

THE  
**WORKS**  
OF  
**THE REV. JOHN NEWTON**

LATE RECTOR OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF  
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LOMBARD STREET, LONDON.

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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.

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**COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.**

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## LETTER XXVI.

### ON THE GRADUAL INCREASE OF GOSPEL-ILLUMINATION.

DEAR SIR,

THE day is now breaking: how beautiful its appearance! how welcome the expectation of the approaching sun! It is this thought makes the dawn agreeable, that it is the presage of a brighter light; otherwise, if we expect no more day than it is this minute, we should rather complain of darkness, than rejoice in the early beauties of the morning. Thus the life of grace is the dawn of immortality; beautiful beyond expression, if compared with the night and thick darkness which formerly covered us, yet faint, indistinct, and unsatisfying, in comparison of the glory which shall be revealed.

It is, however, a sure earnest. So surely as we now see the light of the Sun of righteousness, so surely shall we see the Sun himself, Jesus the Lord, in all his glory and lustre. In the meantime, we have reason to be thankful for a measure of light to walk and work by, and sufficient to show us the pits and snares by which we might be endangered; and we have a promise, that our present light shall grow stronger and stronger, if we are diligent in the use of the appointed means, till the messenger of Jesus shall lead us within the veil, and then farewell shades and obscurity for ever!

I can now almost see to write, and shall soon put the extinguisher over my candle. I do this without the least reluctance, when I enjoy a better light; but I should have been unwilling half an hour ago. Just thus, methinks, when the light of the glorious gospel shines into the heart, all our former feeble lights, our apprehensions, and our contrivances, become at once unnecessary and unnoticed. How cheerfully did the apostle put out the candle of his own righteousness, attainments, and diligence, when the true Sun arose upon him? Phil. iii. 7, 8. Your last letter is as a comment upon his determination. Adored be the grace that has given us to be like-minded, even to "account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

While I am writing, a new lustre, which gilds the house on the hill, opposite to my study-window, informs me that the sun is now rising: he is rising to others, but not yet to me; my situation is lower, so that they enjoy a few gleams of sunshine before me; yet this momentary difference is inconsiderable, when compared to the duration of a whole day. Thus, some are called by grace earlier in life, and some later; but the seeming difference will be lost and vanish when the great day of eternity comes on. There is a time, the Lord's best appointed time, when he will arise and shine upon many a soul that now sits "in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death."

I have been thinking on the Lord's conference with Nicodemus: it is a copious subject, and affords room, in one part or other, for the whole round of doctrinal or experimental topics. Nicodemus is an encouraging example to those who are seeking the Lord's salvation. He had received some favourable impressions of Jesus; but he was very ignorant, and much under the fear of man. He durst only come by night, and at first, though he heard, he understood not; but he, who opens the eyes of the blind, brought him surely, though gently, forward. The next time we hear of him, he durst put in a word in behalf of Christ, even in the midst of his enemies, John vii; and at last, he had the courage openly and publicly to assist in preparing the body of his Master for its funeral, at a time when our Lord's more avowed followers had all forsaken him, and fled. So true is that, "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord;" and again, "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength."

Hope then, my soul, against hope: though thy graces are faint and languid, he who planted them, will water his own work, and not suffer them wholly to die. He can make a little one as a thousand; at his presence mountains sink into plains, streams gush out of the flinty rock, and the wilderness blossoms as the rose. He can pull down what sin builds up, and build up what sin pulls down; that which was impossible to us, is easy to him, and he has bid us expect seasons of refreshment from his presence. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

I am, &c.