right, before I can make them my own. When we eat an apple, we usually first pare it, then cut out the specks, eat what is good, and lastly throw the core away. Such a rule I would observe in reading *human* authors,—the best may be defective, and the wisest mistaken. We are not only permitted, but enjoined, to call no *man* master. . . . Give my love to Mr. —. Now the Lord has called him to put his hand to the plough, I trust he will not look back, but press forward. *Plus ultra* should be our motto. He will probably meet with some things not pleasing to the flesh, but he is not liable to be buffeted, spit upon, scourged, and torn with thorns. We know who submitted willingly to all this, and more, for our sakes,—shall we not cheerfully endure something for his sake? The apostle's word, *αναλογισασθε*,* is a term of calculation. Compare him with yourselves,

* *Consider*, Heb. xii. 3.

and his sufferings with yours, and you will be ashamed to shrink or to complain. However, it is best to set out (as they say) soft and fair. Not to be unseasonably importunate, nor to lay too much stress upon comparatively small things. To wait, as it were, for wind and tide; for what may be impracticable at one time, may be easy at another. For want of this prudence, which perhaps is seldom learnt but in the school of experience, we sometimes increase our own difficulties, and impede our probable usefulness. In many things we must dare to be singular, but a needless singularity should be avoided. Mrs. G—— has her trials, and so have all whom the Lord honors with eminence of grace in their profession. Prosperity may cause us to rise *in* the world, but affliction is needful to raise us *above* the world. Abraham, Moses, Job, and others, met with great trials; not perhaps every day; but there are *turns* in life, which, now and then, at least, will put our faith and patience to the test; and these graces grow by exercise, and would languish without it. Let us fear sinning,—fear grieving the Holy Spirit by wilful disobedience, and then we need fear nothing else. The Lord will be our sanctuary, and we may be confident in him, though the earth should be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea. The very hairs of our head are all numbered, and his eye is upon us for good, from the beginning to the end of the year.

In January, 1788, I began the history of Israel, for a subject on Sunday evening, in and from Egypt, through the wilderness. Last Sunday I took leave of them from *Joshua* xxiv. 25, having seen them safely

fixed in the promised land. Thus the Lord has spared me to finish what I began more than seven years ago. The arrival of Mrs. ——'s letter calls my attention to another subject. I feel for you all. The Lord has done it, and therefore it must be right. Our peace depends upon a childlike submission to his holy will, which may be exercised, though we sharply feel the affliction he is pleased to lay upon us. I mourn, said a good man, but I do not murmur. This is a weeping world, and this a weeping time; but you, my dear madam, and your parents, are not left to sorrow as those without hope. You are passing on to a better world: you are interested in the precious promises; all things are engaged to work together for your good, and the days of your mourning will be quickly ended. In the meantime, your husband and your own children are preserved to you. Had the stroke reached them, it would have wounded you still more deeply. In our lowest times, we may find innumerable causes for thankfulness. May the Lord place a long list of them before your mind, that you may rejoice, yea, glory in tribulation also! . . . I commend you all to the care of the great and good Shepherd.

I am,

Your very affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

March 4th, 1795.

LETTER XXVII.

DEAR AND HONORED SIR,

So you begin, and therefore so will I. Let us both be honored, or neither. . . . Mr. S——, it seems, is gone home, and we are following. May our end be like his, and then we need not be solicitous about the when, or the how. The evening will crown the day. Till our services are finished, *we* are immortal; and when *we* have done, the Lord will still find instruments to carry on his work. I am glad to find Doctor —— comes forward in the Magazine. The instance he gives of weak faith, is, as he observes, by no means singular. The stoutest believer in the kingdom, would find himself as weak, if the Lord was to suspend his influence. I should not say that man who followed and served the Lord, walked honorably in his profession, and overcame the world for a course of many years, was a person of weak faith, because he met with conflicts, and was kept short of comfort in his last illness. Faith, perhaps, is never stronger than when it is most tried. Job's faith was not weak, when he said in defiance of all dark appearances, "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.*" Yet, to be sure, faith may be said to be weak, when it cannot depend simply upon the work and promise of the Saviour, without expecting some extraordinary manifestations, to confirm

its warrant; but this weakness we are all liable to. When we are lively and comfortable in our frames; that is, when we see or feel, then we believe. But though such comfortable manifestations are very desirable, they are not the scriptural evidences of faith, which may be true and even strong without them. The object of faith is Christ, as living, dying, rising, reigning, interceding, for sinners. The warrant to believe is the word of God, "This is my beloved son, hear him." "Him that cometh to me, I will in *no wise* cast out." "He is able to save to the uttermost, &c." The proper act of faith is to receive these testimonies, and to cast ourselves on this Saviour, without regarding any thing in ourselves, but a consciousness that we are unworthy, helpless sinners, and that we are willing and desirous to be saved in this way of God's appointment. The best evidences that we believe, are a broken spirit, obedience to the Lord's precepts, submission to his will, and love to his cause and people. Our frames and sensible feelings are like the weather, changeable, and equally out of our power. I should think the doctor's friend was affected by low spirits, or what we call nervous disorders; and these I well know, are sufficient to hide comfort from us,—yea, in many cases, to plunge a strong believer into a state of despair for a season. Thus it is with my dear friend Cowper, who has been miserable, and to his own apprehension, forsaken of God, for many years; though for many years before, he was a burning and a shining light, full of alacrity in the Lord's service, and rejoicing in the sunshine of his presence. But in the midst of all these changes, the foundation of God

standeth sure. We must be willing to let the Lord work as he sees fit. If souls are delivered from guilt and sin, it does not much signify whether it be in a church or in a meeting house. I am sorry, with you, that so many dissenting ministers are dissatisfied ; but I hope and believe that in London the majority of the evangelical ministers are good friends to government, and not inimical to the established church ; but are thankful that they have liberty to worship God agreeable to their own judgment. I am glad you found Doctor and Mrs. — tolerably well, and resigned to the Lord's appointment. He is faithful to his promise, and will enable those who walk humbly before him, to say in the time of trouble, and in defiance of the reasonings of flesh and blood, It is the Lord, he is wise and good, and therefore all he does must be right.

Written sermons may be excellent in their kind, but a word warm from the preacher's heart, is more likely to warm the hearts of the hearers. You are not now a novice, nor are you destitute of a fund of general knowledge. Pray and try, and I hope you will soon be an extempore preacher. Begin in your family and house meetings. Write a little for the pulpit, and gradually it would free you from a great burden, and save you time for other useful purposes. You cannot easily conceive how much may be done by faith and prayer, when once you are willing to trust the Lord. You preach to a plain people ; why should you be afraid to speak to them, when you speak in his name? Now, Madam, I come to your part. You write about sickness and death, and fear and unbelief— all sorrowful subjects ; but they are familiar to thou-

sands whom you never saw. Such is the lot of mortality—such the nature of the christian warfare. You ask, when shall I say, my God? I answer, you will never have better warrant to say so, than at present. You will say it, whenever you can trust in his word, as much as you would in mine. But we cannot shake off our natural unbelief by any effort of our own. Wait and pray with patience, and he will enable you in due time to call him *yours*. You think if you could do this, you should not be alarmed though the mountains were cast into the midst of the sea; but you are mistaken. They whom you think strong in the faith, are no less apt to be moved with trifles, if left a little to themselves, than you are. They have nothing inherent, and are only strong as the Lord strengthens them.

. . . . You see the Lord can work in the darkest places, and by unlooked for means. He knows how and where to find his lost sheep; and when they begin to seek *him*, they may be sure that he has been before hand with them, and has sought and found them first. I know not if I have answered Mr. —'s former letter. . . . What you complain of in yourself, comprises the best marks of grace I can offer. A sense of unworthiness and weakness, joined with a hope in the Saviour, constitutes the character of a christian in this world. But you want the witness of the Spirit: what do you mean by this? Is it a whisper, or a voice from heaven, to encourage you to believe that you may venture to hope, that the promises of God are true, that he means what he says, and is able to make his word good? Your eyes are opened, you are weary of sin, you love the way of salvation yourself,

and love to point it out to others ; you are devoted to God, to his cause, and people. It was not so with you once. Either you have somewhere stolen these blessings, or you have received them from the Holy Spirit. While you are slow to believe what the Lord has absolutely promised, you are expecting and hankering after what he has not promised. What he has done for you, amounts to the best witness of the Spirit. But there is a spice of legality in you,—you want to have something that you might admire in yourself, but you will get more solid comfort by looking to Jesus and *admiring him*. Try to be thankful ; be as much humbled as you please, but do not expect to be an angel while you are in the body. If you had no feeling of sin in you, why should you confess yourself to be a sinner ? Depend upon it, if you walk closely with God forty years, you will at the end of that term, have a much lower opinion of yourself, than you have now. So Job, at the end of his trials, could say more emphatically than ever, “ Behold, I am vile ; ” and we are sure the latter end of Job was better than his beginning, though that likewise was good. I hope when you go over Riccaltoun again, you will pick something out of him upon this subject ; and that he will teach you not only to lament unbelief as your infirmity, but to fight against it, and to start from it with abhorrence, as a very great sin. Treat it as you would treat a suggestion to murder one of your children. Was Mr. ——’s case yours, I would advise you either to resign the living, or to serve it yourself. There is a responsibility attached to a living, and though human laws and customs allow a dispensation,

it must remain in *foro conscientiæ*. No shepherd can take care of two flocks at once in two different countries. To keep a living, for the profits remaining, when the pay of the curate is deducted, is a poor affair.

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I am,

Your affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

May 7th, 1795.

LETTER XXVIII.

MY DEAR KIND SIR,

I AM glad that both our honors are laid quietly in the dust. I will not refuse your epithet of kind, for I certainly feel much kindness for you and Mrs. ——. You likewise are very kind. We live in an unkind world; let us therefore go on, and shew

as much kindness to each other as we possibly can. Whether we receive or communicate good, we are but instruments in the Lord's hands,—let us give him *all* the praise! If our hearts are but right towards him, we shall not fail in the exercise of mutual love between ourselves, and love is the fulfilling of the law. A comparative strain of writing, as if one was more or less than the other, is better avoided, unless it could be proved that either had any thing which he had not received. Mr. Berridge, who had a way of his own, reproved a friend who wrote-over respectfully to him, in these words, 'It is as if a frog should croak out a compliment to a toad.' It is true, I would persuade you to believe, and even that you do believe; but I would not willingly deceive you, neither do I wish to persuade you into a good opinion of yourself. Need I say much to persuade you that you are a sinner, that Jesus is the only Saviour, and that he is *able* at least to save to the uttermost? Surely you believe these points; but did you always believe them in the manner you do now? Perhaps there was a time when such letters as mine would have offended you! How came the change about? *I* could not have effected it. You must either say, the Lord persuaded me, or I persuaded myself. Which horn of this dilemma will you choose? If you ascribe it to the Lord, thank him for what he has done, and wait patiently upon him for more. You appeal to the word of God for the best evidences of faith. There I read, "To this man will I look, to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." I should prefer this evidence, could I perceive it more clearly in myself, to all the fine

flights which are talked of, or expected, by the term assurance, in the early stages of profession. If you shew me a tree, and tell me it is an apple tree,—can I reasonably deny it, because in the spring I cannot see one apple upon it, but only flowers and blossoms? Could I expect the apples to jump at once out of the buds, full grown, and fully ripe? Nothing *can* hinder *the union between your soul and Christ*, because it is already formed; otherwise you would not have a single blossom to shew, for a dead branch produces no blossoms. Whoever doubts or disbelieves the *leading truths* of the gospel, is not very fit to be a preacher; but a man who has never felt doubts or shakings respecting *his own interest* in them, is not likely to be the most acceptable and useful preacher to a congregation. I should not choose such a man for my pastor. He would probably shoot over my head, and be so taken up with his own strength and comfort, as not to be able to stoop to the level of my experience. After Paul had seen invisibles, and heard unutterables, he was visited by a messenger from Satan, to keep him from being exalted above measure, not only in his spirit, but, as I conceive, in the mode of his teaching also. Some of his hearers might have said, ‘You may well speak so confidently, for you have been in the third heavens, but you cannot understand my case. I am grappling with sin, temptation, and unbelief; and therefore though you speak the truth, you do not speak to *me*.’ For this reason among others the gospel was not committed to angels, but to frail and sinful men. An angel is fit to preach to angels; but a poor sinner might say, ‘I could talk like you, if I was an angel

likewise.' You are in that school in which the Lord teaches his ministers to speak a word *in season* to him that is weary. I wish you may be more willing to learn, that you may be more able to teach. Like your great Master, you are exercised in various ways, for the sake of others; and when you are acquainted with their fears, trials, and conflicts, your own experience will qualify you to pity them, and to advise them. Dido's sentiment will be yours, *Haud ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco.* (*Myself no stranger to affliction, I learn to succour the wretched.*) I can feel for Mr. — in his trials, for though I have not been affected by low spirits and nervous disorders for many years, I have been very conversant with such cases. I account myself a sort of doctor to persons troubled in mind. Not that I can relieve them, but because I think I understand their cases. The human frame is the medium of the soul's perceptions, and when the animal spirits, or nervous fluid, or by whatever name the physicians please to call that hidden inscrutable something which pervades and influences the constitution, is affected in a certain way; it is to the mind, what a coloured glass is to the eye, it gives a tincture to every object. Yea it opens a door to the enemy, and gives him access to the imagination. I cannot explain this, but I have no doubt of the fact. Then storms and confusion reign: wild, and often dreadful suggestions are poured in with irresistible force.

I have known several persons, with whom the Lord has dealt as he did with Nebuchadnezzar, deprived of their senses for a time, and when restored, they have been brought truly to their right minds, and to the

knowledge of themselves. I hope and pray it may be so in this instance, then we may sing, in Mr. Cowper's words,—

‘The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.’

I hope the ship is not yet sinking, but she is very leaky, the weather stormy, and, what is still worse, there is a dangerous mutiny on board. But the Lord has a treasure in her, a people who know his name, and are crying to him night and day. For their sakes I trust she will be still kept above water. Mr. — is an able minister, and a good man; but the politico-mania is a hurtful disease when it seizes on a christian. He was some weeks in London last summer, and was usually with me three or four times a week. We agreed well face to face, for we had neither leisure nor inclination to talk about politics. Send my love to —. She judges right in preferring spiritual advantages to temporal; and I believe with you she will lose nothing by the Lord. He will make all up, either in kind or in kindness.

Continue to pray for us, and believe me to be,

Your affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

June 23rd, 1795.

LETTER XXIX.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I PERCEIVE, with pleasure, that you get forward, and am glad you begin to find that prayer and praise turn to better account than complaining. There are certainly many tokens for good in your experience, if you will but be satisfied with such as are scriptural, without impatiently expecting what the scripture has not mentioned as essential to a state of grace. I wish you to abide by the word of God, rather than to propose the sentiments of your fellow creatures as a standard. The best of them are defective, the wisest, in some points, mistaken. You say that Dr. ——'s account of the man whom he produces as an instance of weak faith, did not encourage you, but it did Mrs. G——, and *she must be right*. She is indeed one of the most excellent women I know, but her spirits are much broken by trials and sickness, and therefore her better judgment is sometimes clouded by temptations and unbelief. Whatever she may sometimes say *of herself*, I believe she would say *to you*, as I do, that the best assurance arises from a simple reliance upon the record which God has given of his Son, without being cast down by the sense either of your weakness or your unworthiness. The sensible comforts you long after,

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however desirable, are not properly assurance, nor even faith. Such an assurance we may possess and lose several times in the same day. It is the effect of a lively frame, and our frames are variable as the weather. This is rather *seeing* than *believing*. But the true faith of assurance is to trust God in the dark; to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:" and to oppose to all objections, this one short answer, "Christ has died, is risen, &c." A good old woman, a dear friend of mine, was asked upon her death-bed, if she was comfortable? She answered, 'very far from it.' Then you are not willing to die. 'Quite willing,' she said; 'If my Father pleases to put me to bed in the dark, I can trust him.' This is what I call assurance, and you shall have it in due time; but you must wait, and grow into it, through conflicts and changes, as others have done before you. The case of Mrs. — is affecting. I admire the candour of the priest. It certainly was not right to renounce her protestant profession for worldly motives; but I would not have her distress about it. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin, and this is but one, perhaps not the greatest amongst a multitude. . . . At some season, let her simply open her mind to him, in a manner not to thwart his prejudices, but merely to plead for the right and peace of her own conscience. If she does this in a spirit of meekness, lifting up her thoughts to him who has all hearts in his hand for his blessing, I should hope the event may be happy. While this cross continues, she must pray for grace to bear it patiently. Sometimes, when the Lord pardons our imprudence, he may permit us to feel the painful

consequences a good while, perhaps to the end of life ; but if we obtain mercy, we have no reason to complain. Let her remember that power belongeth to the Lord ; that he is a hearer of prayer, and can easily make crooked things straight. A friend of mine knows a lady, who when she was young, went to France to finish her education, and to the great grief of her parents, returned a Roman Catholic. They were people of consequence, and procured the late archbishop of Canterbury to talk with her. He began, ' I am sorry, Miss, to hear that you have changed your religion.' But she soon silenced him by saying, ' Indeed, my Lord, I have not ; I assure you I accepted the *first* religion that was proposed to me.' Perhaps it was so with Mrs. ——. Many of the popish clergy, however mistaken, are at least industrious ; whereas the bulk of ours, care but little whether their parishioners have any religion or none. . . . Remember the words of Mr. Elliot, of New England : when with much trouble he had learnt the Indian language, and translated into it a great part of the bible, he wrote in his diary,—' N. B. Prayer, faith, and patience, can perform wonders,'—or words to that effect. By the Lord's goodness, we are all in good health, and in peace. May a blessing from on high rest upon you and yours.

I am,

Your affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

June 25th, 1795.

