



6-6-1795

Letter from John Newton to John Campbell, June 6, 1795

John Newton

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Handwritten note on a small piece of paper attached to the flap.

3d 6th June 1795

Mr. J. Campbell
Grass Market
Edinburgh



Handwritten mark or initials on the right side of the flap.

My dear Sir,

5 June

I have 2 of yours to thank you for. One of the 21. April, the other of 23 May by Mr Sturthens, who brought it on Tuesday. I asked him to dinner but he was engaged. He promised to come again, but I have not seen him since. Burgers Antient - burgers, Kirk. men & Relifemen, all an fish that ^{come} to my net; especially those whom you send.

Last week I directed a letter to your care for my Sister, who I suppose is at Faith. I wou'd to give you an opportunity of calling upon her. It is 12 years I believe since I saw her, but I trust you wou'd find her a truly gracious Woman.

You have sufficiently stored me with Anniversaries. We lastly printed a 2^d Fair hundred of the Faith, & have a good many of the Third remaining.

I am not sure I can get my letter frank'd, & therefore I take a long Sheet, how long I shall be in filling it, I cannot tell.

Neither you nor I, know how Paul preach'd. But as his Writings were design'd to be a standing rule of faith & doctrine to the Church, if he, & his Brethren had said nothing in their epistles about Election & ~~Pre~~ Predestination, we shou'd not have so well understood those points, nor had the same Authority for maintaining ^{them}. Tho' I think they may be fairly infer'd from other parts of Scripture, perhaps we cou'd not have made them well out. But Paul says expressly, that he fed Babes, not with Irony-meat, but with Milk. I think I hardly said, that I never mention the words in preaching. When they lie in my text, they make a part of my ^{subject and} sermon, but seldom otherwise. I think these doctrines shou'd be in a sermon, like Sugar in a dish of tea, which sweetens every drop, but is not when to be found in a lump.

I hope you will enjoy the Lords peace & presence in your new House.

It is pleasant to dwell when he dwells, whether in a Palace, a Cottage, or a Prison. Indeed it does not much signify which of the Three are our abode, provided 'tis pleas'd to be with us. I am not very fond of ^{either} Assemblies, Consistories, Synods, Councils, ~~perhaps~~ Benches or Boards. Ministers as Individuals in their respective places, are like Flowers which will preserve their colour & scent, much longer, if kept singly, than when pack'd together in a Nosegay or Posy, for then they quickly fade & corrupt. Their associations, in my judgment, shou'd always be voluntary & free. Thus there are 10 or a dozen of us in London, who frequently meet; we deliberate, ask ^{give} ~~receive~~ advice as occasions arise. But the consentment of one, or even of the whole body, is not binding upon any. We hear what each person has to say, & then each one judges & acts for himself. Thus tho' we sometimes differ in opinion, we always agree, & live in harmony & ^{love} ~~perhaps~~. Perhaps it might be a good rule, where spiritual matters are decided by vote, that the Minority shou'd determine the point. For in most places the Few, are more likely to be right, than the Many.

I can assure you, that however strong some may think it, I am very glad, & have much cause to be thankful, that I am what & where I am.

I think, with respect to Man, we are properly the Independants. The Bishops in England, interfere with us, no more than the Bishops in Italy. Except in requiring us to appear, & answer to our names, once in three or four years. But no questions are ask'd, nor ^{any} ~~no~~ fault found, by our Superiors.

I ^{have long} ~~always~~ thought that as we have the same Gospel in our hands, which enabled the first Christians to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, & that the same Gospel has still the same power. I am glad you have found it so. I once ~~we~~ visited a family that had suffered a great loss by fire. I found the mistress of the house in tears. I said, Madam I wish you joy. She answered what do you wish me joy of the fire? No Madam, I wish you joy that you have a treasure laid up which the fire cannot reach. This turn stopped her grief, she wiped away her tears & smiled. So the sun breaks thro' the clouds & shines, after an April Shower.

