

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 XXXII.

### ON CANDOUR.

DEAR SIR,

I AM with you an admirer of candour, but let us beware of counterfeits. True candour is a Christian grace, and will grow in no soil but a believing heart. It is an eminent and amiable property of that love which heareth, believeth, hopeth, and endureth all things. It forms the most favourable judgment of persons and characters, and puts the kindest construction upon the conduct of others that it possibly can, consistent with the love of truth. It makes due allowances for the infirmities of human nature, will not listen with pleasure to what is said to the disadvantage of any, nor repeat it without a justifiable cause. It will not be confined within the walls of a party, nor restrain the actings of benevolence to those whom it fully approves; but prompts the mind to an imitation of Him who is kind to the evil and the unthankful, and has taught us to consider every person we see as our neighbour.

Such is the candour which I wish to derive from the gospel: and I am persuaded, they who have imbibed most of this spirit, will acknowledge that they are still defective in it. There is an unhappy propensity, even in good men, to a selfish, narrow, censorious turn of mind; and the best are more under the power of prejudice than they are aware. A want of candour among the professors of the same gospel, is too visible in the present day. A truly candid person will acknowledge what is right and excellent in those from whom he may be obliged to differ; he will not charge the faults or extravagancies of a few upon a whole party or denomination. If he thinks it his duty to point out or refute the errors of any persons, he will not impute to them such consequences of their tenets as they expressly disavow; he will not wilfully misrepresent or aggravate their mistakes, or make them offenders for a word: he will keep in view the distinction between those things which are fundamental and essential to the christian life, and those concerning which, a difference of sentiment may, and often has, obtained among true believers. Were there more candour among those who profess to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, the emotions of anger or scorn would not be so often felt or excited, by pronouncing or hearing the words, churchman, or dissenter, or Calvinist, or even Arminian. Let us, my friend, be candid; let us remember how totally ignorant we ourselves once were, how often we have changed our sentiments in one particular or other, since we first engaged in the search of truth; how often we have been imposed upon by appearances; and to how many different persons and occurrences we have been indebted, under God, for the knowledge which we have al-

ready attained. Let us likewise consider what treatment we like to meet with from others; and do unto them as we would they should do unto us. These considerations will make the exercise of candour habitual and easy.

But there is a candour, falsely so called, which springs from an indifference to the truth, and is governed by the fear of men and the love of praise. This pretended candour depreciates the most important doctrines of the gospel, and treats them as points of speculation and opinion. It is a temporizing expedient to stand fair with the world, and to avoid that odium which is the unavoidable consequence of a steadfast, open, and hearty adherence to the truth as it is in Jesus. It aims to establish an intercommunity between light and darkness, Christ and Belial; and, under a pretence of avoiding harsh and uncharitable judgments, it introduces a mutual connivance in principles and practices, which are already expressly condemned by clear decisions of scripture. Let us not listen to the advocates for a candour of this sort; such a lukewarm temper in those, who would be thought the friends of the gospel, is treason against God and treachery to the souls of men. It is observable that they who boast most of this candour, and pretend to the most enlarged and liberal way of thinking, are generally agreed to exclude from their comprehension all whom they call bigots; that is, in other words, those who, having been led by divine grace to build their hopes upon the foundation which God has laid in Zion, are free to declare their conviction that other foundation can no man lay; and who, having seen that the friendship of the world is enmity with God, dare no longer conform to its leading maxims or customs, nor express a favourable judgment of the state or conduct of those who do. Candour itself knows not how to be candid to these: their singularity and importunity are offensive; and it is thought no way inconsistent with the specious boast of benevolence and moderation to oppose, hate, and revile them. A sufficient proof that the candour which many plead for is only a softer name for that spirit of the world which opposes itself to the truth and obedience of the gospel.