LETTER XXX.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WHAT think you of this title? I hope neither you nor I can object to this compellation. Let us therefore adopt it in future. Blessed be God, we are now better than 'frogs or toads.' We are friends and *brothers*, and some of us *sisters* in Christ Jesus, according to the new table of consanguinity and affinity established by himself, *Mark* iii. 35, *Luke* xi. 28. You will see an Omicron in the magazine for August, which I had sent off to the publisher, about an hour before your last reached me, and that will serve in part for an answer to your inquiries about my views of Riccaltoun's books. The antinomians draw all their scheme from the *abuse* and *perversion* of scripture; and if they should pervert Mr. R——'s sentiments, it cannot be helped. We should be confined to a narrow compass, if we were to say nothing but what evil-minded men cannot abuse. You may observe, he repeatedly supposes, that no man can possess or exercise what *he* means by faith, unless by a new birth he is partaker of a new life, and translated into a new world. It is essential to this faith that it purifies the heart. I think we may (as we ought) warn our hearts against mistaking notion

for faith, without contradicting any thing that Riccaltoun has advanced upon the subject. Nor does he say, if I understand him, that faith is not genuine if it falls short of appropriation, but only that the defect is owing to unbelief, and that unbelief should not be merely lamented as an infirmity, but watched and fought against as a great sin, because it refuses to give that credit to the God of truth, which we readily give to the word of an honest man. A child, newly born, if the eldest son of a great man or a king, is as much the heir from the moment of his birth, as when he is of age; but while he is an infant he has no conception, and during his childhood but a very faint one, of the privileges to which his birth entitles him. Perhaps for a time he rejoices more in a few shillings in his own pocket, than in all the honors and wealth to which he is born. But as he grows older he gradually becomes wiser. Thus young converts rejoice in grace received, in frames and comforts: but advanced and experienced believers rejoice and are strong in the grace which is *in Christ Jesus*; and that, as one with him, unworthy as they are in themselves, their names are written in heaven. To your question in what respects Riccaltoun has added to me,—in general I may say, much every way. That is, in those points in which I fully agree with him, (for on some I still hesitate, though I cannot satisfactorily answer his arguments,) I think he has added to the clearness and certainty of my ideas. In particular: first, his *Essays on Happiness and on the Human Constitution*, have enlarged and strengthened my views of the human frame, of the real difference between matter and spirit, between animal and spiritual

powers, &c., and more confirmed my judgment in the nature of the new birth,—that there is not only a change wrought, but a new creature produced. That the life of God is as much distinct from the rational life, and superior to it, as the rational is to the mere animal. Some brutes, horses and dogs for instance, are wonderfully sagacious in their way, and by words and blows are taught to do many things which seem beyond the ordinary sphere of their species; but I suppose it is impossible to teach them algebra. So man in his fallen state, may by education, example, and endeavour, rise far above the level of his fellow mortals. He may become sober, prudent, benevolent, and even religious upon his own ground; but I believe, with all his advantages and attainments, he can have no more perception of spiritual truth, than a man born blind can have of light and colours. So that the difference between the moralist in his highest state and the believer in his lowest state, is essential, not in degree but in kind; no less so than the difference between a man and a bear. I have long thought so, but I would be thankful that I have read Riccaltoun on the subject. Secondly, his four essays on *Gal.* ii. 20, have not only confirmed, but enlarged my views concerning union with Christ, his life living in the soul, and the true import of being crucified with him. He says some things upon these subjects, which I not only accept as truths, but which to me were new, and lay beyond my ken till he brought them before me. Thirdly, his third volume appears to me the most masterly exposition I ever met with; and I think enables me to understand the whole of the epistle to the Galatians, as well as several detached passages in

it, better than I did before I read him, or than I might have done to the end of my life. I know not in what part of Cardiphonia to find the expression you allude to, 'That I could not speak so assuredly of my own personal interest in the Redeemer, as to say particularly of myself, that he loved me and gave himself for me;' but some of those letters were written thirty years ago. Perhaps I should not have said so, at any time since you knew me, though I had never seen Riccaltoun. It appears to me, that if I profess to believe in Christ for salvation, and yet was afraid to say "he loved me, &c." I make a distinction without a difference. For unless he loved me and gave himself for me, what ground or reason can I have to believe in him at all? Not having been bred at Cambridge, I am not skilful in framing syllogisms, but perhaps this will pass:—

Christ loved and gave himself for all sinners who believe in him;

But I am a sinner who believe in him.

Ergo.—He loved me and gave himself for me.

The major is true if the gospel be so. The minor I trust is true likewise. I certainly am a sinner and a great one, and I know not well how to doubt whether I believe in *him*, or depend upon myself for salvation. Surely not upon *myself* any more than upon *you*! In his strength therefore I will draw and hold fast the conclusion. . . . I am often with you in spirit. Methinks I am at — just now. I smile at the thought of meeting you at the door, and perhaps you would smile, if you could see me as I stand there. Mr. Romaine is gone home. He lived honorably and usefully, and died comfortably. Is not this a sufficient epitaph

for a sinful man! May it be applicable to me, to you, to dear Mrs. ——. The Lord bless you all, and us also. Amen.

I am,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

August 1st, 1795.

LETTER XXXI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I MUST send a codicil to my last, for I was so taken up with Riccaltoun, that I perceived, after it was gone, I had left a great part of yours unanswered.

I congratulate you on your liberty in your more *private meetings*, and take it as a token that you will soon find it at *church*. Mr. Scott is perhaps the most ready and fluent extempore preacher amongst us; yet when he agreed with me on other

points, he still insisted that he should never be able to preach without a book. For some time he read his prayer in his chamber, with his wife, and had not confidence to let even her hear him without a form. I encouraged him to try, and afterwards put him upon praying a little before sermon, which he first attempted with much fear and trembling, but he got through. He was busied in preparing some young people for confirmation, but still he read every word he said. One day, he was so taken up, that he could not possibly write his homily. He was forced to speak, and as it was in the church, where several other people would attend, he was quite distressed; and not a little surprised, when some of the bystanders told him, they hoped he would read no more, for they had never heard him so well before. From that time he laid his notes &c., aside. Trust in the Lord, and he will not disappoint you. A young soldier may start when he first fires his musket, but use makes him bolder. Be not cast down, if sometimes you fear you have been talking nonsense, and are ashamed to come down from the pulpit. Perhaps that sermon may be the best you ever preached, I mean as to the effect. Some person, whom you little think of, may have received conviction or comfort. A *whole* sermon is seldom useful, a detached sentence usually does the business, and then, though the bulk of the sermon should savour of your infirmity, you may be thankful; for you do not stand up to shew off, and be admired by your hearers, but to do good to souls. I can assure you I have trodden this path before you. If you were to preach at St Mary's, in Cambridge, I should not blame you for reading your sermon, nor at a visita-

tion, or an assize. But amongst the plain people of — I believe you will be more useful to others, and more comfortable in yourself, if you extemporize. It will likewise save you much time for other business and exercise. You may digest your thoughts beforehand, and there is no harm in having a slip of paper before you, to remind you of the heads and the principal texts which occur for the proof or the illustration of your subject; but I would confine you if I could, to what we used at school to call a vessel of paper, that is one eighth part of a sheet, and even this you will in a little time be able to lay aside. If the question should arise in your mind, what will the people think of me? answer it by another, what will the Lord think of me? He it is with whom we have to do, and if he is pleased to approve us, a fig for the thoughts of our fellow worms.

Milton represents the sun and day eclipsed, to render the descent of Michael more conspicuous and glorious,— *Paradise Lost*, book xi. line 205. Thus when the Lord is about to work, that the power may be noticed and acknowledged to be all his own, the preacher may sometimes suffer a temporary eclipse, especially in his own apprehension, and Satan will surely try to discourage us, when he is most chagrined at our success. But go on like a traveller, who pursues his journey whether the day be fair or dark. Much is needful to keep us humble. When we are favoured with much liberty of speech, it is easy to tell our hearers, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought. But we shall hardly know it, except we sometimes feel it; and they will know it better, when they can perceive it

without our telling them so. I believe Mrs. ——'s bodily indisposition may be rather the cause than the consequence of the darkness of her mind; but whichever it is, she is in the Lord's hand, and he will take care of her and do her good. I have a friend who has been near three years in a state of despair. I judged her to be a very gracious woman. I made a point of visiting her weekly, and oftener when I was in town; but all I could say was like talking to the east wind. She still insisted that the Lord had cast her off, and that there was no mercy for her; but lately the Lord has set her at liberty, and she now rejoices according to the time in which she was afflicted. So does another, after despair had kept her in bed till the sinews of her thighs were shrunk up. She had not her day clothes on for eight years, and could at last stand no more than an infant of three months old. She is now very cheerful and comfortable. The Lord has restored her to the use of her limbs, so that though she is an old woman, she walks to my church and home again, (a mile distant at least,) all weathers and seasons, and is one of my most constant hearers. Tell Mrs. ——, from me, (though she knows it) that the Lord can do great things, yea nothing is too hard for him. His arm is not waxed short, nor his ear heavy, but we must wait his time. I preached a funeral sermon on Sunday evening, for Mr. Romaine, from *John* v. 35. Three or four other ministers preached from the same text on the same day. For though he was a man, and neither perfect nor infallible, the Lord made him indeed a *burning and shining light*. He went home in the fifty-eighth year of his ministry, and I believe for fifty of

those years he preached the gospel. He was kept at home once or twice in the hard weather last winter, otherwise he had not been confined from preaching for one Sunday, from the day he was ordained. The Lord could give you such a state of health ; but though he loves his people and servants all alike, his dispensations towards them are very different. We shall see hereafter that he has wise reasons for the difference, and that every one had the lot which, upon the whole, was best for him. Mr. R. was in his eighty-second year. His last sermon was, I am told, on the king's birth-day, 4th June. I have just heard that the chancellor has given his vacant living of Blackfriars, to his curate, Mr. Goode. This is good news. He is a valuable man, unprovided for, and with a growing family. He is likewise a good preacher ; and though a young man cannot be expected to stand in Mr. R's shoes, the same doctrines will be heard from the same pulpit ; and if the Lord preserves him humble and dependent, I trust he will get forward apace, and prove a second Romaine to the rising generation. I am now in my seventy-first ; and like Mr. R. I have not been laid aside *by illness* one Lord's day, or preaching day, since I began in the year 1764. I was kept at home three Sundays in 1777, when under the surgeon's hands for my wen, and two Sundays last year I was confined by my lame leg, when I fell in the street ; but never once by illness. Though I have been often unwell, I was always able to preach. Since my dear Mary went home in 1790, my health has been strong without interruption for a single day. But I may look for changes soon. May the Lord give me strength according to my day,

and I need not be anxious about them. Our love to you both, and to all the olive branches about your table. The Lord bless you all.

I am,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

August 6th, 1795.

LETTER XXXII.

MY DEAR SIR,

I shall be glad to hear that your ———'s visit was useful to him. It may prove so in the end, even if nothing appears at present. *Eccl. xi. 1.* As the way of man is not in himself, I will hope the Lord sent him to you for good. *Nil desperandum* is a fit motto for christians, especially for ministers. When the Lord's hour arrives, like the flood-tide, it will carry all

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before it. I hope you received Mrs. — safe and well from —. You are treading in my path. The frequent temporal separations between me and my dearest M. often led my thoughts (like yours) forward to the last parting scene; and often I trembled at the apprehension. Whether you or Mrs. — will be the survivor, we know not; but my own experience warrants me to say to you both, Fear not, only believe. I doubt not but you are very happy in each other: so were we. The tenderness of our mutual regard was known even to a proverb; but when the trying hour came we were both supported. She departed in peace; and I remained, and still remain, to admire the goodness and the faithfulness of the Lord. Till then, if her finger ached, it was sure to give me the heart-ache. And yet I was enabled to watch for three hours by her bed-side till I saw her breathe her last, and neither then, nor when she was put into the vault, did I shed a single tear; and hardly any when I preached her funeral sermon. The night she went away, and the night when I first returned to my own bed, I slept as sound and as long as usual. Considering my disposition, affection and habits, all this seemed nearly miraculous. I was no more capable of it by any power or resolution of my own, than I am of walking upon the water. I am therefore warranted to say to you, Fear not; the Lord whom we serve is able to support us under whatever he appoints. He is all-sufficient; he has promised, and he is faithful. Yes, Mr. R., Mr. L., and Mr. F., are all gone! and we are going. The case of Mr. F. may likewise encourage us to hope, that if the last stage of our journey should be painful and grievous to the flesh, still the Lord can support us.

In short we have nothing to fear but sin. Let us fear grieving his Holy Spirit, and watch unto prayer, and we may confidently commit our all to him. The boldest general of an army may seem to act like a coward in some respects. He places soldiers to watch in every corner of the camp—perhaps he cannot rest upon his bed, but visits all his posts in person in the night. Why is all this caution and anxiety? not that he is properly afraid of the enemy, who he knows is near; but he is afraid of being surprised. Such a fear becomes us while in an enemy's land, every moment liable to assaults, stratagems and snares; and this is the fear which the Lord has promised to put and maintain in our hearts, that we may not depart from him. Had a journey to —— been practicable, I should not have deferred it so long; but —— is no more within the reach of my path of duty than China. It would give me great pleasure to visit you in your own house; but I hope for a much greater pleasure before long, even to meet you in the house not made with hands,—

‘Then all the chosen race,
Shall meet before the throne.’

Faith can realize the presence of an unseen Saviour; and there is a power in the mind which can place an absent friend before us, as if present, in a minute, in a moment, and whenever we please; thus I am with you often. The union and communion of kindred spirits, is not affected by local distance; and though we both might expect much pleasure and benefit from a personal interview, we might both be disappointed. For two empty vessels could do but little towards filling

each other. Unless the Lord supplied us, we might as well be five hundred miles asunder. I have met with many baulks of this kind in my time. How often have I counted the hours and thought them tardy, when in the prospect of converse with friends whom I loved, and to whom I had been accustomed to look up! Possibly they may have had the like expectation from me; and yet, when the time came, it has passed away to little advantage. We have proved clouds without water to each other. It is thus the Lord teaches us to cease from man, and to depend more entirely upon himself, who is always with us. But, alas! we are dull scholars! If it was necessary for his glory or our good, then I should go to you, or you come to me. He would make it practicable. . . . We all join in love. Miss G. thanks you for your remembrance and prayers. We are highly favoured as to externals; and I thank the Lord I have peace within, because I am enabled to rest upon the record which God has given of his Son. I have no other refuge or hope. Were I to judge by frames and feelings, and the actual exercise of grace, I should soon sink into distress, if not into despair; but I trust I may say, "I know whom I have believed." May he pardon what I have attempted to do for him, and enable me to rejoice in what he has done for me! My aim is not to find out reasons for thinking myself good, but to be always sensible that I am weak and vile. I pray chiefly for a broken and contrite spirit; other graces are surely connected with this. It is the soil in which they grow, and their sure and only preservative. In proportion as we *feel* that we have nothing of our own, and can do nothing of ourselves,

we may hope to receive all out of the Saviour's fulness, and to do all things that we are called to, by his power working in us.

Believe me to be,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

September 17th, 1795.

LETTER XXXIII.

I MAY now, my dear Madam, welcome you home. Even now, I believe, you are not quite satisfied ; you feel a want which neither husband nor children can supply. I congratulate you on this feeling : nothing will do without the Lord's presence. Believe that he is very near you, even when you do not perceive him ; believe likewise (for he has promised, and always keeps his word,) that in due time he will manifest himself to you. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst. We are apt to wish for many things, and are glad when we obtain them ; but when we are very hungry, nothing can please us unless we have food. If you so hunger after the Lord, that no

assemblage of earthly good could content you, without an interest in his favour, this is sure token of salvation, and that of God. I knew Mr. and Mrs. — before they removed to —. He has lived long in retirement, and had not, in all respects, the most comfortable post. He was where the Lord placed him. He had likewise his share of trials; but he does not now think he had too many. His weeping days are ended, and now he is before the throne. Let us patiently follow them, who through patience and faith in the blood of the Lamb, do now inherit the promises. In a short time, it will signify as little to us where we lived, or what we went through, as it does now to him. I like that word in our prayer book, “So that *at last* we may enter into his eternal joy.” If *at last* we enter, we shall have full amends for all the difficulties of the way. Instead of grief, we shall have joy; and that joy will not be transient, but eternal, without interruption, and without end. I hope, for your families’ sake, you will out-live your parents. Prop after prop, as you observe, must go, unless we go first; but when the Lord so pleases, it seems most natural that they who were born before us, should be removed before us. You will have cause to praise him for sparing them to you so long. Many are deprived of their parents in early age, and left helpless orphans in a wild, unkind world. It was so with me, but the Lord took me up. I hope you will live to see your children settled, but if not, you may cheerfully leave them to his care.

You say, how can I bear fruit unless I abide in the vine? How indeed! And therefore as you do bear

fruit, it is a sure proof that you are a living branch of the living vine. Fight heartily against unbelief, and the Lord will give you the victory. Instead of indulging complaints, try to be thankful,—you have great reason. Who opened your eyes? Who made you sensible of your malady, and led you to apply for the only remedy? You will not say, I did it all myself: if not, the Lord has done it. And though it is but a beginning, when he begins, he will also make an end; but you must wait his time. Your case is not singular. Others enter the kingdom through much tribulation, and why should you expect an exemption? Be content to go on in the good old path, where you may see the footsteps of the flock. Were I to write sheets and quires, I could but repeat the same things in other words. The Lord says, he will in no wise cast you out. You sometimes are afraid he will; but his word shall stand good, when the heavens and the earth pass away. I commend you and yours to his blessing.

Believe me to be,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

September 18th, 1795.

LETTER XXXIV.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I AM not sick, neither have I absconded, yet I need not tell you I have not answered you or Mrs. —. Growing old, and business increasing, I must content myself with the thought that I write more frequently to you than to any friends I have. Accept this as my best excuse when I seem tardy. . . . I have subscribed my assent and consent to the common prayer, as well as you ; but not in the same manner as I would to the truth of the bible. If the liturgy, or any other human composition, in some parts contradicts itself, I do not accede to both parts of the contradiction. I expound the baptismal office and catechism by the homilies, to which I have likewise assented ; and I seem as well satisfied that the Reformers did not intend literal spiritual regeneration, as your friend can be of the contrary. If he is sincere when he says, that if he changed his opinion he would resign his preferments ; perhaps that consequence may suggest the strongest argument he meets with, to keep him fast in his present sentiment. Yet I am not sure, but that if he came over to us, he might still find reasons for holding his new opinions and old preferments together. It is easy to talk how we would act in circumstances with which we do not expect to be tried. Perhaps you subscribed

it first, like many others, as a matter of course. What is past cannot be recalled. At present you are a parochial minister; the Lord has evidently enlightened you to preach his gospel, and has in some instances owned your labors. I advise you to serve him upon a large and liberal scale, if I may so speak, and do not perplex yourself or your parishioners with the minutiae of words and phrases, which cannot be attended to without lessening your general usefulness. I know not if you have seen *Apologia*. It is quite out of print, or I would send you a copy. I have there endeavoured to prove, that something of our private judgment must be suspended for the sake of peace, take whatever side we may; and that an enlightened mind may meet with as few difficulties of this sort in the establishment, as any where. I trust you will always endeavour to exercise a good conscience; but a scrupulous conscience is a troublesome companion, and many tease us about trifles, till our thoughts are diverted from things of real importance. From the account you give of your friend, I do not think, though he may be amiable and kind, may read good books, and say good things, that he is qualified to be a casuist to you.

