

THE
WORKS
OF
THE REV . JOHN NEWTON

LATE RECTOR OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF
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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 IV.

September 6, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I BEGIN to fear I shall fall under a suspicion of unkindness and forgetfulness towards you, and therefore I am willing to write a line by way of prevention, though I have not leisure to attempt anything like an answer to the letter you put into my hand the evening before I left O——; I must therefore content myself with a tender of affection and respect, and an inquiry after your welfare.

Your letter will give me an opportunity of saying something farther when time shall admit; but an endeavour to answer all the objections that may be started between us, in a way of reasoning, would require a volume, and would likewise interfere with the leading principle upon which my hope of giving you satisfaction in due time is grounded. You seem to expect that I should remove your difficulties; but it is my part only to throw in a word occasionally, as a witness of what the Lord has been pleased to teach me from the scriptures, and to wait for the rest till he (who alone is able) shall be pleased to communicate the same views to you: for, till we see and judge by the same medium, and are agreed in the fundamental point, that faith is not the effect of reasoning, but a special gift of God, which he bestows when and to whom he pleases, it will not be possible for me to convince you by dint of argument. I believe, as I have observed before, that he has already given you a desire to know his will, and therefore I trust he will not disappoint your search. At present I think you want one thing, which it is not in my power to impart, I mean, such a sense of the depravity of human nature, and the state of all mankind considered as sinners, as may make you feel the utter impossibility of attaining to the peace and hope of the gospel in any other way, than by renouncing all hope of succeeding by any endeavours of your own, farther than by humbly waiting at the throne of grace, for power to cast yourself, without terms and conditions, upon him who is able to save to the uttermost. We must feel ourselves sick, before we can duly prize the great Physician, and feel a sentence of death in ourselves, before we can effectually trust in God, who raiseth the dead.

I have not brought your sermons with me, for I thought I should not have time to read them attentively while in this hurrying place. I purpose to consider them with care, and to give you my thoughts with frankness, when I return. However, if they are upon the plan intimated in your letter, I will venture to say one thing beforehand, that they will not answer your desired

end. I am persuaded you wish to be useful—to reclaim sinners from their evil ways—to inspire them with a love to God, and a sincere aim to walk in obedience to his will. May I not venture to appeal to yourself, that you meet with little success,—that the people to whom you preach, though they perhaps give you a patient hearing, yet remain as they were, unchanged, and unholy? It must be so: there is but one sort of preaching which God blesses to these purposes, that which makes all the world guilty before God, and sets forth Jesus Christ, as the brazen serpent was proposed by Moses, that guilty and condemned sinners, by looking to him, and believing on his name, may be healed and saved. The most pressing exhortations to repentance and amendment of life, unless they are enforced in a certain way, which only God can teach, will leave our hearers much as they find them. When we meet, or when I have leisure to write from home, I will trouble you with my thoughts more at large. Till then, permit me to assure you of my sincere regard and best wishes, and that

I am, &c.