If a person be an avowed Socinian or deist, I am still to treat him with candour; he has a right from me, so far as he comes in my way, to all the kind offices of humanity. I am not to hate, reproach, or affront him, or to detract from what may be valuable in his character, considered as a member of society. I may avail myself of his talents and abilities in points where I am not in danger of being misled by him. He may be a good lawyer, or historian, or physician; and I am not to lessen him in these respects because I cannot commend him as a divine. I am bound to pity his errors, and to pray if peradventure God will give him repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth; and, if I have a call to converse with him, I should speak with all gentleness and meekness, remembering that grace alone has made me to differ. But I am not to compliment him, to insinuate, or even to admit, that there

can be any safety in his principles. Far be that candour from us, which represents the scriptures as a nose of wax, so that a person may reject or elude the testimonies there given to the deity and atonement of Christ, and the all-powerful agency of the Holy Spirit, with impunity.

On the other hand, they who hold the Head, who have received the record which God hath given of his Son; who have scriptural views of sin and grace, and fix their hopes for time and eternity upon the Saviour; in a word, all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;—these, I apprehend, if they are prevented from receiving, acknowledging, and loving each other, as he has received, owned, and loved them, are justly chargeable with a want of candour. Shall I be cold to those whom Jesus loves? Shall I refuse them whom he has accepted? I find, perhaps, that they cannot rightly understand, and therefore cannot readily embrace, some points of doctrine in which the Lord has been pleased to enlighten me; that is, I (supposing my knowledge to be real and experimental) have received five talents, and they have as yet obtained but two: must I for this estrange myself from them? Rather let me be careful, lest they be found more faithful and exemplary in the improvement of two talents than I am in the management of five. Again, why should some of those who know, or might know, that my hope, my way, my end, and my enemies are the same with theirs, stand aloof from me, and treat me with coldness and suspicion because I am called a Calvinist? I was not born a Calvinist, and possibly they may not die as they are. However that may be, if our hearts are fixed upon the same Jesus, we shall be perfectly of one mind ere long: why should we not encourage and strengthen one another now? O that the arm of the Lord might be revealed, to revive that candour which the apostle so strongly enforces both by precept and example! Then the strong would bear the infirmities of the weak, and believers would receive each other without doubtful disputation.

Once more, however sound and orthodox (as the phrase is) professors may be in their principles, though true candour will make tender allowances for the frailty of nature and the power of temptation, yet neither candour nor charity will require us to accept them as real believers, unless the general strain and tenor of their deportment be as becometh the gospel of Christ. It is to be lamented that too many judge rather by the notions which people express than by the fruits which they produce, and, as they judge of others, so they often judge of themselves. We cannot have opportunity to say all we could wish, and to all to whom we would wish to say it, upon this subject, in private life; therefore it is the wisdom and duty of those who preach and of those who print, to drop a word of caution in the way of their hearers and readers, that they may not mistake notion for life, nor a form of godliness for the power. The grace of God is an operative principle, and, where it really has place in the heart, the effects will be seen (Acts xi. 23.);

effects so uniform and extensive that the apostle James makes one single branch of conduct, and that such a one as is not usually thought the most important, a sufficient test of our state before God, for he affirms universally, that if any man seem to be religious, and “bridleth not his tongue, his religion is vain;” and again he assures us, that “whoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God:” and to the same purpose, Paul expresses himself on the subject of love (that love which he describes so accurately that none can mistake it unless they willingly deceive themselves): he declares that, without this love, the brightest knowledge, the warmest zeal, and the most splendid gifts, are nothing worth. It is to be feared these decisions will bear hard upon many who have a name to live among the churches of Christ. They are hearers and approvers of the gospel, and express a regard for those who preach it: they will stickle and fight for the doctrines, and know not how to bear those who fall a hair’s breadth short of their standard, and yet there is so much levity or pride, censoriousness or worldliness, discoverable in their general behaviour, that their characters appear very dubious; and, though we are bound to wish them well, candour will not oblige or warrant us to judge favourably of such conduct, for the unerring word of God is the standard to which our judgments are to be referred and conformed.

In the sense, and under the limitations which I have expressed, we ought to cultivate a candid spirit, and learn from the experience of our own weakness to be gentle and tender to others, avoiding, at the same time, that indifference and cowardice which, under the name of candour, countenances error, extenuates sin, and derogates from the authority of scripture.

I am, &c.