I rejoice to find that the Lord is leading you forward, both as to the state of your mind, and as to the exercise of your ministry. With respect to the latter, take your own time and method, and feel your ground as you go along. I believe the day is coming, when you will be no more afraid of your congregation in the morning than in the afternoon. Why indeed should you now? As I suppose they are in the main the same sort of people, the difference of numbers seems no great mat-

ter. But, as I said, take your own time ; allow something to your feelings, but do not *indulge* them, and by and by the Lord will raise you above them. Only I see no reason for your borrowing your heads and notes from Mr. Flavel, when you have the same fountain (the bible) to draw from, as he had. When you write your heads, you are not in the pulpit, but in your study. And I am persuaded, your own experience, if you would consult it, would direct you to deduce observations from a text of scripture, more suitable and acceptable to your people, than any writer or preacher can help you to. I wish you to magnify your office. The Lord has called you to the ministry of the gospel ; and your own words and thoughts, the fruit of your own meditations, are more likely to come warm from your heart, and to impress the hearts of your hearers, than any that you can *steal* from others. Pray against that unbelief, which under the semblance of humility and self-diffidence, would deter you from depending upon the Lord for that assistance which he has promised to those who seek him and desire to serve him. I am not against diligence in the use of means ; study, read and pray as much as you please, but let what you deliver in public be properly your own. Some of your hearers may have Flavel's sermons as well as you ; and it will not add to your honors or your influence, to be thought a plagiarist. Permit me also to caution you against aiming at too much accuracy in your sermons. The great end of preaching is to produce an *effect* ; to rouse the careless and comfort the wounded conscience, &c. : and these are seldom helped by a nice attention to divisions and subdivisions. There should be some method, but

the plainer, and the less entangled by divisions, the better, especially in villages. A chief reason why written sermons make less impression than extempore, is, that few can write them without giving into a style and method which raises them above the comprehension of plain and poor people. Remember, my dear friend, it is one characteristic of the gospel that it is preached to the poor. Adapt yourself as much as possible to the poor and weak of the flock. If these can understand you, others will, of course. And the more simple your discourses are, the better they will be relished by persons of superior taste and knowledge, if they are serious; and you will be the more felt by those who are not serious. It is so long since I read Claude and Robinson, that I cannot tell what you may have learnt from them; but I can say something upon this subject from experience. There are persons of all sorts in my congregation; some very poor, weak and illiterate; some very sensible, of well informed and cultivated minds. By their attention and constant attendance, I seem, through the Lord's mercy, acceptable to them all; and I usually speak to them with freedom. I acquired my preaching talent, such as it is, at Olney. I cannot be sufficiently thankful that the Lord placed me in that school, and kept me there sixteen years, before he sent me to London. The most of his people there were poor and afflicted, ignorant and illiterate, but they were taught of God *before I saw them*. I was their official teacher from the pulpit; but I taught them chiefly by what I first learned from them in the course of the week, by visiting and conversing with them from house to house. Indeed I learned more from them than from all my great folios

and quartos. In their artless, simple talk, I saw more of the workings of the heart, the power of grace, and the devices of Satan, than any books could shew me. I was likewise greatly helped by meeting the children weekly. With them I was obliged to stoop in order to be understood; and I soon found that the familiar style I was obliged to use to children, was the most proper to engage the attention of grown people: and I talk to the people in London, to this day, much as I did to them at Olney. I have always wished to avoid what is vulgar, gross, and low: and the books I have read, and especially the quires and reams I have written, have helped me to some measure of propriety in the use of words. But I may appeal to you, who have heard me, that I rather talk than preach, as preaching is generally understood. I believe you have a few awakened people about you: account these the best part of your library. Converse and pray with them often. Thus you will help them, and be helped by them. The questions they put to you, and the answers they give to yours, together with what passes in your mind, will suggest subject matter to fill up your sermons, better than you can borrow from the learned doctors—I mean better for *your* people, because it will be your own, and directed by the knowledge you have of their cases. And what suits twenty people would be suitable to as many thousands; for our hearts are all alike. I do not find much to say in particular to Mrs. —, nor have I left much room. Perhaps, Madam, we may meet upon earth, which will be well; if not, I trust in heaven, which will be still better. In the mean time I can see you plainly, though at the distance of so many miles, and behind many a

hill: and I see that the Lord leads, and guides, and supports you. He always leads the right way, though we meet with a bit of road here and there that is rough; but then we have shoes of iron and brass prepared for us. May I not apply to you *Solomon's Song* viii. 5? Is not Jesus your beloved? You are in the wilderness, but you do not wish to stay there, but are coming up out of it. Leaning implies weariness, but it likewise implies freedom and confidence. You can readily lean upon your husband, but not on every man you meet. Should you see a woman leaning upon the king, you would suppose that she was either his queen, or one of his daughters. You are invited to lean upon a greater king, and he is *your beloved*. And surely if you lean upon an Almighty arm, though you feel yourself weak and weary, and at times almost fainting, you cannot fall. . . . It may have prevented a fever, but be that as it may, I trust it will work for good, because the Lord sent it; and we are sure he does not afflict his children without a *need be*. He does all things well. He weighs the mountains in the scales, and the hills in a balance; and he likewise weighs, measures, and proportions our trials to our strength and our malady, with greater accuracy than the most skilful earthly physician can prescribe his medicines. No trial comes sooner, or falls heavier, or lasts longer, than the exigency of the case requires. He knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust; and will lay no more upon us than he will enable us to bear. Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pitieth us. But his love is perfect; he will not withhold whatever he sees necessary to promote our best welfare, how-

ever painful and displeasing it may be to the flesh. Earthly parents often, through a weak and mistaken tenderness, spare their children to their hurt; but as he supplies his children with food, so they *must* take his medicines, however distasteful, when he sees they would not be so well without them. . . . I pray every Sunday in public that the Lord may be pleased to give his blessing to the mission business. The design, in the main, is noble and well intended. . . . Cannot Mr. — tell whether reconciliation is effected by the blood of the cross? Mr. R. says, that the reconciliation is entirely on our part. It was not needful on the Lord's side. He was more than reconciled; he so loved us while we were enemies, as to give his Son to die for us. Surely this love has reconciled you to him? You cannot stand it out any longer? You must, you will be his. What *broad seal* do you then wait for? All the angels in heaven could not satisfy you, if you are not satisfied with his promise, that him who cometh in this way, he will *in no wise cast out*.

Pray for us, and believe me to be,

Your affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

November 10th, 1795.

LETTER XXXV.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I HAVE not leisure for a long letter. . . . I cannot write so much, nor so readily as formerly. I am sooner weary, and my right eye is weak and wishes to be spared; but I must tell Mr. right eye, that you must have the verses. . . . I must tell you likewise of the Lord's goodness to us. The old year closed with mercies, and the new year opened upon us with peace. Our family are all well; our friends kind, my flock numerous and attentive, my wants well supplied, and my trials light and few. What can I ask or wish for more? Only a more thankful heart!

I am sorry you are disappointed in Mr. —; but if you live long, you may expect to meet many baulks of this sort. We know that if there be no blossoms, there can be no fruit: but it is not every blossom will be productive; many drop off. There are convictions and purposes, which promise well for a season; but if the heart be not broken, and led to the cross for an effectual cure, they are but temporary, and will, sooner or later, wither away. But where the spirit is truly humbled, and enlightened to see the glory and grace of the Saviour in his person and offices, and is brought cordially to accept of him, as our Lord, our life, and

our whole salvation, we have the security of his word and promises, that nothing shall pluck us out of his hands. Yet we will not give Mr. — up; he who has done this for us, can do it for him. Let us pray for him; and you will find opportunity of speaking faithfully to him. Grace has strong arms: the Lord often knocks at the door, again and again, before he forces open an entrance for himself. Otherwise, what would have become of you and me? I believe neither of us was duly attentive to his first call. I think your difficulties in preaching are chiefly owing to your want of confidence in the Lord, and to some undue solicitude for yourself. For you certainly know what you should say, either to a careless or distressed sinner, if you had them singly with you in your study: and what would suit one would suit a thousand. Allowances must be made for your constitution. Be not discouraged, but pray and wait gradually upon the Lord. I have little doubt but he will deliver you from the burden you feel, and give you liberty in his service. I know you cannot do this for yourself. Only do not be your own hinderance, by giving way to doubts and fears, but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. If the next time we mount the pulpit, we had a strong and sure impression that we should die there as soon as the sermon was finished, I think we should not be much concerned what the people might think or say of us when they left the church. The breath of their opinion is of no more real importance to us now, than it would be then: and the case I have supposed is by no means impossible. Though it seldom happens, it does sometimes, (it did to Dr. Conyers) and it may be your case

or mine. May we be enabled to be faithful, and leave all consequences to him. J — was with us lately,— he is young. Many of them have not a father and mother praying for them at home. Let us put an honor upon prayer; it is the Lord's appointment, and has often done great things. But faith must not only pray but wait. He answers, but in his own time, and in his own way. My mother's prayers for me were answered long after her death; and I had few equals, either in wickedness or misery, when the Lord began to work upon my heart. . . . I am glad of the good news from F—, respecting Mr. W. May the Lord lead him on from strength to strength, bless him in his own soul, and make him a blessing to many.

Believe me to be,

Your very affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

January 8th, 1796.

LETTER XXXVI.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I WISH you to come, not only for the pleasure I hope for from your company, but upon your own account, for two reasons. First, I hope the change of air and exercise will do your spirits good. Sometimes when nervous people come to me, distressed about their souls, and think *that* is their only complaint, I surprise them by asking, if they have no friend in Cornwall, or in the north of Scotland, whom they could visit; for I thought a ride to the Land's End, or John o'Groat's House, might do them more good than all the counsel I could give them. Now if a trip from us to you might be salutary to weak nerves, why not a ride from you to us? Secondly, you would not only breathe a different air, but you would see new faces; you would talk with new people; you would meet with new cases, which though new to you at first, you would find to be very much like your own. You would likewise have plenty and variety of preaching, which is not amiss for a stranger, and for a season; though I am afraid this over-plenty gives many who live in London a spiritual surfeit. By one or other of these means, or all taken together, I hope, with the Lord's blessing, you would return to —, improved in

health and spirits, and thereby stronger in faith, and more comfortable than when you set out. . . .

. . . . If I had no other food but horse beans or acorns, it would be better than I deserve, and yet the Lord is pleased to send me many good things in the course of the year. I say, the Lord ; for though I thank you for the —, I would consider it as his gift likewise. Whatever kindness we shew to one another, it is only as his instruments ; disposition and ability are both from him. The snow on the tops of mountains is at times very generous, and pours abundance of waters into the valleys, but it is only while the sun shines upon it. When the sun is withdrawn, the snow becomes selfish and niggardly at once, and will not afford another drop ; a fit emblem, I think, of how much, or rather how little, may be expected from creatures, further than as they are under his influence. I wish you not to compare yourself with H—, or any one else, but judge by the sure word of God. You see but the *outside* of others, but they all have an *inside* as well as you. A hypocrite seldom suspects himself. I corresponded with H— through the whole of his dark time, as he calls it, and had as good an opinion of him then as I have now. He has been an honorable professor for many years, and was looked up to by others when his frame was at the lowest. My good friend, be willing that the Lord should carry on his work in his own way, and do not prescribe to him how he shall deal with you. Only hold fast by the promise, and it will bring you through. I earnestly advise you not to wish for more trouble and disquietude than you have. If the Lord should grant your wish, you would

soon be at your wits' end. I doubt not but your conscience bears you witness as to your motives and aims. Be thankful for this. Obedience is the best test of sincerity ; feelings are various, transient, and often deceitful ; but a broken, humble spirit, and an upright walk, evidence the finger of God ; other things may be and are often counterfeited.

I wish you joy of Miss —, for though early impressions are not always nor perhaps often abiding, they are pleasing and comfortable omens. Many blossoms fall from the tree, but when there are no blossoms, we can expect no fruit. The Lord usually knocks again and again at the door, before he enters and takes full possession. Let us pray and hope. May the Lord enclose not only J—, but your whole family, so that there shall not be a hoof left behind. May great grace be with us all.

I am,

Your very affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

February 2nd, 1796.

LETTER XXXVII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

. . . . I AM glad to hear well of Mr.—. Dr. —'s preaching in his pulpit has been well rewarded. You see, by this, what the Lord can do; a single sermon, yea a single sentence, will suffice, when he is pleased to work. Nor does it signify a pin, who is the instrument. A great man, an apostle, might speak in vain, and a little man, a lisper, may be heard like thunder. I am not against your thinking lowly of yourself, but you are warranted to magnify your office. Keep in mind your own weakness, but go forth in the strength of the Lord, and expect to do great things and also to prevail. The Lord, if he pleases, can make you more useful than two Dr. —'s, though you think yourself to be nothing. Be thankful for what he has done, and he will do more. I wish you to trust him more, and to depend less upon your writing, every day. Try to speak to your people. Short notes are not amiss, but if you can shake off unbelief, you will not find it necessary to write your sermons at length. Save time from this burden, and devote it to the study of the scriptures, which were once sufficient to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good

work, and I believe are so still. We have reason to regret the time wasted in the days of our ignorance ; but we could not see till the Lord was pleased to open our eyes. The reflection should stir us up to redeem time in future. Forgiveness of the past should animate us now to press forward. But if we strive in our own strength, we shall but labour in vain : in this sense our strength is to sit still. Put yourself into the Lord's hand, as an empty vessel to be filled out of his fulness. Dependance upon him, in the use of appointed means, will do wonders. I never saw Brown, &c., but those are the best books for you, which will lead you most to consult the word of God. The Greenland Mission is a good book likewise. N. B.—The missionaries did not *write* sermons to preach to the Greenlanders, nor had they your advantages of education. They were illiterate men ; a love to the Saviour and to the souls of men were their chief qualifications. I see not that elaborate and exact discourses are more necessary, or more likely to be useful, at — than in Greenland. I hope the Lord will cause your *knowledge and zeal* to grow abundantly, but you need not be ashamed because Mr. — preaches in the neighbouring villages. He is a dissenter, and his way is open. It is not our call ; as ministers of the establishment we are expected to observe parochial order, and may be thankful if we can go on quietly in our own circle. If your brethren offer their pulpits, you will do well to accept them when opportunity serves, but your own parish may find you work enough. A call upon your people in their houses and cottages may both induce them to hear you at church, and prepare them for hearing more attentively.

From your account of Mrs. —, it is probable she is in danger of going to heaven soon. I will not call her 'poor woman' in the world's phrase, on that account. The merchant does not pity his ship, when she is just entering the harbour.

I am,

Yours indeed,

JOHN NEWTON.

April 5th, 1796.

LETTER XXXVIII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I MUST confine myself to one point. Mrs. — has told me of an offer made to place a son in the academy at Woolwich. She asked my advice, and I could not honestly say that I quite approved of it. If I saw you with one of your little boys in your hand, and should ask, What is your highest wish for your child? I think

you would say, 'to meet him at the right hand of the Lord in the great day,' or to that purpose. For this I doubt not you frequently pray. May your prayers be answered! You cannot give your child grace, but I think you should be careful not to put him in a path, which, humanly speaking, is directly calculated to counteract the design of your prayers. A military education would probably preclude him from all instruction and example for the benefit of his soul, and place him where it is likely the most of the people with whom he was connected would be infidels or libertines. And the military line, whether in the army, or artillery, seems but a poor business. If a man is 'called,' *being a soldier*, perhaps he might safely abide in his calling, as Colonel Gardiner and other good christians have done; but I question whether it is becoming our profession, for a believer, especially a minister, to place his son deliberately in the school of slaughter, to be trained up in the art and practice of hurrying sinners in an unprepared state into eternity. This offer was not of your seeking, but came to you unexpectedly, and therefore looks like an opening in providence; but I often consider providential openings as temptations or tests put in our way to prove our sincerity; and whether, when we speak of the importance of the one thing needful, and tell our people, that the lovingkindness of the Lord is better than life, we really speak from our hearts. Such, for instance, was the offer made by ——. It gave you a noble opportunity of shewing your people, that you regarded the flock more than the fleece. I doubt not it added weight to your character and ministry, and I trust you will never repent of your refusing to leave

your people, for what the world and the worldly clergy would call a better thing.

I would write with caution and tenderness, putting myself as much as possible in your case. If I had a wife and a large family, with but a slender provision for them, I should doubtless have many feelings and anxieties to which I am now a stranger. But the word of the Lord is sure. He knoweth them that trust in him. He knows all our real wants, and has promised to supply them. Oh for more faith, for a more simple and entire dependance upon him: this would raise us to a noble independence with respect to creatures. We should only regard them as his instruments, like saws and hammers, which can do nothing of themselves, but as the workman is pleased to employ them. If we aim to live a life of faith, we may expect to be sometimes tried and pinched a little. But the Lord will sooner make windows in heaven, than disappoint expectations raised by his own promises rightly understood. He has a thousand ways to help us, when all our resources seem utterly to fail. If he enables you to devote yourself with a single eye to the care of his concerns, he will assuredly take care of yours, and give you, either in kind or in kindness, more than at present you either ask or think. I hope therefore you will use much deliberation and prayer before you give in the name of your son, especially as you are to choose one out of three or four. It is a serious business. What unforeseen consequences may depend upon your choice, who can say? If you should have a son live to be Master of the Ordnance, Field Marshall, or First Lord of the Admiralty, it would not satisfy you, unless you

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saw him walking in wisdom's ways: you would think of our Lord's words, *Mat. xvi. 26*. May the Lord guide and bless you in all things.

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

April 23rd, 1796.

LETTER XXXIX.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOU will think a note worth postage that comes to tell you Mrs. — is on the road, and is drawing nearer to you every hour.
 We have talked at times a good deal about the path that leads through the wilderness to glory. She would travel on more pleasantly, if she was not often teased by a rude, unreasonable fellow called Unbelief. I have fought him more than once, and more than once I have almost driven him away; but he still returns, especially when he sees she is alone; for he is a coward, and

keeps at a little distance when she is in good company. I have some fear that he will go in the same coach with her to —, and perhaps to —; but I know one, who can, and I believe will, send him packing in due time.

I trust the Lord has given you a heart devoted to his cause. If so, he will surely take care of your concerns. You may safely trust yourself, your wife, children, and your all, to him. He has all hearts and means in his hands, and can open and shut as he pleases. I am aiming at what I wish you may succeed better in, to live with him by the day, and to leave to-morrow with him. Has he not invited us to cast all our cares upon him? Has he not promised to care for us? If the king, or Mr. Pitt, was to say so to some worldly people, they would think themselves well off. Yet the king and Mr. Pitt are mortals, fallible and changeable like ourselves. *Isaiah* ii. 22. But the word of the Lord is sure and steadfast. *Num.* xxiii. 19.

The French seem likely to make peace with all the world, that they may concentrate their whole force against us. Things look very dark to our eye of sense; but faith can see that the Lord uses all men and means as instruments to accomplish his own purpose, and that the wrath of man shall praise him. In the mean time, he says to his people, when they hear of wars and tumults, Be not terrified. He has said, Verily it shall be well with the righteous; therefore let us sing the 46th Psalm. I have long apprehended that *Isaiah* xxxiii. 1, speaks awfully to Great Britain. We are a proud, boasting, oppressive nation, abroad; and the bulk at home are careless, infidel, and licentious to a proverb. And shall we be the only people to escape, when he arises to

shake terribly the earth? He has borne much from us and long with us, and still I hope he will hear the prayers of his children, and not give us up to ruin. But as a nation I think we must have our pride abased. This is not a day for us to seek great things for ourselves. The Lord bless you and your children. Amen.

I am,

Your affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

May 27th, 1796.

LETTER XL.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

EBENEZER! Hitherto the Lord has helped us. We travelled with Mrs. —, as nearly as I could guess, to —, and I took care to be at — in spirit on Thursday evening, to be a witness and a sharer in the joy caused by her safe arrival. I would be thankful to the Lord that my calculations were happily confirmed by

your letter of the 11th. I committed her to the Lord, on whom she had believed, and he has graciously heard our prayers. May this encourage us to trust him in future. I had no doubt that Mrs. ——'s expedition would add to the number of her friends. I believe few have seen her who would not be glad to see her again; but the best meeting of all will be above. In the mean time, I hope she will find her spirits relieved, and her faith strengthened. They shall surely know, who follow on to know the Lord; for he has said so, and his word cannot fail. Unbelief sometimes assumes the garb of humility, but it is both the root and the offspring of pride. The more unworthy we are in ourselves, the more we honor the Lord by trusting in his word. For he did not come to save the righteous, or to help those who can help themselves. The objects of his mercy are those who know they are utterly helpless and hopeless without him; and when he begins, he will also make an end. Little did I think, when I planted the limetrees, of what has taken place since. Had any one told me then, that I should live to be a *parson*, I should have scorned the intimation; for I was not only regardless of the Saviour, but his daring and avowed enemy. Not one of the poor blasphemers Mrs. —— met at D——, can be less likely to preach the gospel now, than I was at that time. My narrative chiefly relates the *misery* of my situation; had I given a detail of the *wickedness* of my heart and life, the book would have been too shocking to bear a reading. Much of it is present in my memory every day. I trust it is all pardoned, but I have good reason to walk softly to the end

of my life. Considering, when I was so apparently out of the reach of recovery, how madly I was bent upon my own destruction,—how often the providence of God interposed, almost miraculously, to preserve me in defiance of myself,—the surprising manner of my deliverance from Africa, and the innumerable dangers and deaths I was brought through afterwards,—I say, considering these things, in connexion with what he has done for me since, I am ready to think my case is a *unique* in the annals of the church, and that the conversion of Saul of Tarsus was not near so striking an instance of the longsuffering and mercy of God, as mine. I think, in me, rather than in him, God has given the most singular proof that Jesus Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners; that he can pardon the most enormous and aggravated sins, and soften the most obdurate heart. The apostle says, “I obtained mercy, because I did it *ignorantly* :” but I did it wilfully. I had not only the benefit of an early religious education, but broke loose after repeated convictions of conscience and vows of obedience. In me sin abounded; and in my case mercy has superabounded, and reigns triumphant. Alas! that I am so faintly affected by my own story! but if I obtain a place amongst his redeemed before the throne, as I trust I shall, surely not one of them will see cause to bow lower, or to praise louder than I! I meant well in what I said about Woolwich, but I hope you will not place too much dependance upon my judgment. I still think as I did; but remember that I am a fallible worm,—I may be mistaken. I hope you will wait upon the Lord, consult his holy word, and keep your eye

upon his providence and promises. He will guide those who simply and patiently look up to him, so that they shall not be misled in matters of importance. He knows your circumstances, how many children you have, and the best way of disposing of them. The butcher, the baker, and many men, are daily at a rich man's door, to know what will be wanted in their several departments ; but believers have a friend always at home, who knows and considers all their real wants, yet invites them to lay them before him, because he has already determined to supply them in his own best time and way. Dear B—— sends love ; this is her birth-day. She will thank you for your prayers. Help me to praise the Lord for sending her to me, and sparing her to me so long. You know what a comfort she is to me in my widowed state. The Lord bless you and your children, and make you happy in himself and in each other, and in all your connexions.

