

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.

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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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**COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.**

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1830.

MESSIAH  
OR  
FIFTY EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

ON THE SERIES OF

SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES

WHICH FORM THE SUBJECT OF HANDEL'S CELEBRATED

ORATORIO

OF THAT NAME,

PREACHED IN THE YEARS 1784 AND 1785,

IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

LOMBARD STREET,

LONDON.

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———Ah!

Tantamne rem, tam negligenter, agere!—TER.

Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this!—DEUT. xxxii. 29.

TO THE  
PARISHIONERS OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,  
AND  
ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH HAW,  
LONDON,  
THESE SERMONS  
ON THE  
MESSIAH  
ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY THE  
AUTHOR,  
TO REMAIN AS A TESTIMONY OF HIS RESPECT  
FOR THEIR PERSONS,  
AND HIS SOLICITUDE FOR THEIR WELFARE,  
WHEN HIS PRESENT RELATION  
TO THEM, AS THEIR MINISTER,  
SHALL BE DISSOLVED.

## SERMON XIV.

### REST FOR THE WEARY.

*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*  
MATTH. xi 28.

WHICH shall we admire most, the majesty, or the grace, conspicuous in this invitation? How soon would the greatest earthly monarch be impoverished, and his treasures utterly exhausted, if all that are poor and miserable had encouragement to apply freely to him, with a promise of relief fully answerable to their wants and wishes! But the riches of Christ are unsearchable and inexhaustible. If millions of millions of distressed sinners seek to him for relief, he has a sufficiency for them all. His mercy is infinite to pardon all their sins; his grace is infinite to answer and exceed their utmost desires; his power is infinite, to help them in all their difficulties. A number without number have been thus waiting upon him, from age to age; and not one of them has been sent away disappointed and empty. And the streams of his bounty are still flowing, and still full. Thus the sun, his brightest material image, has been the source of light to the earth, and to all its inhabitants, from the creation; and will be equally so to all succeeding generations, till time shall be no more. There is, indeed, an appointed hour when the sun shall cease to shine, and the course of nature shall fail. But the true Sun, the Sun of righteousness, has no variableness or shadow of turning (Mal. iv. 2; James i. 17); and they who depend upon him while in this world, shall rejoice in his light for ever. Can we hesitate to accept of these words, as affording a full proof of the divine character, the proper Godhead of our Lord and Saviour; supposing only, that he meant what he said, and that he is able to make his promise good? Can a creature, however excellent and glorious, use this language? Can a creature discharge the debts, soothe the distresses, and satisfy the desires of every individual who looks to him? Who, but the Lord God (Psal. cxlvi. 8; Isa. lxi. 2), can raise up all that are bowed down, and comfort all that mourn!

Again, as is his majesty, so is his mercy. In acts of grace amongst men there are always some limitations. If a king proclaims a pardon to a rebellious nation, there are still exceptions. Some ringleaders are excluded. Either their crimes were too great to be forgiven, or their obstinacy or influence are supposed to be too great, to render their safety consistent with the safety of the state. But the Saviour excludes none but those who wilfully exclude themselves. As no case is too hard for his power, so no person who applies to him is shut out from his compassion. Him that cometh to him, whatever his former character or conduct may have been, he will in nowise cast out, John vi. 37. This glorious exercise of sovereign mercy is no less a divine attribute, than the power by which he

created the heavens and the earth. It is the consideration of his mercy in pardoning sin, and in saving sinners, which causes that admiring exclamation of the prophet, "Who is a God like unto thee!" Micah vii. 18.

This passage (including the two following verses) closes the first part of the Oratorio. In tracing the series of the scriptures thus far, we have considered several signal prophecies which foretold his appearance; we have seen their accomplishment in his birth and have (I hope) joined with the heavenly host, in ascribing glory to God in the highest, for this unspeakable gift and effect of his love. We have learnt from the prophets, his characters, as the great Restorer, and the great Shepherd. The evangelist proposes him to our meditation here, in a gracious and inviting attitude, as opening his high commission, proclaiming his own sovereign authority and power, and declaring his compassionate purpose, and readiness to give refreshment and rest to the weary and heavy laden.

The two principal points in the text are, the invitation and the promise.

