

September 2nd, 1795

Letter from John Newton to John Campbell, September 2, 1795

John Newton

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London Three Sept



Mr J Campbell

Grays Market

Spurthornton

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Dear Sir

It runs in my head that I have 2 of your letters in an
sword, but I can find only one. Nor can I recollect the particulars of the
other, if there be another. That now before me is dated the 17. Aug^o.

It is good to desire to be useful, but it is not necessary to know
how much we are so. If you walk humbly & uprightly before the Lord, I
may venture to answer for your usefulness, but we often ^{mean} by the word,
to be instrumental in doing great things. Self likes to do great things. But
Grace teaches us to aim at doing little things with a great spirit - that is
for the Lord's sake. To file up his appointed post with integrity submission
& thankfulness, is all that an Angel could do, if he was upon Earth.

I thank you for the extract from Dr. Gillies letter. I hope as you say,
it does suit me, & I pray that it may suit me, if it should be the Lord's pleasure
to lay me aside. I may expect it daily at my time of life - tho' at present I
am busy & strong. But a few minutes is sufficient to produce a great change
But I wish to work whilst it is day, & to leave to morrow in his hands.

Dr. Erskine bears fruit in his age. I never exchanged a line with him,
but I have long had a high respect for his character. I hope to know him hereafter
I once breakfasted, & once dined with Lord Hopeton. He seems a very amiable
Gentleman. May the Lord give him the best honours & the best riches! and
strengthen his Chaplain abundantly!

I have little time to write about Baptism. Dr. Williams ~~Discourse~~
an Independent Minister of Shrewsbury seems to have exhausted the subject
in two vol. 12th printed in the year 1789. I am sorry you are disturbed upon
this point. I have long considered the Baptists zeal to make Water. proselytes,
to be something like the zeal of the Teachers who perplexed the Galatians, after
Paul had left them. If those who are persuaded to renounce their Infant Baptism
came out of the Water, more humble, more spiritual, more full of love & tenderness,
than when they went in, I should think it a stronger argument in their favour than
any

any I have met with. I have run the Gantlett among the Baptist for many years. I have studied the point with any best attention. And I do most deliberately think they are wrong, I mean, in their attempts to force their practice upon others, (for they certainly have a right to judge for themselves) so wrong, that I could no more coincide with them, than I could subscribe to the Dogmas of the Council of Trent. As to ^{precedent} scriptural the case will not admit of it. If they will shew me when the Gospel was preached to Infants, I will shew them the ^{express} command for their duty baptizing - & likewise the place when we are informed that Women received the Lord's Supper. They say, That our Lord set us an example. But was John's Baptism & Christ's Baptism the same. If so, our Lord was baptized by John, in the name of the Father, the Son & the Holy Ghost. ~~But~~ This I cannot easily believe. And John's 12 disciples Acts 19. 1 - 6 had not so much as heard there was a Holy Ghost. It was peculiar to the Christian Dispensation John 7. 39. Nor have we any scriptural proof that the Apostles were baptized with Christian Baptism. I suppose they were by John; but we are expressly told that Jesus baptized none John 4.

But enough of this, I mean than I intended. An attention to scriptural precedents in secondary matters, has a tendency to draw off the attention to the great & leading points of heart religion. And therefore ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{artifices} of Satan, & the eagerness of Popes self, the profane Church has been teased & divided about comparative trifles in every age. How many would substitute Uniformity of sentiment, for Unity of Spirit?

I smile at your not knowing the meaning of Easter. Those who observe it profess to observe it ⁱⁿ commemoration of our Lord's Resurrection. As this took place the third day after the Passover, & the Passover was regulated by the Full moon, the third day or Easter, most frequently happens on a Week day. Some Great Doctors thought it most proper to observe it on the Lord's day next following the Passover - Others perhaps as Great Doctors as the former, thought it best to abide by the Numerical third day. I cannot tell you how many Councils & Convocations were held to settle this knotty point. But as Pope self presides in them all, & held both sides of the question - the dispute ended in a total & final separation, between the Eastern & Western that is the Greek & Roman Churches. And Venerable Bede long afterwards, writing in praise

of a temporary, thought himself bound in Conscience to doze the account with this censure, But poor mis taken man, he did not keep Easter in our way & this spoils his otherwise good Character. I consider the modern disputes about Baptism, of the like importances.

I thank you for informing me of my Brother's return. Your account of Mr. L's short animadvert us to bear a faithful & affectionate testimony to the Truth, upon all proper occasions, & not to be discouraged by apparent difficulties. The heart is like Gunpowder, which lies quiet, if fire be kept from it, but a single spark, in the least time, is sufficient to set it in a blaze.

Mr. Romani's life honourably & usefully & died comfortably. The same may be said of many who live & die unknown & unnoticed by Men. A poor old Man or Woman in a Parish Workhouse, if faithful in their profession & submissive to their lot, who say ought to hear of the Men is too success, & pray for him, ^{may be} equally great in the sight of the Lord, who see thro' not as man seeth, & accepteth, ^{not} according to what his people actually do for him, but according to what they would do, if they could. I suppose, when Lazarus died, no train of Coaches attended his funeral, ^{Monument} but he had probably no funeral Orator, no sumptuous ~~burial~~ - but he had an attendant guard of Angels, & is represented to our conceptions, as obtaining a chief seat in the Kingdom, even in the bosom of Abraham see ^{Lyke 16} John 11. 22. And what is said of him Luke 16 will embalm & honour his memory to all succeeding generations. Farewell. My tone is expired & my paper nearly full. May the Lord bless you & all his people in North Britain, & between the North & South Poles. Amen.

I am your truly affectionate

John Newton