Believe me, my dear friends,

Your affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

June 22nd, 1796.

LETTER XLI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

AFTER telling me that you were in trouble, how could you suppose it would spare my feelings to say nothing of the occasion? Not a word of the nature, size, or shape of your burden. I have a fertile imagination, that can and does represent the matter, I hope much worse than it really is. But knowing that you and Mrs. — are in safe hands, I check my fears, and cannot doubt but he, whose you are and whom you serve, will support, sanctify and relieve. Mrs. —'s temperament and her *tempter* subject her to alarms and misconstructions, which I know she cannot wholly avoid; but she should strive against them, and repeat to herself every morning and oftener, what great things the Lord has done for you both. Let her read the history of Jacob and his children. Ten of them conspiring the death of Joseph, afterwards murdering the people of Shechem, besides what is said of Reuben and Judah; yet the Lord was Jacob's father and friend, and shewed him at last, that the things which he said were all against him, were working for his good. Let her think of *John xi. 40*.

You tell good news from F—. I put Mr. — in the list of those whom I deem as my brethren, my

sisters, and my mothers. May the Lord enlarge his heart, strengthen his hands, and bless his ministry more and more. Mr. — seems to have some scope for usefulness, and therefore while the Lord is pleased to continue him there, I shall not wish for his removal. You say he prefers the country to the town; so do I. London would have been one of the last places I should have chosen for myself; but since the Lord chose it for me, and has favoured me there, I can make a good shift without the country. The question should not be, what is most suitable to my own inclinations, but what is that situation which the Lord sees will give me the best opportunities of doing his will and promoting his glory? If I can find out that spot; whether it be on a hill or in a hole, in a city or in a cottage, I ought to prefer it to a paradise, unless the paradise was my allotted post. I hope I am fixed where I ought to be, and have much cause to be thankful that my post is so comfortable; but I was at Olney near sixteen years, and did not take a single step towards removing myself. The harvest hereabouts is just finished. Plenty upon the ground, and fine weather for gathering it in. Such is the Lord's goodness to a sinful people hitherto. What may be before us we know not, but I am not willing to forebode the worst. The Lord has a church among us; a people who know his name, and worship him in spirit and in truth. They are scattered up and down like salt in the land, and though too much divided among themselves by names, notions, and parties, they are all one in him, and they all meet at a throne of grace. These, in my view, are the chariots and horsemen of our Israel. I place no dependance upon our fleets and armies, farther

than the Lord may give success in answer to the prayers of his people. The French, like Rabshakeh, insult the great God and his servants ; like him, they are instruments in the Lord's hands, in a service which he thinks not good enough for his own children ; and when they have done their task, they will find a hook and a bridle in their mouths, and their proud boasting will end in shame and confusion. The Lord is, I hope, spreading his gospel amongst us both in the establishment and out of it ; and when we see a great man enlarging his house, and adding to the number of his servants, it is not a sign that he is about to give up house-keeping. I think we must be humbled, or at least have our national pride mortified and abased ; but I hope we shall not be given up and forsaken, especially if he is pleased to pour out a spirit of supplication and humiliation upon those who know his name ; but at the worst we know that it will be well with those who fear him. The glory of God ought to be the chief point in our thoughts. Many say, and more think, that he does not govern upon earth. He is now risen to plead his own cause. He declares, *They shall know that I am the Lord !* What may be necessary to bring them to this acknowledgment, we cannot tell. But dare we wish that he should lose his cause, and his enemies triumph, at least in England, because *we* live there, and rather than our petty concerns and connexions should be disturbed ? Surely not. May we weaken our attachment to the present world, to the love of ease and self, and then we shall not greatly fear, though the earth should be moved, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea ; for the Lord of hosts will be with us, the God of Jacob

will be our refuge. And the promise is to us and to our children. Your visit amongst your relatives has shewn you how much you owe to free grace ; for you were no better than they. Sometimes one, like Ruth, is often taken from amongst many. She had reason to be thankful for the mercy afforded to herself ; for the rest, we should endeavour, as proper occasions offer, to warn and instruct others in a spirit of meekness : and while there is life, there is always ground for hope and prayer. We know from our own experience, that he can soften hard hearts, open blind eyes, and overcome obstinate habits and prejudices, whenever he pleases ; so that we have no reason to despair of any ; and he can effect the desirable change at the last hour of life. But after all his mercy is free : it is lawful for him to do as he will with his own ; and the best retreat we have, when our thoughts are exercised about those whom we love, is to his sovereignty, wisdom and goodness.

I believe Mr. — is a good man and a good preacher, though I never heard him but once. But the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. I have heard Mr. F—— say, that when Mr. — first began to preach, he thought him one of the most unfurnished, unfinished men he ever saw in a pulpit ; but his heart was right, and the Lord has brought him forwards. “ *Mutis quoque piscibus, donaturus, si libeat, sonum.*” (He will give even the dumb fishes a voice, if it please him.)

I am surrounded by woods, lawns, prospects, and kind friends. What want I more ? Alas, what would all these be, if the sun did not afford us light. You may judge therefore what I want, or what I should

want, if I was left to myself. Blessed be his name, though few of his people perhaps have less of *sun-shine*, I am favoured with *day-light*, by which I can see to walk and work with some comfort. May the God of peace give you peace, by all means and in all circumstances.

I am,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

September 3rd, 1796.

LETTER XLII.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I HAVE NO anniversary for you this year; though it was on my mind for three months before-hand, I could hit upon nothing: and I have been led to think I have written enough upon the subject. After acknowledging in my last, that the Lord had healed the wound, what can I with propriety say more? *Est modus in rebus*. Taking all the anniversaries and letters to a wife together, I have been a tolerable egotist; and perhaps I ought not any longer to draw the attention of my friends or the

public to a *crambe repetita* (distasteful recital) about my own dear self; yet I own my feelings would have prompted me to go on this year also, could I have found materials; but they say, when nought is to be had, the king must lose his due.

I am glad you accede to my sentiments concerning dissenting ministers. I wish you not only to avoid needlessly displeasing your bishop and the clergy, but to be careful of the peace of your parish, which I think liable to be broken, if dissenters get a permanent and allowed footing in it; and that in time you might be perplexed with parties, both religious and political. I found the inconvenience of an unqualified encouragement of dissenting ministers, in the latter part of my residence at Olney.

I saw Dr. — but about a quarter of an hour, excepting the time he was preaching in my church. He was well approved at St. Mary's, and I thought I could perceive that he did not get what he told us out of great folios, but was Θεου διδακτικος (taught of God.) The Lord fits his ministers for the services he assigns them. Perhaps the strength of Dr. —'s constitution, spirits, and voice, may render him more suitable for the post *he is in*, than you might be; but I see no reason why you may not do as well at —, as he does at —, if you can but simply trust the Lord, and go forth, depending upon him who giveth power to the faint. You are not now a novice; you have a fund of general knowledge,—you are not called to stand before great men. Do not pore too much over books and paper. Entreat the Lord to impress your mind with a few leading, important points, and then go forth in the Lord's strength, as a plain man, to speak plain truths to a

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plain people. Do this, *et tu eris mihi a Dr.*——. It would save much time, which might be more profitably employed, either in visiting your flock, or in needful exercise. It would relieve you from the inconveniences which much of what is called *study* brings upon people of a weakly habit of body; and I am persuaded you would be better *heard*, better *understood*, and *more attended to* by the bulk of your auditory. I long to see you an extempore preacher.

And now for Mrs. ——. I am glad to find, that notwithstanding the hills and dales between us, you frequently meet us in spirit. We likewise return your visits in the same way, and this perhaps, by the Lord's blessing, may do as well. Spirits may touch, when bodies are far asunder; ere long we shall meet to part no more. I shall be glad to know by your next, when you expect to be confined, that I may think of you particularly about the time. There is a good promise for you in *Job* v. 19. Do not charge all your apprehensions to unbelief, but make allowance for your weak spirits and present circumstances. "Hope thou in God, and thou shalt still praise him." The Lord bless you.

I am,

Your affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

December 28th, 1796.

LETTER XLIII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

AMONG the reasons why the Lord permits us to mispend our time and talents so long in ignorance, I suppose one may be, that we may have something to look back upon with shame and humiliation for the rest of our days; *Ezekiel* xvi. 63: that we may not open our mouths, to complain or boast, or censure others severely; as we are naturally prone to do, till we know something of our own hearts. And well it would be, if a constant reflection upon the years we have lived without God, or perhaps set him at defiance, could effectually teach us this lesson. But alas, the worm of pride is still apt to lift up its head; and there is a need be that we should be taught, by painful experience, that we are, in ourselves, no better now than we were then. In my days of folly and vanity, I was a chief sinner indeed,—a vile blasphemer, and profligate to an extreme. Yet surely the most aggravated and affecting proofs I have had of the deceitfulness of sin and of my own heart, have been since I first hoped in his mercy: sins committed against light, and love, and experience, must be, as the apostle expresses it, exceedingly sinful. The Good Shepherd seeks his lost sheep, and leads them into his fold, in his own way.

and his own time : sooner it cannot be done. He calls some in childhood, and some at the eleventh hour ; according to his own sovereign pleasure. So likewise they are scattered in a variety of situations ; some are rich, others are poor ; the vessels of his mercy are selected from among the wise and the ignorant, decent and profane, lords and slaves, to shew the power of his grace in all the variety of human character :—thus the gospel approves itself to be a *catholicon*, a universal remedy. Thus it is not only declared but proved, that him that cometh shall in *no wise* be cast out, and that he is both able and willing to save to the uttermost. We have cause to be humbled, that we lived so long in a state of alienation from him ; but it is no just cause for discouragement. No voice but his can raise the dead. Let the time past suffice to have lived to ourselves, and may the uncertain remainder be devoted to him, and all shall be well. When we are enabled to believe the record God has given of his Son, we are at once, and *once for all*, accepted in the Beloved. Then our sins are blotted out as a cloud—a beautiful emblem. When the sky is covered with dark clouds, who can remove them ? Only the Lord. When he pleases, they are quickly dispersed, and not a trace of them remains in the whole hemisphere : who then can recall them ? We have good reason to walk humbly, under a sense of what we were and of what we still are ; for our best services are defective and defiled. But if our faith was strong, and our dependance upon the Saviour simple, nothing would break our peace but *wilful sin*. There is sin mingled with our prayers, our preaching, our every thing ; but if it has not the consent of our wills,

though it should lay us low in the dust before the Lord, it need not interrupt our confidence in him, or our communion with him, unless we give way to unbelief. 1 *John* ii. 1. A believer, in the exercise of faith, while recollecting innumerable past transgressions, and conscious of present infirmities and evils, which he can no more avoid than he can cast off his skin, may come before the Lord with humble boldness, no less so, than if he were sinless as an angel. He feels that he is unworthy of the air he breathes, and yet is warranted and enabled to ask the greatest blessings a creature can receive, because being united to Jesus, he knows the Lord views him, not as he is in himself, but as he stands related to his glorious head. See Olney hymns, book 3, hymn 41.

With regard to your preaching extempore, I remember the adage, *Festina lente*. If you write but one sermon of three, I am satisfied for the present. Go on, and the Lord will be with you. Time was when brother Scott used to preach five sermons, and good long ones, every week, and to write them every word. But now his tongue is as the pen of a ready writer.

I have just now a letter from Mr. F——. I hope from the strain of his writing, that there is something good in him springing up and coming forward; but his knowledge of the gospel and of himself seems at present faint and indistinct; but if a ray of *living light* has dawned upon his mind, it will shine more and more to the perfect day. The Lord does not despise the day of small things, nor should we. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. There is a figure in the expression, which I think you learned men call a *meiosis*. Far from breaking, he will strengthen

the bruised reed ; far from quenching the flax, he will blow it into a flame. And he employs such as you and me, as instruments of his merciful will, in this work. The times are still cloudy ; distress abounds, alarms are multiplied, and many hearts shake like leaves upon a tree in a storm ; but the Lord reigns, and he says to his people, *See that ye be not terrified*. He will take care of them that put their trust in him : he will either preserve them from suffering, though others suffer and fall around them ; or if he permits them to share in common calamities, he will proportion their strength to their day, which amounts to the same thing. I can only add my love to all. Pray for us.

I am,

Your affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

March 1st, 1797.

LETTER XLIV.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YESTERDAY'S post brought me the good news from — which I have been sometime waiting for. I join with you in praising the Lord. May Mrs. —'s strength be restored, and the child given you, with all the rest, be numbered among the sheep and lambs of the Good Shepherd. You see the Lord *can* provide, and he is often graciously attentive to our desire, even in smaller things, which are not of absolute necessity. Mrs. — might have been safely and happily delivered, though Dr. — had been in London; yet things were so timed and adjusted, that she had him with her according to her wish. Both you and we have cause to set up daily Ebenezers. For though the time of childbirth is eminently formidable and dangerous, the same power that brought Mrs. — through it, is necessary to support us in the smoothest scenes of life. Every step we take is upon the brink of danger. A slip of the foot, a fit of coughing, a bit of bread or meat going the wrong way, may be fatal; yea, we depend upon the Lord for every breath we draw. On the other hand, if the path of duty should find us in a besieged city, on the field of battle, upon the sea in a storm, or when the pestilence sweeps away thousands around us; still, till

the appointed number of our services and trials is completed, we are immortal. At all times and all places the Lord is equally near ; the danger and the safety are always the same, and the *apparent* difference is only to our apprehension. If Paul *must* stand before Cæsar, he is as safe in the tempest, as Cæsar upon his throne. I can scarcely talk or write without introducing Mr. Wilberforce's book. It revives my hope that ripe as we seem for judgment, while the Lord raises up such witnesses for his truth, he will not give us up, as we justly deserve, for a prey to our enemies. How in the midst of continual bustle, he could find either time or spirits to write such a book, I can scarcely conceive. Then his situation is such, that his book *must* and *will* be read by many in the higher circles, to whom we little folks can get no access. If we preach, they will not hear us ; if we write, they will not read. May the Lord *make it useful* to the great men both in church and state ! Oh for that happy spirit of absolute dependance upon the Lord, which may raise us to a noble independence upon creatures and circumstances ! Then, if as Elijah thought, we were actually left to serve God alone, we need not fear the wrath of man ; nay, if the earth were shaken, and the mountains cast into the sea, our confidence would be still unmoved. For the care and providence of him whose we are and whom we desire to serve, extends to our most minute concerns. We take but little account of the hairs of our head, but *he* numbers them all. He is all sufficient—he can preserve us from trouble, or support us under it, or deliver us from it, as he pleases. In many cases he will do the first ; for we shall never be in heaviness, but when his wisdom sees

it needful : and he will in all cases do the second and the third for them that put their trust in him. All pretty well here. I feel as yet no remarkable decay from old age, and still can fill up my hour in the pulpit with as little fatigue as formerly. *Sed appropinquat hora.* Pray for me that it may find me ready. The Lord bless you all.

Your very affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

April 20th, 1797.

LETTER XLV.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

IT did indeed give us pleasure to see a testimony of the Lord's goodness to Mrs. — under her own hand. May little — be taught of the Lord from his early years to use the sword of the spirit, the shield of faith, and the sling of prayer, that he may conquer all the

lions, bears, and Goliaths, which infest this wilderness world. . . . We once had that unpleasant intruder in our family at Olney, which prevented Miss G—— from visiting yours. It was what I call an *inconvenience* at the time, and as you say, hardly deserving the name of a trial; and yet if we are left to ourselves, we are so unhappily ingenious that we can form a great trial out of a small inconvenience. On the other hand, when the Lord is with us, and we have some due sense of our unworthiness, and of his wisdom, love, and purpose, what we should otherwise find a heavy trial, shrinks almost to the size of a button. The inconvenience I felt more than twenty years ago, is no more to me *now*, than the events which took place among the antediluvians. I have an idea, could I but realize it, of making pain or trouble momentary, though it should be of long continuance. Suppose for instance I had the tooth-ache; the pain I felt a moment ago is gone, I shall feel it no more: the pain of the next moment will not come till the present is past, and that likewise will last but a moment, and so on. I acknowledge there is a fallacy in this kind of reasoning, and that it will not charm away my feeling, if I should be every moment in pain for hours, days and weeks. But if we take a longer interval it may do better. Our Lord says, "sufficient to the day is the evil thereof." The evil of yesterday is gone; that which is appointed for tomorrow is not yet arrived. Would it not be well if we could live with the Lord by the day? This reminds me of a fable. A father bid his young child carry away a large fagot; the child tried, but it was beyond his strength, he could not lift it. Then the father took off the band,

and said, carry one stick at a time. This the child did easily, till he had removed the whole fagot. Thus the troubles of a month or year, which would be too heavy for us if they came all together, are parcelled out by our wise and gracious Lord into daily portions ; we have as it were, to carry one stick every day. But often when we have carried the stick all day, we cannot or will not lay it down at night ; yea we take up the sticks allotted for future days or weeks before the proper time. It is no wonder then that we say, Oh what a heavy burden—Oh how weary am I ! Well, the day is coming when we hope to drop every load, and to bid farewell to sin, sorrow, and care for ever.

I wish Mrs. ——— to consider that a simple desire to please God, to walk by the rule of his word, and to do all to his glory ; like the feigned philosopher's stone, turns all to gold, consecrates the actions of common life, and makes every thing that belongs to our situation and duty in civil and domestic life a part of our religion. When she is making or mending the children's clothes, or teaching them, and when her maid (if serious) is cleaning the kitchen, or a saucepan, they may be as well employed, as when they are upon their knees or at the Lord's table. It is an unpleasant mistake to think all the time as lost which is not spent in reading, or hearing sermons, or prayer. These are properly called *means* of grace ; they should be attended to in their proper season ; but the *fruits* of grace are to appear in our common daily course of conduct. It would be wrong to neglect the house of God ; it would be equally wrong to neglect the prudent management of her own house. It is chiefly as a mother and a mistress of a family, that

she can let her light shine to his praise. I would not have her think that she could serve the Lord better in any other station, than in that in which his providence has placed her. I know that family cares are apt to encroach too much, but perhaps we should be worse off without them. The poet says,—

‘Life’s cares are comforts, such by heaven designed ;
He that has none, must make them or be wretched.’

At the best, if a contemplative life is more quiet, an active life is most honorable and useful. We have no right to live to ourselves. I do not think our Lord blamed Martha for providing a dinner for himself and his twelve apostles, but I suppose she was too solicitous to have things set off very nicely, and perhaps lost her temper. Methinks I see her breaking in upon him with her face red with heat and passion to huff her sister. This was her fault ; had she sent the dinner in quietly and with a smiling face, I believe he would not have rebuked her for being busy in the kitchen, while he was talking in the parlour. We like to have our own will, but submission to his is the great point. Religion does not consist in doing great things, for which few of us have frequent opportunities, but in doing the little necessary things of daily occurrence with a cheerful spirit, *as to the Lord*. Servants, in the apostles’ times, were slaves ; they could have but little time at their own command ; books were scarce, and few of them could read. The servants of heathen masters had doubtless much to suffer ; yet the apostle expects that these poor slaves would adorn the doctrine of God

their Saviour, and follow his example in all things. He says, Art thou called being a slave? Care not for it. If Christ has made you free, the trials of your slavery are scarcely worth your notice. The time is short. You that are now slaves shall soon be equal to angels. And at present you may hope for strength according to your day, and a peace passing understanding, such as the world can neither give nor take away. How much is our situation preferable to that of a slave! The Lord's mercies and favors *to us* are renewed every morning. Only he appoints us a daily cross. Shall we not thankfully and patiently bear it for his sake, who bore a dreadful cross for us?