I. The invitation is expressed in very general terms: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." There is no qualifying or restraining clause, to discourage any person who is willing to accept it. Whoever hath an ear to hear, let him hear. "Let him that is athirst come, and whosever will, let him take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. I cannot doubt but these words authorize me to address myself to every person in this assembly. I speak first to you who are spending your money for that which satisfieth not (Isa. lv. 2); who are wearied in seeking happiness where it is not to be found, and in digging pits, and hewing out cisterns for yourselves, which can hold no water (Jer. ii. 13), and have hitherto been regardless of the fountain of living waters, which is always near you. While you are pursuing the wealth or honours of this world, or wasting your time and strength in the indulgence of sensual appetites, and look no higher, are you indeed happy and satisfied? Do you find the paths in which you are led, or rather hurried and driven on, to be the paths of pleasantness and peace? Prov. iii. 7. With what face can you charge the professors of religion with hypocrisy, if you pretend to satisfaction in these ways? We have trodden them far enough ourselves, to be assured that there are feelings in your heart which contradict your assertion. You know that you are not happy, and we know it likewise. Are you quite strangers to a secret wish that you had never been born? or that you could change condition with some of the brute creation? Are you not heavy laden, burdened with guilt, and fears, and forebodings, harassed with crosses, disappointments, and mortifications? Are you not often, at least sometimes, like children in the dark, afraid of being alone, unable to support the reflections which are forced upon you in a solitary hour, when you have nothing to amuse you? And while you seem so alert and upon the wing after every kind of dissipation within your reach, is not a chief motive that impels you, a desire, if possible, of hiding yourselves from yourselves, and of calling off your attention from those thoughts which, like vultures, are ready to seize you, and prey

upon you, the moment they find you unemployed? And how often do your poor expedients fail you, especially in a time of trouble, or on a sick-bed? What comfort does the world afford you then? What relief do you then derive from the companions of your vain and gay hours? Most probably, at such a season, they stand aloof from you; the house of mourning, or the chamber of sickness, is no less unpleasing to them than to yourself. They do not choose the pain of being reminded, by a sight of your distress, how soon the case may be their own. Or, if they visit you, you find them miserable comforters. But I have to speak to you of one who is able to comfort you in all seasons, and under all circumstances, whose favour is better than life. And will you still refuse to hear his voice? What hard thing does the Lord require of you? Only to come to him for that peace and rest to which you have hitherto been strangers. But though you are invited, I know that of yourselves you will not come; you will not, and therefore you cannot. Be assured, however, the invitation does not mock you, and, if you finally refuse it, the fault will lie at your own doors. But may I not hope you will refuse no longer? The preaching of the gospel is his appointment, and has a great effect, when accompanied with the energy of his Holy Spirit, to make a willing people in the day of his power.

There are others, however, to whom this invitation speaks more directly. The convinced sinner is heavy laden with the guilt of sin, and wearied with ineffectual strivings against it. He is weary of the yoke and burden of the law, when he can neither answer its commands with cheerful and acceptable obedience, nor see any way of escaping the penalty which is due to transgressors. He sighs earnestly and anxiously for pardon and liberty. If he has an interval of comparative peace and hope, it is more derived from some occasional fervour and liveliness in the frame of his spirit, than from the exercise of faith; and therefore, as that fervour abates (and it will not always remain at the same height), his fears return. If in such a favoured moment he feels little solicitation or trouble from the evil propensities of his heart, he is willing to hope they are subdued, and that they will trouble him no more; but his triumph is short, the next return of temptation revives all his difficulties, and he is again brought into bondage. For nothing but the knowledge of the Saviour, and the supplies of his Spirit, can give stable peace to the mind, or victory over sin. A repetition of these disappointments and changes fixes a heavy burden and distress upon the mind. But here is help provided exactly suitable to the case. Comply with this invitation, come to him and he will surely give you rest.

But what is it to come to Christ? It is to believe in him, to apply to him, to make his invitation and promise our ground and warrant for putting our trust in him. On another occasion, he said, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst," John vi. 35. The expressions are of the same import. When he was upon earth, many who came to him, and even followed him for a season, received no saving benefit from him. Some came to

him from motives of malice and ill-will, to ensnare or insult him. Some followed him for loaves and fishes; and of others, who were frequently near him, he complained, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life," John v. 40. But they who were distressed, and came to him for relief, were not disappointed. To come to him, therefore, implies a knowledge of his power and an application for his help. To us he is not visible, but he is always near us; and as he appointed his disciples to meet him in Galilee (Matthew, xxviii. 16) previous to his ascension, so he has promised to be found of those who seek him, and wait for him, in certain means of his own institution. He is seated upon a throne of grace; he is to be sought in his word, and where his people assemble in his name, for he has said, There will I be in the midst of them, Matth. xviii. 20. They therefore who read his word, frequent his ordinances, and pray unto him, with a desire that, they may know him, and be remembered with the favour which he beareth to his own people (Psal. cvi. 4), answer the design of my text. They come to him, and he assures them, that whoever they are, he will in nowise cast them out. If they thus come to him, they will of course come out from the world and be separate, 2 Cor. vi. 17. If they apply to him for refuge, they will renounce all other refuge and dependence, and trust in him alone, according to the words of the prophet, "Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherless (the helpless and comfortless) findeth mercy," Hosea xiv. 3.

