

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

LATE RECTOR OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF  
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CONTAINING  
AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE, &c., LETTERS ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS, CARDIPHONIA, DIS-  
COURSES 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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## LETTER XL.

### A WORD TO PROFESSORS IN TRADE.

DEAR SIR,

IT is suspected, or rather it is too certainly known, that, among those who are deemed gospel-professors, there are some persons who allow themselves in the practice of dealing in prohibited, uncustomed, or, as the common phrase is, smuggled goods, to the prejudice of the public revenue, and the detriment of the fair trader.

The decisions of the word of God upon this point, are so plain and determinate, that it is rather difficult to conceive how a sincere mind can either overlook or mistake them. The same authority which forbids us to commit adultery, or murder, requires us to “render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s;” to render unto all their dues: tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom. These precepts enjoin no more than what the common sense of mankind pronounces to be due from subjects and members of society, to the governments they live under, and by which they are protected. But the obligation is greatly enforced upon those who acknowledge themselves the disciples of Christ, since he has been pleased to make their compliance herein as part of the obedience they owe to himself. And it is plain, that these injunctions are universal and binding, under all civil governments, as such; for none can justly suppose that tributes exacted by the Roman emperors, (under whose dominion the first christians lived) such as Tiberius or Nero, had the sanction of our Lord and his apostles on account of their peculiar equity.

The vending smuggled goods, or the buying them, if known to be so, is likewise injurious to the fair trader, who, conscientiously paying the prescribed duties, cannot afford to sell so cheap as the smuggler; and, therefore, must expect the fewer customers. In this view, it offends the royal law, of “doing to others as we would they should do unto us.” The force of this argument may be easily felt by anyone who will honestly make the case his own. Without any nice reasoning, people may know in a moment, that they should not like to be put to this disadvantage. It is, therefore, unjust, (i.e. sinful, and utterly unbecoming a professor of religion) to purchase smuggled goods, even in small quantities, and for family-use. As for those who, being in trade themselves, make this practice a branch of their business, and, under the semblance of a fair reputation, are doing things in secret, which they would tremble to have discovered, being afraid of the exchequer, though not of God, I can only pray, that God may give them repentance; for it is a work of darkness, and needs it. Transactions of this kind cannot be carried on for a course of time, without such a series and

complication of fraud and meanness<sup>1</sup>, and, for the most part, of perjury likewise, as would be scandalous, not only in a professed christian, but in an avowed infidel.

It should be observed likewise, that there is hardly any set of men more lost to society, or in a situation more dangerous to themselves and others, than the people who are called smugglers. Frequent fightings, and sometimes murder itself, are the consequence of their illicit commerce. Their money is ill gotten, and it is generally ill spent. They are greatly to be pitied. The employment they are accustomed to has a direct tendency to deprive them of character, and the privileges of social life, and to harden their hearts, and stupefy their consciences, in the ways of sin. But for whom are they risking their lives, and ruining their souls? I would hope, reader, not for you, if you account yourself a christian. If you, for the sake of gain, encourage and assist them, by buying or selling their goods, you are so far responsible for the consequences. You encourage them in sin; you expose them to mischief. And have you so learned Christ? Is this the testimony you give of the uprightness of your hearts and ways? Is it thus you show your compassion for the souls of men? Ah! shake your hands from gain so dearly earned. Think not to support the cause of God with such gain; he hates robbery for burnt-offering. Think it not lawful, or safe, to put a farthing of it into your treasury, lest it secretly communicate a moth and a curse to all that you possess; for it is the price of blood, the blood of souls. If you are indeed a child of God, and will persist in this path after admonition received, be assured your sin will find you out. If the Lord loves you, he will not suffer you to prosper in your perverseness. You may rather expect, that as a little damaged corn is sufficient to spoil the whole heap to which it is laid, so money, thus obtained, will deprive you of the blessing and comfort you might otherwise expect from your lawful acquisitions.

If you are determined to persist in opposition to scripture, to law, to equity and humanity, you have, doubtless, as I suppose you a professor, some plea or excuse with which you attempt to justify yourself and to keep your conscience quiet. See to it, that it be such a one as will bear the examination of a dying hour. You will not surely plead that “things are come to such a pass, there is no carrying on business upon other terms to advantage!” Will the practice of the world, who know not Christ, be a proper precedent for you who call yourself by his name? That cannot be, since his command is, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.” That the truth and power of his grace may be manifested, he is pleased to put his servants into such situations, that they must forego some seeming advantages, and suffer some

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson, defining a smuggler, says, he is “a wretch who imports or exports goods without payment of the customs.”

seeming hardships, in their worldly connections, if they will approve themselves faithful to him, and live in the exercise of a good conscience. He promises, that his grace shall be sufficient for them. It is the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich; and, for want of this, we see many rise early, take late rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, to no purpose. And I believe, integrity and diligence in business, with a humble dependence upon his providence, are the best methods of thriving even in temporals. However, they who lose for him are in no danger of losing by him. They may be confident of so much as he sees best for them; and they shall have his peace and blessing with it. But if, when you are placed in a state of trial, the love of the world is so powerful in your heart, that you cannot resist the temptation of enriching yourself by unlawful means, you have great reason to fear you have not his Spirit, and are therefore none of his.

I am, &c.