As it is not that which goeth into a man defileth him, but that which cometh out; so our peace and spiritual progress depends not upon our outward circumstances, but the inward frame of our minds. If the heart be set right, submissive to the will of God, devoted to please him, and depending upon his faithful word, we may be happy in a prison; and otherwise we must be unhappy in a palace. I suppose Eden did not lose all its beauty and verdure the moment when Adam ate the forbidden fruit; but it was no longer Eden to him. He was changed, though the place remained the same: he had lost all relish for it. It matters not whether we live at — or in Coleman Street, so that we are where the Lord would have us to be, and simply yield ourselves to him.

The woman in *Mark* xiv. had done no very great thing; she had not built or endowed a church or an infirmary, but she had done *what she could*, and our Lord accepted it, not according to her *ability*, but her

intention. He that gives a cup of cold water to a prophet, for the Lord's sake, if it be all he *can* do, shall receive a prophet's reward. The evils of the heart, of which you complain, are not peculiar to you, but common to all who are alive to God. We may be humbled for them, and abhor them, and we ought; but they are inseparable from our present state, and we can no more escape from them, than from our skins. But if they are our cross, they shall not be our bane. We have an advocate with the Father, who knows our frame. His blood cleanseth from all sin. May the blessing of the Lord rest upon you and yours.

Very affectionately yours,

JOHN NEWTON.

May 25th, 1797.

LETTER XLVI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

. You may assure Mrs. L——, that she is not really worse than she was. If she thinks herself so, it is a sign that her spiritual light and feeling are increased. The tip-top christians do

not say, behold I am perfect, but, behold I am vile ; and perhaps much of her complaints may be from temptation. If her outward path is more smooth, the Lord may permit the enemy to assault her within. He will go to the full length of his chain, but he can neither break it or go beyond it.

While you were writing on the 4th July, we were trotting on to Reading, where we staid a fortnight with Mr. Cadogan's widowed people. Things look dark there at present, but they are a numerous, lively, humble, united people, and I doubt not but the Lord will take care of them, and either in kind or kindness make up their loss. My love to your people at —, and tell them I hope they will prize the gospel while they have it, for should the Lord remove it, they will find a great difference. The Lord has done great things for you. Be thankful. Much of what you feel remains to be done, will be done at a stroke. Death will free you, once for all, from the body of sin, the effects of which you must be content to bear, as others have done before you. Can a man carry fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned ? The old man is incurable, incapable of being converted, he must be crucified. He will die hard, but die he must and shall. So long as he lives he will tease you, and therefore the christian life is a warfare. The apostle groaned being burdened, and why should you expect to be exempted ? Are you not a soldier ? Your uniform and arms were not given you to strut about with, like the *beef-eaters* in St. James's Park, without seeing an enemy ; but to fight your way through a host. I believe you do not sin wilfully ; but the law of our nature, the source of cold-

ness, deadness, wandering thoughts, &c., you can no more avoid, than you can shake off your skin. Our holiness in this world, does not consist in being delivered from them, but in watching and praying against them, and being humbled and abased for them. A good man from the lower part of your county, breakfasted with me lately. He is a lay preacher, I believe. He mentioned several gospel clergy in —, and wished I would propose to you, to attempt to form an association. I now find that you have already made a beginning. May peace and an unction from on high crown all your meetings. I hope and pray that Mr. — will come forward, receive a blessing among you, and prove a blessing to many. One candle may light many. Who knows but — may yet bloom and flourish as the garden of the Lord. I am highly pleased that you are beginning to visit the more distant parts of your diocese. While you keep within your own bounds, you will be strictly regular, and able to justify your conduct. That question, what do you more than others, concerns all faithful ministers; and our great Lord and Exemplar often went to those who could not, or would not come to him. It is likewise the best method you can take for the improvement and increase of your ministerial abilities.

I am content that you should think your best attempts but poor and weak. We all must think so, if we can duly compare the grandeur and importance of the message intrusted to us, with our manner of delivering it. The gospel seems a theme worthy of an angel's tongue, but the Lord puts this *treasure* in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be ascribed

to him alone. Some preachers may amuse the ear more than others; but none can reach the heart, but by the accompanying energy of the Holy Spirit: *Acts* xvi. 14: and with this influence a feeble worm can thresh the mountains, and make the hills as chaff. Go on, and the Lord will be with you; your own heart shall be as a watered garden, and your ministry like a stream of water, fed from a never-failing spring, and pouring forth for the benefit of many. I preached twice a day at Reading, while I staid there. I wondered at myself, but we know not what we can do till we try. Few at my age could hold out to preach thirty times in fifteen days; but the state and wishes of the people called for some exertions, and the Lord strengthened me. Here my work is more limited. I preach three evenings in the week, and my friend Mr. Taylor has provided room under his own roof for three hundred people. . . . Mr. Gunn is highly acceptable in my pulpit, and the church is crowded to the steps in the street. I have reason to thank the Lord for such an assistant. I must decrease, but I trust he will increase; and should I be laid aside for a time before I am called home, it will be a great comfort to me, if I may have him to supply my place. May the Lord Jesus be your sun and shield, your present joy and your everlasting portion. Amen—so it shall be.

I am,

Your very affectionate,

OMICRON.

August 10th, 1797.

P 5

LETTER XLVII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I JOIN in your prayer that your lambs may be all brought into the fold, one by one, if not all together. Wait the Lord's hour : he waited for you, till you were much older than any of your children now are. Nothing can be done (as to true awakening) till he is pleased to do it ; till then, if they are sober, affectionate, and what is called moral, there is great cause of thankfulness. It is reported here that Dr. — by his over exertions has hurt himself, and seems wearing out ; but as you do not mention it, I hope it is not true. However, I have known faithful ministers, who have precluded their own usefulness, for want of a little prudence being mingled with their zeal. A wise man in a journey would take care of his horse as well as of himself ; for if the horse is jaded, he cannot travel fast or pleasantly. Now the flesh is to the spirit, as the horse is to his rider. Things as you say look dark ; but faith in exercise can see through the clouds to the hand that guides them. Supposing that we had no war, discord, or want in the land ; things ought to appear as dark as they do now to a spiritual eye, if infidelity,

profligacy, and contempt of God were making the same progress. On the other hand, if we were harassed by fire and sword, should the Lord sanctify the troubles to the conversion of sinners in great abundance, the times would be more bright and happy than at present. May the Lord enable us to consider his glory as the first and grand object of our desires, and then we may be assured that all is going on well and right. Why should not things look dark upon such a nation as this? Our sins are more aggravated than those of any nation in Europe, because committed against greater light and privilege. God has lately disconcerted the designs of our enemies. How few comparatively will thank him for it! The thanks are given to Lord Duncan, his officers, and brave tars; joy and gratitude are manifested by gluttony, drunkenness and boast. Instead of songs of praise to the giver of all victory, the proud song of 'Rule Britannia,' is the favourite; though we were so lately shewn by the mutiny of the sailors, how little dependance is to be placed on our boasted wooden walls. Yet the Lord has a people amongst us, a remnant whose eyes affect their hearts. They mourn for sin, and plead for mercy. I ascribe every respite, every providential interposition in our favor, to his gracious attention to their prayers: and therefore, dark as the times are, I will not be a *croaker*. I will hope as long as I can, that though we must be humbled, or rather mortified, (for I fear we are too far gone to be humbled as a nation) we shall not be yet given up. The state ship, like that in which Paul sailed towards Rome, has passengers on board, who are dear to him whom the winds and seas obey; and who knows but their prayers

may prevail, not only for themselves, but for those who are embarked with them in the same bottom! We join in hearty love to you all.

I am,

Your affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

October 25th, 1797.

LETTER XLVIII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

MY spirits fluctuated while reading your letter, as much as the barometer has for some days. In the beginning, finding you were better, I rose to *glad*. Towards the close you say you are worse, and going to consult the doctor—then I sunk down to *sorry*. And yet I knew beforehand, that you are just as well as you should be, and that you will never be sick, when the Lord sees health would be upon the whole better for you. But I believe a right persuasion that we are in his hands, and that he does all things well, should not

preclude the use of prudent means, or prevent our sympathising with our friends in affliction.

I have thought at times with some attention upon Mrs. ——'s problem, but am not able to solve it. Nor could Mr. S., to whom I propounded it, give me much assistance; I mean with respect to your serving a curacy elsewhere, and putting a substitute, if you find one, into the cure of ——. Neither of us could decidedly say that it would be absolutely wrong; on the other hand, though we felt the weight and importance of your reasons for thinking such a change desirable, they did not fully preponderate against the *ifs and buts* which arose in our minds. We know the inconveniences and trials of our present situation, but we cannot foresee those which we might meet with in another; and as Dr. Watts says,—

‘It is a poor relief we gain,
To change the place but not the pain.’

The solution must be left to yourselves, or rather to the Lord. I know you have and will present the case to him by prayer. I would advise you not to look out for yourselves, but to entreat him to look out for you. If a place or a person should *providentially* be brought before you, then will be a proper time to deliberate and determine about a removal; but I cannot wish you to remove, without you have some glance of the pillar and the cloud, and the ark going before, to provide you a resting-place. He certainly placed you where you are, and I trust that both your hearts will say, “If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.” He

knows the dampness of your house, the state of your health, and the number and size of your children ; and if there be a place where he designs to make you useful, he will open a door and a way to it in his own time ; otherwise the experiment might be hazardous. If you should choose a place where he has no people to call, you might rise early and late to little purpose ; or you might run your head into a hornet's nest ; or, if after leaving —, wolves should break in, grievous wolves, not sparing the flock, or men should arise among themselves speaking perverse things ; you would be pained to the heart, unless you were satisfied in your minds that it was *his will* and not *your own* that removed you : in which case you might cheerfully leave all consequences with him. You are used to your own people, and they to you. The bulk of them I suppose are tolerably quiet, and some of them love you for the truth's sake. You cannot communicate these advantages to a curate, and it is possible you might be mistaken in the man. However, it is likewise possible, that the Lord, by the difficulties you feel, may prepare you for a willingness to go to some other part, where he means to employ and own you. Therefore I can give you no better advice, than to read and plead his own gracious direction and promise, *Proverbs* iii. 5, 6. If you walk by this rule, and wait patiently upon him, I am sure you will not go wrong. It is easy to perceive by the strain of Mrs. —'s letters and yours, that the Lord is gradually leading you both forward from strength to strength : and as he has given you a simple desire to know and do his will ; if he is pleased to preserve you in that dependant spirit, I have little fear of your

making a mistake in matters essential to your character and peace ; and if in smaller things you may be permitted to mistake, that you may be more experimentally mindful of your own incompetency, he will over-rule your mistakes for good. What my namesake ascribes to the principle of gravity or attraction in the universe, may, I think, be applied to the depravity of our fallen nature. It is, and will be, universally and always felt, during our present state. It insinuates into, and mixes with all our thoughts, and all our actions. It is inseparable from us, as the shadow from our bodies when the sun shines upon us. The holiness of a sinner does not consist in a deliverance *from* it, but in being sensible *of* it, striving *against* it, and being humbled *under* it, and taking occasion from thence to admire our Saviour, and rejoice in him as our complete righteousness and sanctification. My poor simple people at Olney, had a *saying* which I think well deserves the name of an aphorism : *that the grace of God puts a great deal into the heart, but it takes nothing out.* Grace and nature, flesh and spirit, will counteract each other to the end of the chapter ; and therefore the life of a believer, while in the body, is a continual state of warfare. The apostle felt a law in his members warring against the law of his mind ; he would do good, but evil was present with him. He groaned being burdened ; and we have no warrant to expect that we shall be much better than he was. When we first set out, we hope to be rich in time, but the Lord's purpose is to make us sensible of our extreme poverty. We wish to be *something*, but he is teaching us that we are *nothing*. When indeed we are willing to be nothing,

that he may be all in all, *in us and for us*, then I think we reach the very *acme* of our profession. Then, while we feel that we have no sufficiency of ourselves, we shall be enabled to do all things that occur in the line of duty, through him strengthening us. See 2 *Corinthians* xii. 9, 10.

I aim to leave public concerns in the Lord's hands. He is pleading his own cause ; future events, unknown to us, are already established in his counsels, and his providence is daily accomplishing his purposes. I am sure all shall issue in his glory, and the final good of his people. I cannot see why *such a nation as this*, should be exempted from a share of those calamities, which have overspread the greatest part of Europe ; and yet I hope the prayers of his remnant amongst us will prevail for a mitigation. Perhaps what the flesh calls dark times, may be the best times ; they will be so, if the Lord is pleased by calamities to stir up those to seek him, who would not hear his voice in prosperity. But I may be called to suffer ? Very probably ; but he can give strength according to the day, and shoes of iron and brass when the road is very rough. But what will become of my family and dear relatives ? The Lord is able to take care of them also. Thus I would reason ; thus I do reason, while smoking my pipe quietly by the fire side ; and it looks very well upon paper. But how shall I stand to it in the time of need ? Surely if the Lord does not stand by me then, I shall prove a very coward ; but may I not rely upon his faithful promises ? He bids me live with him to-day, and not be anxious for the morrow before it comes. Our part is to mourn over sin, and to watch unto prayer.

He will be a strong-hold in the day of trouble, and will shew himself strong in behalf of those who trust in him. I cannot say that our public measures afford me an indication that the Lord directs our great men; but I meddle not with them. The French government, and ours, and all the governments are instruments in his hands; and amongst them all, they shall just accomplish that, and no more, which he has already appointed to be done. As to us,—the time is short. We are strangers and pilgrims, and are posting away apace to that happy region, where neither sin nor sorrow can reach us. Suppose the worst, that we should be called to lay down our lives for the sake of him who *voluntarily* laid down his life for us: the grace which supported the first christians, can make us equally willing, and he is no less worthy of such a sacrifice from us than from them. I advise Dr. — to be cautious of engaging in a contest with his diocesan. When a warm heart and a warm temper are united, the effect is often a precipitancy, which only time and experience can correct. I wish the Doctor may commit his cause to the Lord, who will plead and manage for him, better than he can for himself. It is His prerogative to rule our hearts, bishops, and pulpits. If he shutteth, none can open; and if he is pleased to open, none can shut. I have frequently found, that when difficulties and disagreeables have been in the way, and I have tried to remove them by my own exertions, he has left me, for a time, to make the best of it that I could, and then I have been sure to make bad worse. On the other hand, when I have had faith and patience to leave the concern with the Lord, he has, sooner or later, made the crooked

straight, and saved me much trouble and anxiety. I believe it was not necessary to remind you of the 15th of December. Though the merciful Lord has healed my *wound*, I hope it does me no harm to look at the *scar*. Indeed, it is almost continually present to my mind; nor can I well think of it, without feeling some *gratitude* and some *humiliation*,—two exercises of heart peculiarly suited to my retrospect of life. The Lord bless you. So prays,

Your affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

December 16th, 1797.

LETTER XLIX.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IF I have written to you (as I think I have) since I received yours of the 25th October, I forgot to set it down; and though my memory, through mercy, is still good, my

recollection depends much upon pen-and-ink. But I thought, to make sure of being on the right side, I would write again. If it should prove an intercalary letter, you will accept it in good part, and perhaps it may put you in mind to write again soon.

On Friday, the 23rd of November, the strength of my left leg suddenly and silently withdrew. I fell several times while dressing, before I was convinced I could not stand; for I was in perfect health, no giddiness in my head or numbness in my leg. I kept house on the Sunday, and for three or four days I could not move about the room without support. But I have a praying people, and the Lord has heard them; means were used, and a blessing afforded. I was soon restored to St. Mary's, and can now walk in the streets as formerly. It was a gentle warning to prepare for greater changes, which at my time of life may be daily expected. I thought at first, that perhaps it might be the Lord's pleasure to confine me at home for the rest of my days, that I might try to practise myself the lessons of submission, &c., which I have so often proposed to others; and I thank him that I was in a good measure resigned to his wise and holy will. My times are in his hands, and I desire to leave them with him. May he enable me to say from the heart, 'what, and when, and how thou wilt.' I am now quite well; but old age is a disease, a growing disease, which will admit of no cure. It is well that it does not, for who that has a hope beyond the grave would wish to remain always in such a world as this? Oh for grace to live, while we do live, like Paul; and to die, when the time comes, like Simeon! We returned from Southampton about the

18th September, and found all well at No. 6: and all is so still, only my maids like myself have intimations that they grow older. I trust we shall live together here till death us do part, and ere long shall live together for ever in a better world.

I congratulate you on preaching at —, and without notes. Did not I tell you I thought it would be so? Did I not say *Habenti dabitur*? I trust you will go on and prosper in the strength of the Lord. You say L— is very dark. Where should a light be put up but in a place that is dark without one? In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand. Do not expect to sow one week, and to reap the next; but continue to sow in hope. The husbandman should have patience till he receive the early and latter rain. We are responsible for diligence and fidelity, but not for the success. If the Lord is pleased to work amongst your people at all, do not say, it is so little! Be thankful for that little, and then pray and wait for more. The salvation of one soul is worth the labour of a whole life; but I trust you will be the honoured instrument of saving many. You will be useful to all to whom it is the Lord's pleasure to make you so. Neither Paul nor Gabriel could do more.

Give our love to —. All in our house wish him well. If he is moral, attentive, and obedient, be thankful. Till the Lord's hour is come, there can be no abiding, radical change. You were much older than he is, before you knew the way of salvation. Nothing is more desirable than to wait patiently in the use of means and in prayer, without dictating to the Lord as to the how or

when. We may watch for the morning ; but we must not expect the sun will rise before its time, because we are watching. Does he not invite us to cast all our cares upon him, and assure us that he careth for us ? Be patient likewise with ——, and do not over dose him, lest it should give him a distaste.—We were once boys ourselves.

Mrs. G——'s heart is like yours and mine, it knows its own bitterness. She has been sharply tried ; no doubt there was a need be for it ; and she has been mercifully supported, but I hope and believe she does not shine in her own eyes as she seems to do in yours. All the Lord's people are empty vessels any further than he is pleased to fill them. We have nothing properly inherent in ourselves, but a capacity to receive what he is pleased to bestow. If we can glorify him in affliction, it is not because we are wise and good, but because he is faithful to his word. He has said, "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be ;" and so we find it. And therefore if we wish to be eminent in our profession, we must take the bitter and the sweet together, for the Lord has joined them, and they cannot be separated. Though afflictions are not sanctified to all, I believe there is seldom much good done without them : a believer, like a star, shines brightest in the night.

I would make Mrs —— quite well this morning if I could. The Lord can, and does not. Ergo— it is better she should be as she is, for he loves her better than I do, and is a better judge of what is most for her benefit. My letter has been written at various intervals, a few lines at a time : at length I find myself at the bottom, with only room to express the desire of my heart, that

the Lord will bless you and Mrs. — with his own peace, and that all your children may be his sons and daughters. Pray for me and mine.

I am,

Yours indeed,

JOHN NEWTON.

December 13th, 1798.

LETTER L.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I SHOULD not write to you quite so soon, were it not to enclose a letter to Miss J—; therefore to you I shall, for once, be short.