Riccartons works are become very scarce, & yet are much enquired after. Chapman the Bookseller wrote to Scotland for many sets, but they could only promise him six, & these tho' long expected are not yet arrived. I put in for one set for a friend, & am sorry I cannot get it. I believe I told you that Mr. Riccarton had written to me about a New Edition, which I dissuaded him from, because as he has no Copy-right, it was at any persons option to print another, which might spoil the sale of his. I desired Mr. Eyre (the Editor of the Evening Magazine) to advise Chapman, to write to Mr. Riccarton for his consent to publish his Fathers works; for which I thought, especially if he would write a short preface, & then & then some brief notes, he had a right to some pecuniary consideration; & perhaps in this way, he might recover his copy right. It might be deemed, as coming from him, & with a few notes of his own, as a New work. I am not Lawyer enough to be sure of this. But if Mr. R. is not yet engaged with Chapman, I could wish you to think of the business, to make enquiries, & to write to Mr. R. A new Edition in 12^{mo} I believe would sell, & it could be printed cheaper in Scotland, than here. Only the paper & the type should be good. For our nice London Eyes cannot read print upon coarse paper. But for fear of Mr. R. being burdened, I would have the risk lie with the booksellers, as Interest will make them more diligent in promoting the Sale.

I shall be well pleased, if the ~~new~~ paper which I printed may provoke your Ministers to do something handsome for Mr. R. The cause of his incumbrance is a noble one, to relieve a Father, and a Man, whose memory I think, should be precious to those ^{who} love the Gospel in Scotland. Let not that proverb, A prophet is not without honour save in his own Country, be applied to him. For setting Religion aside, on the sole ground of literary abolitions, I think if boasting were lawfully Scotland might boast of Mr. Riccarton, no less than of Thomas Robertson, Blair &c; He was certainly a Man of a strong comprehensive mind, & if not an elegant, He was a Masterly writer. His Metaphysics, I think are a good Besom to sweep away the fine spun, cobweb, sceptical Metaphysics, which at present, are too much in fashion, in both Kingdoms.

I am glad your reprinted Mr. Romains address. The subject surely demands attention. To ~~the~~ your question, Do you approve of the invitation? I answer heartily, Yes? when you ask, Do you adopt it? I must answer, Not literally. I endow more than daily, both in private & in my family. Nor do I omit it in the Pulpit. But after I have been engaged on the Lord^{day} in preaching & speaking for 6 hours, & 9 a Clock

comes, I find myself more disposed for supper & bed, than for prayer. The truth is that I cannot confine myself much to rules, except Scriptural rules. The thought that a great number are joining with me in prayer, at the same hour & minute, is pleasing to the Imagination. But the Lord hears prayer whenever we call upon him, without regarding our distinction of times (his own day excepted) I then fore choose the seasons which suit best with my circumstances, & convenience. Sometimes my mind is thus engaged on the Public accounts, while walking in the Streets. But really I find it not easy to know how to pray. Many think, you may presume to say, that God does not govern the Earth. ~~So~~ He has a controversy with the Nations, & especially with our Nation (which considering our superior privileges & advantages) I deem to be worst in Christendom) upon this account. Dare I pray, that he should give up his cause, & leave his enemies to triumph, lest I & my friends, should be incommoded by the methods He may see fit to take, to make them know that He is the Lord? I dare not. Personal lopes & Croppes are sometimes sanctified to the saving of the soul. If that person is my friend, I ought to be rather thankful than sorry for those trials which have this effect. It may be so with a Nation. If the French were permitted to land, & to spread ravages, fire & sword thro half the Kingdom, provided such calamities, were the means of stirring up multitudes who & new love can clap in ~~our~~ sin, to seek the Lord in good earnest, & with their whole heart, such a season of distress, might be the happiest time that Britain ^{ever saw}. For surely, that must be the best time, when the best cause flourishes most. We are apt to be too selfish, too little concerned for the Glory of God, & the good of souls. Let us pray that the Gospel may spread that the Lord may revive his work in the midst of years, whatever may become of our fig trees & vines! And it becomes us submissively to leave the methods of accomplishing his great designs, to his Wisdom.

Happen what will, it shall be well with them that fear the Lord. He invites them to hide themselves in his secret chambers, & promises to keep them under the shadow of his wings. He can protect them, when many fall around them, or if he permits them to suffer with others, He can, & he will, give them strength according to their day, & make all things work together for their good. So that either way they are safe. The time is short, his people will soon be at the end of their journey, & then they will not be much concerned for what they meet with upon the road. I pray with submission, for peace at home & abroad. But when I look upon the state of things around me, I rather pray from a conviction of duty, than ⁱⁿ Faith that it will be so. But the Lords thoughts are higher than mine, as the heavens are above the Earth. Who knows but He may yet turn from his fierce anger? The light & power of the Gospel, are certainly upon the increase in England. This is the only good sign of the times, I can discern.

If I can get this franked I will. If not, you must pay for it. I shall be glad to pay the like tax for a letter from you, whenever you please to write, & have no other conveyance, Mrs. Catlett adds her best wishes to mine for your peace & comfort. I am sincerely yours
John Newton

6 June 95