

THE
WORKS
OF
THE REV . JOHN NEWTON

LATE RECTOR OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF
ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH-HAW,
LOMBARD STREET, LONDON.

CONTAINING
AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE, &C., LETTERS ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS, CARDIPHONIA,
DISCOURSES INTENDED FOR THE PULPIT,
SERMONS PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF OLNEY,
A REVIEW OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY, OLNEY HYMNS, POEMS,
MESSIAH, OCCASIONAL SERMONS, AND TRACTS.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED
MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE, &c.

BY THE REV. R. CECIL, A. M.

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

EDINBURGH

Printed at the University Press, for

PETER BROWN AND THOMAS NELSON.

1830.

LETTER XIV.

DEAR SIR,

BY the directions I had received from my friend at St. Kitt's, I soon found out a religious acquaintance in London. I first applied to Mr. B——, and chiefly attended upon his ministry, when in town. From him I received many helps both in public and private; for he was pleased to favour me with his friendship from the first. His kindness and the intimacy between us have continued and increased to this day; and of all my many friends, I am most deeply indebted to him. The late Mr. H—d was my second acquaintance; a man of a choice spirit, and an abundant zeal for the Lord's service. I enjoyed his correspondence till near the time of his death. Soon after, upon Mr. W—d's return from America, my two good friends introduced me to him; and though I had little personal acquaintance with him till afterwards, his ministry was exceeding useful to me. I had like-wise access to some religious societies, and became known to many excellent christians in private life. Thus, when at London, I lived at the fountain-head, as it were, for spiritual advantages. When I was in Kent, it was very different, yet I found some serious persons there; but the fine variegated woodland country afforded me advantages of another kind. Most of my time, at least some hours every day, I passed in retirement, when the weather was fair; sometimes in the thickest woods, sometimes on the highest hills, where almost every step varied the prospect. It has been my custom for many years, to perform my devotional exercises sub dio, when I have opportunity, and I always find these rural scenes have some tendency both to refresh and compose my spirits. A beautiful diversified prospect gladdens my heart. When I am withdrawn from the noise and petty works of men, I consider myself as in the great temple, which the Lord has built for his own honour.

The country between Rochester and Maidstone, bordering upon the Medway, was well suited to the turn of my mind; and was I to go over it now, I could point to many a place where I remember either to have earnestly sought, or happily found, the Lord's comfortable presence with my soul. And thus I lived, sometimes at London, and sometimes in the country, till the autumn of the following year. All this while I had two trials, more or less, upon my mind; the first and principal was Mrs. N*****'s illness; she still grew worse, and I had daily more reason to fear that the hour of separation was at hand. When faith was in exercise, I was in some measure resigned to the Lord's will; but too often my heart rebelled, and I found it hard either to trust or to submit. I had likewise some care about my future settlement; the African trade was overdone that year, and my friends did not care to fit out another ship till mine returned. I was some time in suspense; but, indeed, a provision of food and raiment has seldom been a cause of great solicitude to me. I found it easier to trust the Lord in this point than in the former, and accordingly this was first answered. In August I received an account that I was nominated to the office of These places are usually obtained, or at least sought, by dint of much interest and application; but this came to me unsought and unexpected. I knew, indeed, my good friend in L—— had endeavoured to procure another post for me, but found it pre-engaged. I found afterwards, that the place I had missed would have been very unsuitable for me, and that this, which I had no thought of, was the very thing I could have wished for, as it afforded me much leisure,

and the liberty of living in my own way. Several circumstances, unnoticed by others, concurred, to shew me that the good hand of the Lord was as remarkably concerned in this event as in any other leading turn of my life.