. My breath is still prolonged, my leg restored, and I go on much in the old way. The

Lord is very merciful to me in all points, unworthy as I am. Phœbe is drooping, and I think will not hold out long. C—— is very asthmatic. S—— but so so. Perhaps one young, healthy servant could do as much as all our three ; but then, we live in love and peace, and bear each other's burdens as much as we can ; and for their past services, especially in the time of my great trials, from 1788 to 90, I shall always think myself more obliged to them than they can be to me, and I hope nothing but death shall part us. Pray for them, for they all love you and Mrs. —— . In answer to what you say of L——, I shall refer you to *Eccles. xi. 1 and 6.* Let us sow while we can ; some of the seed which we think thrown away, may spring up when our mouths are silent in the dust. I shall be glad if your dwelling is more comfortable ; but, damp or dry, I trust the Lord will dwell with you, and be your sun and shield, your guide and guard, through life, through death, and bring us together in a better world.

I am,

Your affectionate brother and friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

No. 6, January 9th, 1799, Evening.

Saturday, 12th January.

P.S. Phœbe went quietly home yesterday, rather more suddenly than we expected, aged 64. She lived sixteen years with us in London, and though she was

not a hired servant, nor slept often in the house, she was as one of our family fourteen years at Olney. She was ignorant, and could not read; but she knew she was a sinner, and I trust she knew the Saviour, and is now with him. She never could say much about herself. She was an honest, faithful, careful, and affectionate servant, and in losing her, I think I have lost a valuable friend; but for her own sake, I am glad she is gone. She was a great sufferer.

LETTER LI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I BEGIN with the point upon which I am most at a loss to give an opinion. I dare not say that you are married to L——, for I know not what other services the Lord may design you. Nor can I wish you to remove while you have a hesitation in your mind whether such a step would be right or wrong. It is desirable to have a *plerophoria*, a full persuasion on our minds that we are where we ought to be, and are going where we ought to go. Then, if a new situation should bring us into new and unexpected trials, we may con-

fidently look them in the face, and expect that the Lord appoints them, and will support us ; but otherwise they would be whips and thorns, and excite a daily painful reflection ;—this and the other I brought upon myself. I think there are few circumstances, (though doubtless there may be some) which will warrant an *Incumbent* to leave his living while his people will hear him with patience, and he is made useful to a few, if but to a few ; and if his call is sufficiently strong and clear, perhaps it would be more honorable to resign it wholly, than to continue responsible for a personal charge which we cannot personally attend. Indeed it is often said, I will keep my living however, because I can put in a curate to my mind, but if I give it up, perhaps the gospel would be wholly removed. Specious as this plea is, I think a similar one would not be accepted in any department but ours. If a captain of a ship should say, I mean not to go to sea this voyage, for I know that my first lieutenant, or chief mate, is a better seaman, or a cleverer fellow than myself ; so that the concern will suffer no loss by my absence : the answer would certainly be, if you do not sail in the vessel, you cannot retain the command of her.

But if with a single eye and an upright heart you consult the Lord, you will have little need of our casuistry.

I wish I could advise you about your sons, but here likewise I am at a loss.

If both J—— and T—— are strongly inclined to the sea, I think it a lawful calling.

Dispose of your children in any way, you cannot keep them out of the infectious

air of the world's evil atmosphere. When you have made the most prudent use in your power of the means that the providence of the Lord affords, you can do nothing further than to commend them to him by frequent, fervent prayer, and then in faith, patience and hope, wait for the issue : and if you give them up to him, (when you have done your part,) you must leave him (if you can) to answer your prayers in his own time and way ; for he often brings the blind by a way they know not. Though it be desirable, it is not absolutely necessary, that they should be converted while they are very young. It was not so in your own case. The Lord gave you something to look back upon, some proof of the evil of your heart, to humble you through life, before he called you by his grace : so it was with Mr. Grimshawe ; so it was with me. My dear mother was a pious woman. It was her desire and prayer from my birth that I might be a minister ; and as she was a dissenter, it was a part of her plan to send me to St. Andrews, in Scotland, to learn divinity in the college. But she died before I was seven years old ; and the Lord thought fit rather to send me to Guinea. Methinks if she had lived to know the wickedness and misery into which I plunged myself from my seventeenth to my twenty-third year, it might have broken her heart : but if she had lived a few years longer, she would have said, " He has done all things well." We have liberty to express our desires to the Lord ; but the more simply we can commit the how, the when, and the where, to his wisdom and will, the more we shall be freed from heart-eating anxieties.

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I ought to be very thankful for fire-side mercies, and that I have faithful and affectionate servants. I hope if you pray for such, the Lord will in due time send them to you. I think few can be worse than mere talking empty professors. I should prefer those who make no pretences to religion, if of a good character, willing to comply with the rules of the family, and to attend the ordinances : such a one, if awakened under your ministry, (and perhaps the Lord might send her for that purpose,) would love you and her mistress like a child, and of course would take a pleasure in endeavouring to please you : but we must have crosses as the Lord pleases, and prayer and patience will enable us to profit by them all. Phœbe's place is well supplied by a niece of C—— : we took her up at the age of ten years, a helpless orphan, liable to fall into bad hands ; she is now a good servant, of about twenty-one years of age, and *she likewise* thinks she has reason to love us.

I think Mrs. —— will remember Miss H. She is in a dying state, but she is very comfortable, and though possessed of a good fortune, rejoices in the thought of leaving all behind her. The Lord has inclined her, unasked and unthought of by me, to do what affords me great pleasure. If I ever wished for more than I have, I think it was for the sake of C. and S., who, if they survive me, will scarcely be fit for another service, especially after we have lived so long together, in a way perhaps almost peculiar to ourselves. I have done what I prudently could for them *in my will*, but I thought it too little. Miss H. has made provision for building and endowing eight or nine alms-houses. She often came to our house ; our maids were respectful to

her, and she liked them; but neither they nor I had the least expectation that she would appoint two of the houses for them. This provision, with what I shall leave them, will be quite enough: they may live like ladies. And now I hope I can say from my heart, I have no desire to be richer than I am this day; and by the grace of God I will not. There was a house designed for Phoebe likewise, but the Lord has called her to a better mansion, a heavenly. We all jog on in our old way. The Lord heaps blessings and mercies upon us, and enables us (I trust) to see his hand in them, and to seek his blessing in the use of them. May he dwell in your heart and in Mrs. ——'s, in the hearts of your children, your men and maid-servants; and may his blessing be upon all that you have in the house and in the field. Amen. We unite in love to you both, to Miss J., J. T., and all the rest. Tell John Newton to be a good boy, lest I should take his name away, for it is *mine*. *Ora pro nobis*.

I am,

Your affectionate brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

No. 6, February 19th, 1799.

LETTER LII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

.

 My dear Miss C. and myself,
 our little family at home, and the family we are with,
 (though nearly twenty in number) are all well. Oh!
 Sir, we are highly favoured. But my legs, my eyes, and
 my ears, all admonish me that I grow old apace. My
 recollection likewise fails me greatly; but seldom in the
 pulpit, for which I ought to be very thankful. The 4th
 of August is at hand; you need not to be reminded of
 it, and my letter will come time enough to thank you
 and dear Mrs. — for your kind remembrance of me
 on that day. Now for your paragraphs, *seriatim*.
 Captain C. is my intimate friend; I cannot doubt but he
 is truly gracious; and if I live till his return, I shall be
 glad to tell him how much I am interested in your son
 T——, for his parents' sake: as he is so much inclined
 to be a sailor, I hope you may safely consent. If he goes
 under Captain C's auspices, he will have an eye to
 his conduct; and the vicissitudes of a sea-faring life are
 well suited to impress the mind of a young man who
 has been previously well instructed at home. The
 bias of young minds to particular callings, is under the
 directions of an all-wise Providence. You have endea-

R

voured to do your part. You will continue to pray for him, and I trust the Lord will answer your prayers, and do that for him which you cannot. When the heart of Monica was much engaged for her son Augustine, her bishop told her, a child of many prayers could not be lost : but you must try to commit him wholly and without reserve to the Lord. He grants our desires, in his own time, and in his own way. He answered my mother's prayers by sending me to Africa. This seemed an unlikely method, but it proved a sure one. Sin plunged me into misery, and that misery was the means by which his mercy wrought, to bring me to myself. Mr. Grimshawe did not go to sea, but he learnt to sin with a high hand at Cambridge.

I have long expected you would prove an extempore preacher, and I should rejoice to hear you at St. Mary's. The Lord can teach the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak ; and therefore I do not wonder so much at you, as you do at yourself. He is Almighty : if he speak, it is done ; but he seldom works instantaneously ; but we are warranted to expect, that in a patient course of waiting upon him, and in the use of his appointed means, he will prepare and strengthen us to do or to bear whatever his wisdom may allot us. The oak was once an acorn, and we expect their acorns will still produce oaks ; but they do not spring up and wither in a night, like Jonah's gourd. The growth of the oak is gradual and slow ; but when grown, it stands for ages. Do not grieve much for those who die in the Lord. In them the end of your ministry is perfected : a merchant is seldom sorry when his ship arrives in

port, and by a short passage is preserved from the storms and dangers incident to a long voyage. A good farmer will not cut down his corn while it is green, nor let it stand long after it is ripe. We may be sure that the great and good Husbandman will do every thing in the proper season. We are glad indeed to hear that Mrs. — has some relief from the complaint. Better health would perhaps have a good effect upon her spirits and her spiritual frames; for our religious experiences are much influenced by constitutional causes.

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 You say you have been at L—— nineteen years; if so, you and I were planted in our present spot about the same time. I was married to St. Mary W. in 1779; she has been a good wife to me, for which I would praise the Lord.

. This is a chequered life, that we live in the flesh. The corn requires both rain and sunshine, to bring it forward; but either of them without the other, would destroy the crop. Thus, if we had only the sun of prosperity, the plant of grace would be burnt up; if always the rain of affliction, it would be overwhelmed and drowned. The Lord, who knows exactly what we are, and where we are, adjusts these different means, in season and measure, as he, in his wisdom, sees most for our advantage. We pass through so many changes, that when it rains, we may always hope for fair weather; *Genesis ix. 14*; and when the sky is bright and serene, we may expect rain before long. What a mercy to know that all our concerns are in the hands of him who so loved us, as to wash

us from our sins in his own blood. To his care and blessing I commend you, and Mrs. —, and Miss J—, J—, T. and C., and my namesake, and A., and one more whose name I cannot recollect. May the Lord bless you all, and your children, your men and your maids, and your congregation. Amen. *Ora pro nobis.*

I am,

Your very affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

Southampton, at Walter Taylor's, Esq.

July 31st, 1799.

LETTER LIII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOU must expect my letters will be shorter and less frequent as I grow older. I have more to do, and am less able to do it. Miss *Report* is a talking baggage, and tells lies all over the kingdom. She said I was ill at S—, and that C. was sent for to me. All this was utterly false. She had the assurance to tell Mr. S.

so, from whom I suppose Mrs. G. heard it. My health was never better than while we were abroad. We had not a finger-ache between us. Through mercy we are all well at No. 6, at present. I mean to write to Mr. H. as soon as I can ; but I have several letters pressing for immediate answers. I suppose you can easily inform him of my intention, and say that in the mean time I wish him not to hold himself too cheap, by losing his time in disputing with every one who intrudes upon him. Whoever is right, they who presume to dictate to him how he should preach, must be fundamentally wrong, as destitute of one thing, without which the highest attainments in knowledge are nothing worth, I mean *humility*. The poison of ——'s preaching and writing, seems to spread far and near ; I hear of it from many quarters. I almost wonder that any persons of judgment and experience should be infected by it ; but considering the weakness of man in his best estate, and the subtle, insinuating nature of error, the wonder ceases. They are well kept whom the Lord keeps. We are not able to keep ourselves for a single day with respect either to judgment or practice. I congratulate you on your extempore talent : did I not tell you that you would one day obtain it ? but much more on the steadiness and fidelity the Lord has given you. It is right to wish and pray for more success, but we cannot command it. If we have grace to be faithful and diligent, we are not responsible for the event. *Isaiah* lix. 5. But I trust the Lord will let you see that you do not labour in vain, either at L—— or C—— : and remember that the conversion of one soul is worth the labour of a whole life.

Now I come to Mrs. ——'s letter, of the 16th of August, which followed us to S——; though I have not much to say to her, after what I have written to you. My dear Madam, Mr. —— says you still refuse comfort. I am sorry for it, when it seems to lie so near you. But surely you find some comfort, when you think of the mercy that has opened your eyes, and directed your desires to a Saviour, whom you believe is exactly suited to your case. Your ill health affects your spirits, and your low spirits prevent that sensible comfort which you might otherwise have. You rather mourn; but has not the Lord said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they *shall be* comforted." This life is a state of conflict rather than of comfort; but your comfort is coming; the hour is at hand when your sun shall go down no more, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Live upon that hope. Faith founded upon the sure word of God, is better than sensible comfort. I wish you were quite willing to be saved as a sinner, and to think the blood of Christ, and the oath of God, sufficient warrants for your trust. If you wait till you think yourself very good, you will never be comfortable in this world. Jesus says, "Come to me;" and, "Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." I have the comfort of believing that he means what he says, and is able to make his word good; together with consciousness that I have taken him at his word, and committed my soul and my all to him. Were I to seek comfort from my frames, feelings, and services, I might sink into despair: for if the Lord was strict to mark what is amiss in the best day of my life, I should be ruined. The care of a family is your department; it

demands your attention, and you are as well employed when in it, as Mr. — is when in the pulpit. True, you are encumbered about many things; so am I: so all will confess who know themselves. It is the effect of that depravity which is common to us all. It calls for humiliation; but should be no discouragement; because we have an almighty, compassionate Saviour. I had rather see you as you are, than that you should be heady and high-minded, like the vain-glorious professors you speak of at — and —. Their knowledge makes them proud: yours lays you low before the Lord. He beholds the proud afar off, but gives grace, and more grace to the humble.

Yours,

J. N.

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 The least attention to money matters embarrasses me, and makes me, as Mrs. — says, like Martha in her kitchen.

. I have two Dutch ladies, (who were driven from home, and are totally destitute here,) so providentially brought to me, that I think myself bound in duty to take care of them. I need faith, for they have neither storehouse or barn; and taxes are so multiplied, provisions so dear, and the Lord's people visit me so much from all quarters, that I shall be thankful if my income will bring the year round. But I think I am in the path of duty, and I look to him to raise up friends to assist me in their maintenance. I trust I only want money while on my journey: I know

it will not pass where I am going. The Lord will provide. I brought nothing with me into the world, nor from the coast of Africa.

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 As you are not quite so old, nor so much engaged as I am, I shall hope to hear from you as usual. Do you write when you please: I will write when I can. The Lord bless you all. Amen.

Believe me,

Your very affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

October 31st, 1799.

LETTER LIV.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I KNOW not when I wrote last; am sorry to be so dilatory, but I cannot help it. I find it difficult now to write by candle-light, and have little leisure by day-light. My eyes, ears, and legs remind me that I grow

old, but I thank the Lord my health remains firm ; and they tell me I do not yet seem much older in the pulpit ; but when out of it, I cannot do as formerly.

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 I pity poor ——. My regard for him, and my expectation from him, were both great. I thank the Lord for myself and for Mr. —, that we are preserved ; for we are no wiser or better in ourselves than those who fall.

I was concerned for Mr. —'s illness in the church, and the remaining indisposition in his eyes and head ; but if what we suffer is sanctified to keep us from dishonouring our profession, and if the Lord sees afflictions necessary to counteract the devices of our subtle enemy, we have reason to praise him for them. Methinks we should think it preferable to die upon the spot, or even to be buried alive, rather than be left to do what might make the godly weep, and the wicked rejoice.

Your letter told me that Captain C—— was at Falmouth. If T—— should miss going, it will be what the world calls a *disappointment*, and a great one ; but there is no such word in the dictionary of faith. What to others are disappointments, are to *believers* intimations of the will of God. We are blind to future consequences ; and therefore even when we mean well, we often form plans which the Lord sees, though we do not, would in the issue, be painful or hurtful, and therefore mercifully interposes by his providence to show us that what we aim at would not answer our wish, or that the right time is not yet come. Thus Joseph was disappointed, when the

chief butler forgot to intercede with Pharaoh for his discharge from prison ; but had he been set at liberty then, he would probably have gone home to his father : then he would not have been upon the spot to expound Pharaoh's dream ; of course he would not have been lord of the land of Egypt.

I was sadly disappointed when the archbishop of York, in the year 1758, refused me ordination. But he *could not* ordain me ; if he had, I should have been fixed in Yorkshire ; whereas the event proved I should preach at Olney, and afterwards be removed to London. What a mercy to be baulked for our good ! The sum is, that if T—— goes in the Topaze, I shall hope it will be well : and if he does not, I shall hope it will be better. Only hold out faith and patience. The Lord knows all our wants, fears, and wishes ; and if we cast our cares simply upon him, he will choose and manage for us, better than we could for ourselves.

I know not if I have answered Mrs. ——'s sorrowful letter of the 7th of November. The Lord himself will answer, to her comfort, in his good time. Her nervous habits expose her to Satan's assaults. In such cases my words can have little effect : but when the Lord speaks, the enemy must retire ; and in the mean time, he is restrained by a chain he cannot break. He is permitted to worry her, but he cannot devour, nor even hurt her, for her Saviour will make all things work together for her good. Be of good courage, Madam : I know you love the Lord, because you love his people, (1 *John* iii. 14 ;) and that is a sure sign that he loves you, for if he had not loved you first, you would not have thought of him.

If I was able, I would cure Mr. ——'s head and eyes. One who loves him much better than I, could do it with a word ; but as he does not, this also must be best upon the whole. The power and compassion of our great Physician are unspeakably great ; his attention to us is unremitted, by day, by night, abroad and at home : not a sigh, not a tear, escapes him. And therefore if he appoints us to bow in heaviness, there is a needs be for it. What he does now, if we know not at present, we shall know hereafter. Then we shall say, "He has done all things well." Then, I doubt not, we shall see cause to number our sharpest trials amongst our choicest mercies. And it is but for a season ; we shall not always live in this poor, dying, trying, suffering, sinful state. Yet a little while, and all our sorrows will be

—————'left below,
And earth exchanged for heaven.'

The Lord help us to triumph while we fight, and to sing in the midst of our troubles ; for they will soon be to us but as the remembrance of a dream when we awake ! Let us sing as well as we can. Virgil speaks a christian truth in heathen verse, when he says,

'Carmina tum melius, cum venerit Ipse, canemus.'—
(We shall sing better when HE is come.)

This letter has been in hand about a week : interruptions have often called me off in the midst of a line, and when I resume my pen, perhaps I forget what I meant to say. Broken and inaccurate as it is, you will accept it as a token of my love. Miss C. joins me in love to you both, to Miss J. ——, John Newton, and little

D. ——. We shall have some love left for the next when it comes. May the Lord be with you in the trying hour, and make you a joyful and thankful mother! Who knows but you may be released from your fears and complaints at the same time, and send me a letter in a different strain, when you come abroad again. Remember us affectionately to Mr. ——. I have often wished to write him; but—Oh that *but*! Farewell. The Lord bless you all.

I am,

Your sincerely affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

No. 6, *February 10th*, 1800.

LETTER LV.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE had a letter from Mrs. H——. I find that Dr. W—— is gone home. He was an old man; he lived honourably and usefully, and died comfortably. The Lord has removed him to a state of happiness without abatement, interruption, or end. We hope in due time to follow. I trust neither of you will sorrow as



those without hope. Jesus still lives. He is still sufficient to make up every loss. The comfort we had in our relations, was from his blessing; and he can bless us without them: when our cisterns are broken, the fountain from whence they were supplied is still full, and still flowing.

We dined at Mr. Serle's yesterday, and talked about L——. We should be glad to hear that Captain C—— and T—— have met: but if not yet, I hope they will meet in the best time. We are short-sighted creatures, we cannot see the length of our nose before us; but the Lord knows and sees all things in their connexions and possible consequences, and he does all things well. He can make what we call hinderances helps, and, if we can but trust him, would choose better for us than we can possibly do for ourselves.

Tell dear Mrs. — that I think much of her, and pray for her safe lying down and getting up. You will let us hear, as soon as the event takes place; for few of your friends are more interested in your concerns, than ourselves.

