

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.

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LETTER

TO

THE REVEREND MR. O——— .

April 3, 1759.

DEAR SIR,

You see I have prevented you in your promise of writing first; and, having found a pretext for troubling Mr. ——, I was willing to venture upon you without any, unless you will let me plead a desire of showing you how welcome your correspondence would be to me. I know not if my heart was ever more united to any person, in so short a space of time, than to you; and what engaged me so much was, the spirit of meekness and of love (that peculiar and inimitable mark of true Christianity) which I observed in you. I mean it not to your praise. May all the praise be to him, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh, who alone maketh the best to differ from the worst; but I think I may well mention, to your encouragement, that all who conversed with you greatly regret your speedy departure; and I am persuaded the same temper, the same candour, will make you acceptable, honourable, and useful, wherever you go. Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, and the peace-makers; they shall obtain the mercy they want, and possess the peace they love. They shall inherit the earth. The earth, sinful and miserable as it is, shall be worthy to be called an inheritance to them, for they shall enjoy a comparative heaven in it. They shall be called the children of God, though dignified with no title among men. Alas, how much are these things overlooked, even by many who, I would hope, are real believers! Methinks a very different spirit from that of the church of Laodicea, is to be seen amongst us, though perhaps it is not easy to say which is the best of the two. That was neither cold nor hot, this (*mirabile dictu*) is both cold and hot at once, and both to the extreme. Hot, hasty, and arbitrary in those few things where mediocrity is a virtue; but cool and remiss in those great points, where the application of the whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, is so absolutely necessary, and so positively enjoined. Surely there is too much room for this observation, and I perhaps stand self-condemned in making it.

I hope you will take opportunity to improve your interest in Mr. —— by letter. He expressed much satisfaction in the hour he spent with you before you sailed, and a great regard for you; therefore would, I doubt not, give you a fair hearing; and the phrase *litera scripta manet* is true in more senses than one. He makes such large concessions sometimes, that I am apt to think he is conscious of the weakness of his own argument; and then he is as soon angry with himself for complying so far, and flies off to the other extreme.

Yet, for the most part, when he speaks plain, and is not restrained by complaisance for particular persons, he appears not only a stranger to experimental religion, but averse to the notion, and generally inclined to treat it with levity. His obstacles are very many and very great; his reputation as a learned man, his years, his regular life, and perhaps, above all, his performances in print, especially his last book, are so many barriers that must be broke through before conviction can reach him. But the grace of God can do all this and more; and indeed, when I think of the many truly valuable parts of his character, and the indefatigable pains he has taken in his researches after truth, I am willing to hope, that the Lord will at length teach him the true wisdom, and enable him, however hard it may seem, to give up his own attainments, and sit down like a little child at the feet of Jesus.

I hope to hear soon and often from you. I number my Christian correspondents among my principal blessings, a few judicious pious friends, to whom, when I can get leisure to write, I send my heart by turns. I can trust them with my inmost sentiments, and can write with no more disguise than I think. I shall rejoice to add you to the number, if you can agree to take me as I am, as I think you will, and suffer me to commit my whole self to paper, without respect to names, parties, and sentiments. I endeavour to observe my Lord's commands, to call no man master upon earth; yet I desire to own and honour the image of God wherever I find it. I dare not say I have no bigotry, for I know not myself; and remember, to my shame, that formerly, when I ignorantly professed myself free from it, I was indeed over-run with it; but this I can say, I allow it not: I strive and pray against it; and thus far, by the grace of God, I have attained, that I find my heart as much united to many who differ from me in some points, as to any who agree with me in all. I set no value upon any doctrinal truth, farther than it has a tendency to promote practical holiness. If others should think those things hinderances which I judge to be helps in this respect, I am content they should go on in their own way, according to the light God has given them, provided they will agree with me *εν τω επαναγγελει*. If it should be asked, which are the necessary things? I answer, Those in which the spiritual worshippers of all ages and countries have been agreed. Those, on the contrary, are mere subordinate matters, in which the best men, those who have been the most eminent for faith, prayer, humility, and nearness to God, always have been, and still are, divided in their judgments. Upon this plan I should think it no hard matter to draw up a form of sound words (whether dignified with the name of a creed or no, I care not), to which true believers of all sorts and sizes would unanimously subscribe. Suppose it ran something in the following manner:—I believe that sin is the most hateful thing in the world; that I and all men are by nature in a state of wrath and depravity, utterly unable to sustain the penalty, or to fulfil the commands of God's holy law; and that we have no sufficiency

of ourselves to think a good thought. I believe that Jesus Christ is the chief among ten thousands; that he came into the world to save the chief of sinners, by making a propitiation for sin by his death, by paying a perfect obedience to the law in our behalf; and that he is now exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sins to all that believe; and that he ever liveth to make intercession for us. I believe that the Holy Spirit (the gift of God through Jesus Christ) is the sure and only guide into all truth, and the common privilege of all believers; and under his influence, I believe the holy scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, and to furnish us thoroughly for every good work. I believe that love to God, and to man, for God's sake, is the essence of religion, and the fulfilling of the law; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; that those who, by a patient course in well-doing, seek glory, honour, and immortality, shall receive eternal life; and I believe that this reward is not of debt, but of grace, even to the praise and glory of that grace whereby he has made us accepted in the Beloved. Amen.

I pretend not to accuracy in this hasty draught; they are only outlines, which, if you please to retouch, and fill up at your leisure, I hope you will favour me with a sight of it. I fear I have tired you, and shall only add my prayers, that the Lord may be with you, and crown your labours of love with success, that you may hereafter shine among those who have been instrumental in turning many to righteousness.

I am, &c.