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

And now, I think, I have answered, if not exceeded, your desire. Since October 1755, we have been comfortably settled here, and all my circumstances have been as remarkably smooth and uniform as they were various in former years. My trials have been light and few, not but that I still find, in the experience of every day, the necessity of a life of faith. My principal trial is, the body of sin and death, which makes me often to sigh out the apostle's complaint, "O wretched man, &c." But with him likewise I can say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." I live in a barren land, where the knowledge and power of the gospel is very low; yet here are a few of the Lord's people; and this wilderness has been a useful school to me, where I have studied more leisurely the truths which I gathered up in London. I brought down with me a considerable stock of notional truth; but I have since found, that there is no effectual teacher but God; that we can receive no further than he is pleased to communicate; and that no knowledge is truly useful to me, but what is made my own by experience. Many things, I thought I had learned, would not stand in an hour of temptation, till I had in this way learned them over again. Since the year 1757, I have had an increasing acquaintance in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where the gospel flourishes greatly. This has been a good school to me. I have conversed at large among all parties, without joining any; and in my attempts to hit the golden mean, I have sometimes been drawn too near the different extremes; yet the Lord has enabled me to profit by my mistakes. in brief, I am still a learner, and the Lord still condescends to teach me. I begin at length to see that I have attained but very little; but I trust in him to carry on his own work in my soul, and, by all the dispensations of his grace and providence, to increase my knowledge of him and of myself.

When I was fixed in a house, and found my business would afford me much leisure time, I considered in what manner I should improve it. And now, having reason to close with the apostle's determination, "to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified," I devoted my life to the prosecution of spiritual knowledge, and resolved to pursue nothing but in subservience to this main design. This resolution divorced me, as I have already hinted, from the classics and mathematics. My first attempt was to learn so much Greek as would enable me to understand the New Testament and Septuagint; and when I had made some progress this way, I entered upon the Hebrew the following year; and two years afterwards, having surmised some advantages from the Syriac version, I began with that language. You must not think that I have

attained, or ever aimed at, a critical skill in any of these. I had no business with them, but as in reference to something else. I never read one classic author in the Greek. I thought it too late in life to take such a round in this language as I had done in the Latin. I only wanted the signification of scriptural words and phrases; and for this I thought I might avail myself of Scapula, the Synopsis, and others, who had sustained the drudgery before me. In the Hebrew, I can read the historical books and psalms with tolerable ease; but in the prophetic and difficult parts, I am frequently obliged to have recourse to lexicons, &c. However, I know so much as to be able, with such helps as are at hand, to judge for myself the meaning of any passage I have occasion to consult. Beyond this I do not think of proceeding, if I can find better employment; for I would rather be some way useful to others, than die with the reputation of an eminent linguist.

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

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

One word concerning my views to the ministry, and I have done. I have told you, that this was my dear mother's hope concerning me; but her death, and the scenes of life in which I afterwards engaged, seemed to cut off the probability. The first desires of this sort in my own mind, arose many years ago, from a reflection on Gal. i. 23, 34. I could not but wish for such a public opportunity to testify the riches of divine grace. I thought I was, above most living, a fit person to pro-claim that faithful saying, "That Jesus Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners;" and as my life had been full of remarkable turns, and I seemed selected to show what the Lord could do, I was in some hopes that, perhaps, sooner or later, he might call me into his service.

I believe it was a distant hope of this that determined me to study the original scriptures; but it remained an imperfect desire in my own breast, till it was recommended to me by some christian friends. I started at the thought, when first seriously proposed to me; but afterwards set apart some weeks to consider the case, to consult my friends, and to intreat the Lord's direction. The judgment of my friends, and many things that occurred, tended to engage me. My first thought was to join the dissenters, from a presumption that I could not honestly make the required subscriptions; but Mr. C--, in a conversation upon these points, mode-rated my scruples; and preferring the established church in some other respects, I accepted a title from him, some months after-wards, and solicited ordination from the late archbishop of York. I need not tell you I met a refusal, nor what steps I took after-wards to succeed elsewhere. At present I desist from any applications. My desire to serve the Lord is not weakened; but I am not so hasty to push myself forward as I was formerly. It is sufficient that he knows how to dispose of me, and that he both can and will do what is best. To him I commend myself: I trust that his will and my true interest are inseparable. To his name be glory for ever. And thus I

conclude my story, and I presume you will acknowledge I have been particular enough. I have room for no more. but to repeat that

I am, Sir, Your's, &c.

February 2, 1764.