May the glory and defence which rested on the Tabernacle, rest upon the minister's house at L——, and upon poor No. 6. Amen.

I am, truly and always,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

March 25th, 1800.

LETTER LVI.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

By this time, I suppose you either are, or have been together, and have heard the particulars of our Southampton interview, which could scarcely be more pleasing to Mr. and Mrs. B——, than it was to me.

I congratulate you, my dear friends, that the Lord has given you such a daughter.

I pray the Lord to bless them; and I think I can pray thus in faith, for I surely trust he has blessed them already, and they shall be blessed.

I am sorry to find you seem cast down to see so little success to your labours. Some concern on this head is needful to animate our prayers and enliven our zeal; but giving way to discouragement only weakens our hands. I thank the Lord, who has given you a desire to be faithful and diligent: these are our parts, we are not responsible for success; and further, it may come when you least expect it. When he has shewn how little can be done by us, he may shew you suddenly how much may be done, when he says, "*I will work,*

and none shall let it." His time is like the time of tide, which can neither be accelerated nor retarded by man. Though it tarry, wait for it; not in a spirit of despondency, but of hope and expectation. Consider what the Lord has done for you, since Mrs. ——'s first letter to me. He has shewn you the clear light of his truth; he has given you courage to preach it; he has even made you an extempore preacher, which you once thought impossible; he has preserved you from error in judgment, and enabled you to maintain a conversation becoming your profession. Nor can you say you have laboured in vain. Some fruit you have seen. If you were even only useful to your friend Mr. P——, (give my love to him,) it is a greater thing than if you could restore peace to Europe. I believe you have been useful to Mr. M——, (my love to him likewise,) and if the Lord owns his services, you are remotely useful through him likewise. Be thankful; be cheerful; be strong, not in grace and power received, but in the inexhaustible grace and power of the Lord Jesus. Praise him for what he has done, and wait on him for more. The Lord, who well knows the distance of L—— from London, appointed you and me our respective posts. He could easily have placed us nearer together; but better we could not be placed, than by his appointment. We are not necessary to each other, and he is sufficient for us both. We see the same sun, we breathe the same air, and are going to the same home.

We came hither on Wednesday, half-way to No. 6, where I hope to be on the 17th. I long to see my family, friends, and people again. Through mercy we have had nothing but *well* from home, and we are

When I had written so far, I laid down my pen yesterday, and I cannot now tell you what I meant to say. *We are*—My recollection fails me greatly, but through mercy, I seldom miss it while in the pulpit. But the time must come, and cannot be very distant, when I shall either be called away, or laid aside: the Lord knows when or which. I aim to leave it with him. His faithful word, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," has been my sheet anchor, and is so still. That he is able to save to the uttermost, and has made me willing to be saved by him, is all my comfort. I can scarcely see what I write, but I write on because it is to you.

We join in love to you both, and to all your children. May your daughters be all like their sister J——. May your sons know and cleave to their own Friend, the Friend and God of their parents.

May the blessings which your kindness expresses in prayer for us, be doubled and multiplied upon yourselves, and upon all dear to you. I am persuaded I can wish you no better. The Lord is now giving us a second set of harvest weather, for gathering in the crops that are behind-hand. He is good; but the miserable and numerous tribe of *face-grinders* labour to counteract his bounty, and to make an artificial scarcity: they would starve the poor, to fill their bags, though at the hazard of their own souls. But this also, like the war, is from the Lord. He gives them up to hardness of heart, for the sins of the nation. Sin is the root and spring of all misery. Let us rejoice that we have a Saviour, who is leading us to a better world than this, and has engaged to support us

every step, until we arrive safely there, leaving all our sorrows behind us. I commend you all to his gracious care and keeping. *Ora pro nobis.*

Believe me to be,

Your very affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

Farnham, September 13th, 1800.

LETTER LVII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

As I took it for granted you would see my letter to Mrs. —, I thought in writing to her I was writing to her parents.

Though I am a poor, inconsistent creature, and find it much more easy to point out to others what is right, than to apply the advice I give to them, when the case becomes my own; yet I will tell you what I think. There are some things the Lord

has absolutely promised, for which I wish I could open my mouth wider, ask with more importunity, and larger expectations; such as humility, more simple dependance, submission to his will, &c., &c. These are what he invites and commands me to be earnest and fervent for. I know I am not straitened in him, though I am shamefully straitened in myself. But in *temporals*, I am so short-sighted to the consequences of my own wishes, if I could obtain them, that I dare not desire to choose for myself if I might. The spirit of adoption gives us the liberty of children: we may come, though with humiliation, yet with confidence, and open our hearts freely; we may tell Him all we feel, or fear, or want, or think we want: but it is well for us that we are likewise directed to add, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Thus, if one of your young children, who doubt not your love, comes freely to your knee, and asks, we will say for a cake or an apple, you will probably grant the request; but if the child sees a razor, and because it looks bright, wants it to play with, it is well for the child that you have a negative. The child knows not the danger of playing with a razor, but you do, and therefore put it out of the way. It is better the child should cry, than do itself a mischief. How often has the Lord in mercy refused one those things, which would have been as razors in the hand of a child or a mad-man. We cannot foresee all that might follow if — was in the —; but every link in the chain of causes and effects is present continually to the Lord. If Gabriel was sent to tell you that — was not to go into the —, you would give up the thoughts at once. We do not expect to see angels; nor

need we, if we believe that the divine providence superintends all our concerns. What the world calls a disappointment, should be considered by us only as an intimation of the will of God. Either the thing desired would not have been for our good; or the Lord purposes to give us that, or something better, in another way, and more immediately from himself; or his hour is not yet come, and we must wait and pray a little longer. .

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The Lord bless you and your house, from the oldest to the youngest.

So prays

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

February 10th, 1801.

LETTER LVIII.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

BEFORE you read farther, I beg you not to be alarmed. I trust all is, and shall be, well. My trial did not spring out of the dust: it is the Lord's doing. He has promised that all things shall work together for good; and, blessed be his name, he enables me to hope in his word. Since the removal of my late dear partner, I have had a long halcyon season; my path has been comparatively smooth till lately, but now I have a trial indeed! It is his pleasure to touch me in a tender point. Oh for grace and strength according to my day! My dear Miss C——, my Eliza, who has been long, by the Lord's blessing, the staff and comfort of my old age, is at present laid aside. For a year she has been much troubled with an indigestion. . . . This has lately abated, but the disorder has had an awful effect upon her nervous system, (which has always been weak,) and by the Lord's permission has given Satan an open door to fill her imagination with the *Horribilia de Deo et terribilia de Fide*. (Horrible thoughts concerning God and his word.) He persuades her that all her former religious profession was hypocrisy; that the Lord has now deserted her, cut her off, and set her up as a mark of his endless displeasure, &c., &c.: and

though, a few weeks since, the Lord suddenly dispersed the gloom, and gave such a manifestation of his love and grace, as she said she had never before experienced, nor ever expected; she now says this likewise was delusion. It was indeed short, it lasted not a quarter of an hour; but it has given me much comfort. It was sudden and unlooked for, and shewed me what the Lord can do in a moment. At present I think, so far as concerns herself and her own feelings, she is deranged; though, in other things, attentive and sensible. She is always under the immediate apprehension of death, which is very terrible in her state of despondency. I seldom leave her but she says I shall find her a corpse on my return. . . . I think, if the Lord please, to take her to Reading next week. My friend Dr. K. lives in a large house and garden,—fine air and prospects: he is a medical man. I am willing to use the means; but I believe only the help of Him who made heaven and earth, and who raises the dead, can effectually relieve us. I aim to commit her into his faithful hands, and I trust he will *help me* to abide by the surrender I have made, of myself, and my all, to him; but I feel too often the workings of unbelief and self-will. I have often told my friends and hearers when in affliction, that the post of *trial* is the post of *honour*: he now appoints me to practise my own lessons. I feel that without him I can do nothing; but may I not humbly hope, that I shall both do and suffer all things through Christ strengthening me? My life has been a series of wonders, mercies, supports and deliverances, in which I can myself, (though I cannot prove it to others,) perceive the hand of my Lord, no

less clearly than in the miracles he wrought by Moses in Egypt, and at the Red Sea. If after all this I should murmur and distrust, I should imitate the worst part, and the worst conduct of the Israelites. Yet this I certainly should do, were he to leave me to myself: but he has said, "my grace is sufficient for thee:" "I will never leave thee; when thou walkest through floods and flames, I will be with thee." And

‘ His every word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies.’

Therefore though cast down, I am not destroyed. My chief desire on my own account, is, that I may honour him while in this fire; that I may not stain my character and profession, by impatience, despondence, or any wrong tempers. Then, I trust, this trial will promote his glory, and the good of others. When they see that though we are like the bush, *Exodus* iii., we are not consumed, because the Lord is there; it may encourage them to bear their own burdens with submission and hope. Through mercy, when I am in the pulpit, I seem to leave all behind me, for the season; and perhaps my trouble may occasion me to preach with more emphasis and earnestness than before. I hope likewise it has quickened my spirit in prayer. And who can say how much worse it was sent to preserve me from? Perhaps Satan was spreading a net for my feet, or preparing a spell to lull me to sleep upon the enchanted ground; and the Lord has in this way interposed to disappoint his malice. I cannot doubt but when, hereafter, we

look back by a clearer light upon the way we have been led, we shall see cause to number our sharpest afflictions amongst our chief mercies.

My eyes are so dim, that I write with difficulty, and cannot easily read my own writing, nor a letter from a friend unless written in a large hand, and with black ink. Now again I sensibly miss my dear secretary. She was indeed my *fac-totum*. The poor likewise will miss her greatly. To them she was an assiduous and benevolent friend. She delighted to follow her Lord, in going about doing good. But all this he knows; *Psalm cxxii. 3*: yet he permits, yea *invites* me, to pour out my heart before him; and he is a God who heareth prayer.

I have just received from Mr. Serle the good news of dear Mrs. ——'s safe delivery of a boy. I would praise the Lord, and congratulate the parents, grand-parents, and all concerned. May the Lord number the child among the lambs of his own flock: and thus, if he lives, he may be an honourable member of society, and of the church of God; an honour and comfort to his family; and at last stand with them on the right hand of the Saviour in his great day!

I long to hear from L——. I do not forget you; but we were a month at Walworth, and my attention and time were so divided between my feelings for her, and my calls for service in the city, that I could do little else.

May the Lord bless you in all things, and hear our mutual prayers at a throne of grace: yet a little while, and we hope to join our praises before a throne of glory. Worthy is the Lamb

that was slain! The Lord bless you both, your children and your child's child, and Mrs. —.

I am,

Your very affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

May 8th, 1801.

LETTER LIX.

LET my eyes say what they will, I must write a bit to my dear friends at L—. First.—My dear Sir, I thank you and Mrs. — for your sympathy and prayer. I have much to be thankful for with respect to my dear child, but the derangement is not visibly abated. The Lord's time is not yet come; may he enable me to wait for it with submission, patience, and humble hope. He can paint a beautiful rainbow upon the darkest cloud, whenever he pleases. He does all things well. I aim to yield all into his hands, and he in a measure helps me to do so; but sometimes the pinches I have from self-will and unbelief, make me feel that I am a poor creature, and that I can stand no longer than I am held up.

I believe you are more useful than you are aware

of. If *any* receive your messages, it will not signify much, a hundred years hence, whether they lived within the bounds of your parish or not. We are responsible for fidelity and diligence, but not for success. As to a removal: you may advise with Mr. S——, A——, and Newton, or whom you please; but do not depend upon us. You have an infallible counsellor always at hand; and in answer to simple hearted prayer, he will guide you by his eye. I do not think the possession of a living, is always like marriage, binding for life. You doubt not that the hand of the Lord fixed you at L——; and if it be his pleasure that you should remove, he can, by the leadings of his providence, and the feelings of your own mind, when you are spreading the case before him by prayer, afford you equal satisfaction that he calls you away. Be ready to follow the cloud and pillar, but not hasty to go before them. The case is more dubious, when we see, or think we see, some desirable temporal advantages, such as better income, better air, better schools, &c., by the exchange. For these things will plead: and though our judgment tells us that nothing but a regard to the glory of God and the good of souls, ought to influence our minds, we should be upon our guard against the deceitfulness of our own hearts; or rather pray that he who alone fully knows them, will search, and try, and guide us himself.

You are happy indeed in your daughter —; may all your children prove like her! She and they must pass through trials and changes, if the Lord loves them; but that *if* will make amends for all. Let us

T

hope, and pray, and wait. Who would have thought last winter, that we should have peace and plenty so soon restored!

Secondly.—My dear Madam, I am thankful that you could tell me you were better, as soon as I could hear you were ill. Your horrible doubts, as you call them, respecting God, &c., are no more yours than they are mine; they are forced upon you, and you abhor them. Did you never hear of Satan and temptation; and how the powers of darkness tease and worry those whom they are not permitted to devour? You cannot see the wood for the trees. Your very complaints are good evidences to me that you love the Lord; and if so, I am sure he loves you. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you; but if you suffer him to keep you from a throne of grace, you encourage him.

Suppose in your own house, a great ugly fellow should always try to stand between you and the pantry door, to prevent your eating: would not you *try* to get rid of him? Would you let him quite starve you, when you could have help against him, for asking? The more he assaults, the more you should pray. But I know the rub; you cannot pray to please yourself! I hope you never will. But I read in *Romans* viii. that the help of the Holy Spirit excites groanings which cannot be uttered. If you cannot pray, I hope you can and will groan. Come, cheer up! you are the Lord's soldier, and have been so long in the service, and so well, and so often preserved in the heat of the battle, you should not be terrified when the enemy throws a

few squibs at you. They give a flash, but there is no ball in them that can pierce the armour the Lord has provided for you. I must leave off. Pray for us. I love you all. The Lord bless you all! Amen.

I am, very much,

Your affectionate and obliged,

JOHN NEWTON.

October 17th, 1801.

LETTER LX.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

.
 My dear Miss C. remains
 much the same. This is my trial, and I feel it. Dear
 Mrs. — has a different one, and you and Mrs. —
 have yours. We are all supported, and I trust all
 interested in the promises. He who says, "In me you
 shall have peace;" says likewise, "In the world you
 shall have tribulation." So we find it, and so we must
 find it, if the scriptures are true; but let us look
 upward: an hour is coming when we shall see the
 Egyptians no more for ever.

My pen would run on, in defiance of my eyes, when I am writing to you. I pray that you may serve the Lord with a spirit of liberty. Lay not too much stress upon frames, however desirable, or upon appearances, however dark. Hold fast by the great truths and promises of the gospel. Do not complain that you are not an angel, nor expect to be one in this life. Here we must fight: hereafter we shall triumph, and unite in a song in which the angels cannot join. You are the Lord's servant; aim to do the business of the day, and to leave the morrow in his hand. He invites us to cast our care upon him, and assures us that he careth for us. Love to all your house; with my poor prayers. I trust we frequently meet at a throne of grace. Ere long, *miserere* will be changed to hallelujahs.

I am, truly,

Your affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

November 21st, 1801.

LETTER LXI.

To Mr. T. —, son of the Rev. J. —.

DEAR SIR,

My love to your parents attaches me to every branch of their family; and therefore you are dear to me, though I never saw you. I thank you for your letter. I am glad to hear that you are safe on board the *Topaze*, and that you are pleased with your situation. I deem it a peculiar advantage, that you are under the patronage and direction of my valuable friend Captain C—. I pray the Lord to make him a blessing to you, and to enable you to give him full satisfaction by your attention and obedience while under his command. I am especially pleased to find that your heart is impressed by the advice of your parents, and still more by the dying advice of Dr. W—. You have seen in him the importance and the reality of religion in a dying hour, and the comfort it affords when every other source of comfort is dried up. I say Amen to your hope that this impression may abide with you, and never be effaced. I pray likewise that you may not only consider the religion of the gospel, as necessary to a comfort

table dismissal from this world ; but that you may know, by happy experience, that it is equally needful and valuable, to live honourably and comfortably while you remain in the present life. It will preserve you from a thousand anxieties, snares and mischiefs, which oppress those who live without God in the world. It will afford you a present and effectual help and resource in every time of trouble. It will lessen the weight of affliction, and double the relish of every temporal good, to see and acknowledge the hand of God in all your concerns, and to receive both the sweet and the bitter, as equally from *him*, and equally designed to work for your final benefit. I trust you will not be satisfied with a mere moral conduct, (as it is called,) and a good character and reputation amongst men. The religion of the gospel is calculated for the sinner. It provides a plea for those who have nothing to say on their own behalf. It directs us to Jesus Christ, as the only way of access to God ; either to the right knowledge of him, or to communion with him. This gracious Saviour assures us that him that cometh to Him, he will in no wise cast out. He invites us to receive, out of his fulness, grace for grace : and he is both able and willing to save to the uttermost. Every semblance of religion that is not derived from him, by faith in his name, is, at the best, but like a lamp without oil.

I know something of the Navy : I was once a midshipman myself. If all your officers and shipmates were likeminded with your commander, you would have fewer difficulties ; but this is not to be expected. If you depend upon your own strength, you will be soon overpowered ; but if you trust in the Lord, he will keep

you from evil. If you pray to him, he will hear you and help you ; otherwise, the fear of man, and the power of the temptations which surround you, will prove too hard for you. Read and study the scriptures, that you may be made wise unto salvation. Some striking passages I wish you to commit to your memory : such as *Isaiah liii.*; *Proverbs iii.*; *Psalms xxxvii.*; and *Titus ii.*, from *v. 11 to the end*, is an epitome of the whole faith, practice, and hope of a christian. Such passages will, I hope, suggest pleasing and profitable thoughts, when you are walking the deck in the night, or looking out at the fore-topsail-yard. Life is precarious to us all ; but more apparently so to a sailor in a ship of war. To-day the weather may be fair, and all peaceable around you ; to-morrow may bring a storm, or an enemy to grapple with. A cannon ball, or even a musket shot, give but short warning. Death may follow instantly ; and death is the door to eternity. Happy they, who in the path of duty, and in the face of danger, feel themselves prepared for all events ! This is my desire and prayer for you :—that, amidst the many things that call for your attention in their proper place, you may above all be attentive to “*the one thing needful*,”—absolutely needful and abundantly sufficient, to make you happy, both in this world, and in the world to come.

Please to present my cordial, affectionate respects to Captain C——. Tell him that Miss C—— and I remember him in love, and that he has a place in my heart and in my prayers. I commend you to the blessing, care, and guidance of that Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. I shall be glad to hear from you now and then, and I will write if I can : but

I am near seventy-five years of age, and know not but every letter I write may be my last.

I am, Sir,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

April 7th, 1800.

LETTER LXII.

MY DEAR MISS J——,

I WAS sorry to miss your former letter, but the second has made amends: I have read it again and again, with much pleasure, and the perusal was very acceptable to dear Miss Catlett.

There is a simplicity in your manner, which satisfies me you wrote from your heart; and if so, I may say, as the proverb goes, *you cannot see the wood for trees*. Most of the complaints you make, are the best proofs I can offer of the reality of a work of grace. The only expression I find fault with, in your letter, is

when you say, 'once I thought I did love Jesus; now I am *sure* I do not.' Pray do not *be sure* of any such a thing. The Lord Jesus is an *unseen* object; and we may truly love him, though we are not so sensibly affected by the regard we bear to him, as by what is near and visibly before our eyes: he is an *infinite* object, and therefore they whose love to him is in the strongest exercise, are always the most conscious that they do not, cannot, love him as they ought.