II. The promise is, "I will give you rest." The word signifies both rest and refreshment. He gives a relief and cessation from former labour and bondage, and superadds a peace, a joy, a comfort which revives the weary spirit, and proves itself to be that very satisfaction which the soul had been ignorantly and in vain seeking amongst the creatures and the objects of sense.

This rest includes a freedom from the forebodings and distressing accusations of a guilty conscience; from the long and fruitless struggle between the will and the judgment; from the condemning power of the law; from the tyranny of irregular and inconsistent appetites; and from the dominion of pride and self, which make us unhappy in ourselves, and hated and despised by others. A freedom likewise from the cares and anxieties which, in such an uncertain world as this, disquiet the minds of those who have no solid scriptural dependence upon God, and especially a freedom from the dread of death, and of the things which are beyond it. In these and other respects, the believer in Jesus enters into a present rest. He is under the guidance of infinite wisdom and the protection of almighty power; he is permitted to cast all his cares upon the Lord (1 Pet. v. 7), and is assured that the Lord careth for him. So far as he possesses by faith the spirit and liberty of his high calling, he is in perfect peace. The prophet Jeremiah has given a beautiful description and illustration of this rest of a believer (Jer. xvii. 5–8); which is rendered more striking by being contrasted with the miserable state of those who live without God in the world. "Thus saith the Lord,

Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places of the wilderness, in a salt land not inhabited. But blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when the heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

But besides rest there is refreshment. There are pleasures and consolations in that intercourse and communion with God to which we are invited by the gospel, which, both in kind and degree, are unspeakably superior to all that the world can bestow, and such as the world cannot deprive us of; for they have no necessary dependence upon outward situation or circumstances; they are compatible with poverty, sickness, and sufferings. They are often most sensibly sweet and lively when the streams of creature-comfort are at the lowest ebb. Many have been able to say with the apostle, “As the sufferings of Christ (those which we endure for his sake, or submit to from his hand) abound in us, so our consolation in Christ also aboundeth,” 1 Cor. i. 5. The all-sufficient God can increase these communications of comfort from himself to a degree beyond our ordinary conceptions, so as not only to support his people under the most exquisite pains, but even to suspend and overpower all sense of pain, when the torment would otherwise be extreme. And he has sometimes been pleased to honour the fidelity of his servants, and to manifest his own faithfulness to them by such an interposition. One well-attested instance our own martyrology affords, that of Mr. Bainham, who suffered in the reign of Queen Mary. When he was in the fire, he addressed himself to his persecutors to this effect: “You call for miracles in proof of our doctrine, now behold one; I feel no more pain from these flames than if I was laid upon a bed of roses.” But in ordinary cases, and in all cases, they who taste how good the Lord is to them that seek him, how he cheers them with the light of his countenance, and what supports he affords them in the hour of need, can without regret part with the poor perishing pleasures of sin, and encounter all the difficulties they meet with in the path of duty. Whatever their profession of his name, and their attachment to his cause may have cost them, they will acknowledge that it has made them ample amends.

Come, therefore, unto him, venture upon his gracious word, and you shall find rest for your souls. Can the world outbid this gracious offer? Can the world promise to give you rest when you are burdened with trouble? when your cisterns fail, and your gourds wither? or when you are terrified with the approach of death, when your pulse intermits, when you are about to take a final farewell of all you ever saw with your eyes, and an awful, unknown, untried, unchangeable eternity is opening upon your view? Such a moment most certainly awaits you; and when it arrives, if you die in your senses, and are not judicially given



np to hardness and blindness of heart, you will assuredly tremble, if you never trembled before. Oh! be persuaded! May the Lord himself persuade you to be timely wise, to seek him now while he may be found, to call upon him while he is yet near, lest that dreadful threatening should be your portion: “Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh,” Prov. i. 24, 26.