I suppose you have some full-grown oaks about L——. Look at one: is it not wonderful that such a great tree should proceed from a small acorn? But it did not spring up in a night, like Jonah's gourd: it was a small plant when it first appeared above ground; it came forward gradually through a succession of years, and a variety of seasons; it grew in defiance of many a frost, and many a storm; but now it has a tall head, and wide-spreading branches. Thus, the beginnings of a spiritual life are very small; faint as the light of dawn, weak as a new-born child: but he who alone can plant it in the heart has said, its latter end shall greatly increase. Again: if you were to dig deep around the oak, you would find that the depth and spread of the root was proportionate to the height and spread of the branches; and were it not so, the first hard gale of wind would overset the poor tree, and great would be its fall. They who are right, are led to see more and more of the depravity of their nature, the evil of their hearts, their utter inability to help themselves, or even to think a good thought; and thus they acquire that broken and contrite spirit in which the Lord delights, which is as the root of our perse-

verance ; for were young converts always indulged with those lively sensible comforts which they long for, they would soon be heady, high-minded, and careless, and the wind of some powerful temptation would overset them.

When our Lord says, "If you love me, keep my commandments," he intimates that the best proof of true love is obedience. If you desire to make the word of God, not only the foundation of your hope, but the rule of your life, by which you are desirous to regulate your tempers, conduct, and pursuits ; you do that which none can do, but those who love him.

Suppose you were long absent at a distance from your parents ; how would your love to them shew itself ? It would prompt you to write to them, make you glad to hear from them, and long to see them again. If a person, till then a stranger, came to you from them, told you much about them, and spoke of them like a cordial friend, I think you would feel some regard to him for their sakes. On the other hand, you could not be pleased with any company who declared their dislike and hatred to your parents. Now if your desire is to the word and ways of God ; if you love those who you think love him ; and for that reason, if you choose your friends and companions from among them, and are grieved by the conversation of the wicked ;—these are more solid and scriptural tokens that you love him, than you could derive from warm emotions, or lively sensible feelings, which are often like blossoms that drop off in the spring and produce no fruit.

After all, the best way to increase *your* love to *him*, is firmly to believe that *he* loves you. Did he not die

for sinners? And are not you a sinner? Does he not say, "Come unto me," and preclude all our unbelieving objections by adding, "Him that cometh, I will *in no wise* cast out?" He will not be angry with you for taking him at his word, that is, taking it for granted that he really means what he says, and is able to make his words good. Do not wait till you find qualifications in yourself; but wait upon him to give you, in his own time, all that you really want. Do not reason like Naaman. The Lord does not require some great thing of you;—he only says, "Wash, and be clean;" "believe, and be saved."

Your mamma can shew you, from the many letters I have written upon this subject, more than I have either time or paper to write to you. Remember that the christian life is a warfare; that there can be no victory without a fight. If you pray to the Lord, he will give you armour of proof, so that you shall be able "to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

I shall always be glad to hear *from you*, because I shall always hope and expect to hear well *of you*. May the Lord bless you, and lead and guide you in his good way, and may we at last meet in his kingdom of glory! Amen.

I am,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

January 9th, 1799.

LETTER LXIII.

MY DEAR MISS J——,

MR. ——'s last letter is dated the 4th June, and yours the 3rd : as you stand first in date, you must be first answered. I cannot always write when I would, but I can always find time to read what you write, and therefore I beg you will not keep silence from a fear of interrupting me in my supposed important business.

When you tell me what a sad heart you have, and what strange and evil thoughts pester your mind, you tell me nothing new : I also feel the same. The hearts of all men, women, and children, are deceitful and desperately wicked. It is a mercy to know and feel this truth, provided the knowledge of the disease leads us to the great Physician. Our depravity, like the human face, has universally the same leading features. People of all ages and sizes, in all countries and climates, have a nose, eyes, &c. ; and yet it will be difficult to find two faces so exactly alike, that one cannot be distinguished from the other. Thus constitution, education, habits of life, make each person, in some respects, an original ; but the heart, from whence the issues of life proceed, is exactly the same in all. Grace will make you feel your inward malady, teach you to loathe it, to watch, and pray, and fight against it, and to be humbled for it ; but it will not free you from it,

while you are in this world. Therefore your life will be a continual warfare : but death will put an end to it ; then you will leave the flesh and all its inseparable evils behind you. Till then, we must groan being burdened, as others have done before us. You must not expect to be better than Paul, who tells us, that in his flesh there dwelt no good thing, and that when he would do good, evil was present with him. Young converts are apt to think their cases singular. I thought my own so once ; and should have reason to think so still, if the scriptures did not teach me otherwise. The case of Jonah is singular indeed : he was entombed alive three days in the belly of a fish, and came alive out of it. He is the only one I ever heard of in such a situation. I could point you out a shorter road than that by which I travelled myself, but I question if unbelief will permit you to walk in it. And perhaps the Lord sees it best that we should all, like Israel, be led round about.

Our Lord, in *John* iii., teaches us the sure way of salvation, by a very instructive and plain emblem. When the Israelites were bitten by poisonous serpents, God commanded Moses to set up a brazen serpent upon a pole ; and whoever looked up to the brazen serpent was instantly healed. If, with such a sure and easy remedy at hand, they presumed rather to trust in plaisters of their own contriving, they must die. Again : they could get no help by meeting at the foot of the pole, and saying to each other, ' Ah ! I am worse bitten than you.' Looking to the serpent was necessary if a man had received but one bite ; and it was sufficient to cure him if he was bitten from head to foot. Now

the Lord has opened the eyes of *your* mind ; you know that you are a sinner, and what a sinner deserves ; you know likewise who is the Saviour. Now go to the cross. Consider who hangs upon it,—Jesus, the Son of God. Read *John* i. 1 to 3 ; then consider, why did he who was with God, who himself was God, assume our nature ? The apostle says, “He came into the world to save sinners.” ‘But will he save *me*?’ Yes, if you come to him ; for he says, “Him that cometh, I will in *no wise* cast out.” Here you see he makes no exception, he prescribes no condition : it is only, look and live ; believe, and thou shalt be saved. Then, think of his sufferings. If he sweat blood in Gethsemane, and died in agonies upon the cross to save sinners ; will he be disappointed, and suffer in vain ?

But if you listen to unbelief, it will try to persuade you that it would be presumption, in such a sinner as you, to believe that Christ really means what he says, and is able to make his word good. Stop the mouth of unbelief with those words, “*IN NO WISE.*” If he should cast you out, it must be *in some wise* ; either for the nature, number, or aggravation of your sins. But if his word may be safely taken, though you were chargeable with all the sins that have been committed in L——, since it has been a parish, yet if you had a sense of your need of mercy, and were willing to accept it in his appointed way ; “*In no wise*” would give you a sure and safe warrant to trust in him. The point is not, what you think of yourself ; but, what think you of Christ ? Not, what can I do ? but, what has he done ? He has obeyed the law, made an atonement for sin, brought in an everlasting righteousness :

he has lived, and died, and risen again; and now he reigns, a High Priest upon the throne; and all *for us*. Therefore he is able *to save to the uttermost*. But there is a growth and gradation in the christian life. If you wish to enjoy a stable peace, you must pray for a simple, upright, and humble spirit. You cannot avoid many of the effects of indwelling sin: but by his grace you may avoid *wilful sin*: and you will do this more successfully, the more firmly you trust in him. You must likewise read and take heed to his word, by which young persons are enabled to cleanse their ways; and carefully attend the preached gospel. You have reason to fear the snares of the world and to watch and pray against them; and if you are honest in this endeavour, the Lord will help you two ways; he will give you such tastes of happiness as the world cannot give; and he will, when needful, put some wholesome bitters in your cup of earthly comforts, that you may not drink too eagerly. In a word: though believers will surely repent, and be found in the use of the means of grace, these things have nothing to do with their acceptance: they are accepted in the beloved,—because he died for sinners, and because, renouncing every other plea, they commit their souls and their all to him, as their wisdom, righteousness, their Lord, their Prophet, Priest, and King.

Do not indulge unbelief, but consider it not merely as a weakness, but a sin. Yea, it is the greatest of all our sins, and the source of them. We can believe one another, and yet distrust and contradict the God of truth. When he says, “I will receive you,” how dare we say he will not. But you are yet but a young

plant : may the blessing of God water you, and make you grow in faith and holiness. Then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord.

I have often written in this strain to Mrs. ——. The same gospel is equally good for the mother and the child. Give my love and Miss Catlett's to your dear parents, to J——, and to all your brothers and sisters, and take a large share for yourself. We can love those whom we never saw. How else should we love the Saviour? I mean to write to Mr. — and to Mr. —, while I am here, and as soon as I conveniently can. We left London the 9th instant, and spent a week at Reading; arrived here in safety the 19th. We are both in perfect health. Mercy and goodness attend and surround us, at home and abroad.

I commend you to the great and good Shepherd. Endeavour to be cheerful, thankful, humble, and watchful. You have no sufficiency in yourself, even to think a good thought; but let not this discourage you. Look to him, and you shall be enlightened. You shall be able to do all things, through him who is always near to strengthen you. Pray for us, and

Believe me to be,

Your very affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

Southampton, July 25th, 1799.

LETTER LXIV.

MY DEAR MADAM,

YOU may judge of our baulk by your own, for I believe we were little less sorry than yourself that we could not meet. We had left London before we received Mrs. ——'s letter informing us when you were to set out. Had I known in time, if the delaying of our journey for one week would have brought us together, I would have contrived it so, if possible. But let us look higher. Our time and ways are in the Lord's hands. He does all things well, and his providence extends to the minutest of our concerns. Had it been his pleasure, or had he seen it needful for our good, we should surely have met. It is a great privilege, if we can cheerfully submit to the Lord's will, when it crosses our own, and I believe this privilege is seldom obtained by having things go on smoothly, according to our own wishes. It is usually by crosses, sometimes greater, sometimes smaller, that the spirit of self-will is gradually weakened, and we learn to say from our hearts, "Not my will, but thine, be done." We learn submission, as porters gain strength by being inured to carry burdens.

The last letter I received from Miss J——, I purposed to bring with me, to answer, but I cannot find it: no great matter, as there is now no such person as Miss

—, at least as Miss J—, to be found. I am now to write to Mrs. —. The first usual expression to newly married folks is, I wish you joy: and I do most sincerely wish Mr. — and you joy; but I mean *joy in the Lord*. All joy not connected with this, and dependent on it, is but like the crackling of thorns under a pot, a hasty, noisy, transient blaze, which will soon go out. But if you rejoice in the Lord, you may well rejoice in each other, as help-mates, and fellow heirs of the hope of eternal life. The term of the union between you at church, was limited by the words, '*Till death us do part:*' but the union between hearts, joint partakers of the faith and hope of the gospel, is indissoluble, and will subsist and flourish when every earthly tie shall be dissolved; when all our past pleasures and pains, from our connexion with the things of this world, shall retire like the imperfect remembrance of a dream when we awake; and nothing remain but the consciousness and consequences of our conduct while here. In this view I congratulate you and Mr. —; as I think I am warranted, from what I know of you both, in the hope that you are setting out upon the right plan; desirous to have the Lord himself for your portion; to assist each other with your counsels and prayers; and to devote yourselves, your time, talents, and influence, to his service, and to let the light of your profession shine to his praise. There are several letters of mine on this subject in Omicron and Cardiphonia, to which I refer you; for if I had better eyes and more time to write at large, I could only say the same things, perhaps with some difference of expression. There is likewise a

letter of the late Mrs. Althan's, in the '*Christian Character Exemplified*,' which I deem worthy the perusal and attention of every married woman in the kingdom. I believe dear Mrs. — has the book; or if you call at No. 6, after receiving this, Crabb will give you one.

Dear Miss Catlett joins with me in a tender of love and best wishes to you and Mr. —. If we meet not before, I trust we shall meet in glory. I could say much on the subject of matrimony from my own experience; but believing the Lord has suited you to each other, I would only advise you not to attempt or expect to be *too happy*: this was the fault which often stuffed my pillow with thorns, and put many bitter ingredients into my otherwise sweet cup. I was too much satisfied with the Lord's gift; I idolized it, and it often hid the giver from my eyes. Oh the pains, the griefs, the anxieties which I suffered, almost every year of the forty his long-suffering spared us together, for misimproving what I always acknowledged to be his chief earthly blessing! May you and Mr. — be wiser! I commend you to his gracious care,

And remain,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

Southampton, July 25th, 1800.

LETTER LXV.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

FOR you say I must not call you *Madam*. I answered Mr. ——'s letter from Stroudwater, before I left Southampton, and I have wished to answer yours of the 31st of October ever since ; but my eyes will not give me leave to write by candle light, unless upon pressing business, and I have very little leisure by day. I hope this will come to you just at the right time.

You may be assured that the recollection of our interview at Portswood Green, is little, if at all, less pleasing to us, than to you. We often talk of you both, and if we do not drink your healths every day, we seldom if ever, forget it on a Saturday night ; then likewise I usually take a peep in spirit at you, though absent in the flesh. I am glad, yea thankful, that I saw you and Mr. —— together.

As to our old subject, if I were to write a quire, I could only repeat in other words what I have already said. I have told you more than once, that what you call *your* complaints are *mine* also, and are known to all who have any right knowledge of themselves. They are the unavoidable effects of that depraved nature which will cleave as close to us as our skins, while we remain in this world. Hence it is that the christian life is a continual warfare : and our finding it so, is a

proof that we are in the right path. As I know more of myself than I can of you, I have some cause to believe that your coldness, wandering, and evil thoughts, &c., are not to be compared with mine. When I have persons to hear me, I can pray with seeming composure ; but you would often pity me, if you could see how I am in secret ; how, when I have the Lord's name upon my lips, my thoughts fly, with the fool's eyes, to the ends of the earth. Yea I often look like a fool in the streets, forgetting where I am ; and I doubt not but my words and antics frequently draw the eyes of the people upon me as I pass ; for my imagination is wild and ungovernable as the clouds in a storm. But this has nothing to do *with my acceptance*. The Lord has said, "him that cometh I will *in no wise* cast out." "He is able to save to *the uttermost*." These and such texts and promises, are my whole support and dependance. If he would in *any wise* cast out ; if "*to the uttermost*" did not go a long way beyond my longest difficulties, and beyond all the power and subtilty of all my enemies ; I must sink into despair. You and I are sick of that worst of maladies, sin ; we both know there is one, and but one physician, who is able to relieve us ; we have both applied to him, and he has mercifully undertaken our relief : so that we are warranted to say, "I shall not die but live, to declare the works of the Lord." Thus far we are agreed. The chief difference between us is, that the malignity of my disease constrains me to cast myself absolutely upon my Physician, and to have no hope but in his power and skill ; whereas you seem to wait till you find you are better, before you can think yourself warranted to place the same

confidence in him. I dare not prescribe to him what methods he shall take to perfect my recovery, but I aim to accept all his dispensations as so many prescriptions, temporal or spiritual, designed by his wisdom and mercy to work together for my good. I have trod upon your ground, and I trust you shall one day tread upon mine ; but you have need of patience. His work is gradual, like the light which from the dawn, shineth more and more unto the perfect day. He does not despise the day of small things, nor should you. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. In the mean time, praise him for what he has done, and humbly wait upon him for more. The desires and views you express, are evident tokens of salvation, and that of God. He gave them to you, or you would never have had them ; for they are directly contrary to the stream of our corrupt nature. He has given you already a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light : for if you should be removed suddenly into the invisible world, the Saviour you would then see, is he whom having not seen you love ; and the song you would hear before the throne, is the very song that you are aiming to sing below ; and you would leave all your sins and imperfections behind you.

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The times are dark, and growing darker every day. We know not how the Lord is about to deal with this proud, boasting, and oppressive, careless nation, nor what *we*, as *individuals*, may live to see ; but this we know : that it shall be finally well with them that fear him. He who died upon the cross for us, reigns

over heaven and earth. He loves his people, and they are invited to hide themselves in the secret chambers of his wisdom, love, and power. All shall end well with us, and heaven will make rich amends for all we can suffer upon earth. He promises us strength according to our day; and shoes of iron and brass, if any part of our remaining path should prove very rough. We are warranted to adopt the language of Psalm xli. : God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore we *need not*, and if he gives us faith in lively exercise, *we will not* fear. But it behoves us to watch and pray, to mourn over our own sins, and the sins which fill the land and the earth with so much misery. May we be of the number of those who sigh and mourn before him, for the evils they cannot prevent, and are crying for mercy! Then he will put his mark upon us, either for protection or support. He is a God hearing prayer: he bids us call upon him in the day of trouble, and says he will deliver. See *Psalm* l. 14, 15, and iii. 16 17. Many such promises are scattered in the bible, like the stars in the firmament; and as, if it were always day, we should not have known that there was a star in the sky; so, many of his promises only shine, or at least shine brightest, in the night of affliction.

My letter has been long in hand, but I have little time and many interruptions. Tell dear Mr. and Mrs. Hitchens that we love them much: tell them so at L——, yea, you may safely give my love to all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. May grace and peace be with us all! We hope to meet hereafter before the throne of glory; and I trust we shall often meet here

at the throne of grace, the common rallying point of all believers ! Crabb and company send their love and best wishes to you both.

I am,

Both your and Mrs. ——'s affectionate friend,

JOHN NEWTON.

And so is my dear Elizabeth.

No. 6, *December 20th*, 1800.

LETTER LXVI.

MY DEAR SISTER J——.

I HAVE a letter from your dear Mamma, dated from S——, but as I know not how long she might stay, I write to you : if she is with you she will see it of course ; if gone, you can send it after her. Thus, as the saying is, I shall hit two birds with one stone.

When the Lord is pleased to relieve my dear Eliza, you will hear of it soon ; till then, you may suppose there is no material alteration : the report of sense and

feeling is, that she is very bad indeed ; I will not pain you by a particular detail. But when faith is in tolerable exercise, it brings a better report from the good word of God, and tells me that the Lord does all things well, and will make all work for our good and his own glory in the final issue ; and that at present, he warrants me to hope, that his grace shall be sufficient for me, and that my strength shall be according to my day. Indeed his mercies are new and multiplied every morning. My health is firm, I eat and sleep well, I preach as usual, and when in the pulpit, a stranger would scarcely guess that my trial is very great. This is my chief desire for myself : that I may not give way to despondence or impatience, but may act as becomes a believing sinner, who ought to be always thankful that he was not long since shut up in the pit from whence there is no redemption. Every thing short of this, my just desert, is a mercy, *Psalm* ciii. 10, *Lamen.* iii. 39. Oh for grace to exemplify in my own practice, the lessons I have often recommended to others ; to be submissive and resigned under afflictions, because they are appointed by infinite wisdom and love ! We are the Lord's, not our own ; and he has a right, as the potter over the clay, to place us in what situation he pleases : and heaven will make amends for all, *Romans* viii. 18. *2 Corinthians* iv. 17, 18.

Tell your Mamma that the unbelieving thoughts she complains of respecting fundamental truths, are not more hers than mine. They are the suggestions of Satan, and he shall answer for them. Our great High Priest was tempted for us : See *Matthew* iv. 9, and then read *Hebrews* iv. 15, 16. The enemy is often

permitted to vex and worry believers but he cannot destroy them, *Micah* vii. 8, 9. *Romans* viii. 38, 39. Tell her likewise, that what she says of me, shews she does not know me. Through mercy I can see, but not without light: when the sun withdraws, I am in the dark. I learn more and more, that without him I can do nothing. I know but little of *sensible* comfort: but I am enabled, in some measure, to trust and rest in the sure word of God. He has said, "Him that cometh I will *in no wise* cast out." This, and other similar passages, preserve me from sinking into despair.

My dear child enters her thirty-third year to-day. She never saw such a birth-day as this. But blessed be the Lord, she has been partaker of a new and heavenly birth.

My love to Captain ——. I direct my letter to him for fear of mistakes, and I know you are *both one*. The Lord bless you together, and number your child among the lambs of his chosen flock! May he bless your parents and their children, and all dear to them and to you. You have probably heard that Mrs. W. ——— and I have met several times. My eyes have allowed me to write you a long letter, and it affords me pleasure.

Pray for us; and believe me to be,

Your affectionate,

JOHN NEWTON.

June 22nd, 1801.



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