

November 28th, 1794

Letter from John Newton to John Campbell, November 28, 1794

John Newton

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26 Nov.

Dear Sir, I take a whole sheet, for I have a large paquett to answer, I date the top, but what date the bottom may bear is yet unknown

I do not wonder that Moses would have been willing to wait a little longer for Heaven, to have seen Israel established in Canan, tho' he was sure it would be so after his decease. God has in mercy so constituted the human frame, as to ^{produce} ~~produce~~ an ^{in necessary} ~~engagement~~ ^{affairs} of heart, so that we are not only employed in his service, but interested in what he appoints us to do. Because ^{it is} ~~it is~~ ^{his} ~~his~~ ^{concern}, it becomes our own. This wonderfully sustains labour, & likewise keeps up that attention & exertion, which are necessary to our doing ~~things~~ things as well as we can. Perhaps you have known parents who seem'd very willing to go to heaven (if it were the Levi's time) & yet not unwilling to live, to see a dear child comfortably settled; ^{or} where they went. Surely the object of Moses' desire was as noble & important, as any thing that we can propose upon Earth now. Moses lov'd Israel, & long'd to see them settled. But when the Lord forbade it, he cheerfully acquiesced.

Abraham was as you observe, a great man; apt he was but a man. We may admire his Faith & obedience, for the Bible commends them, & holds them forth to us as a pattern. Yet he has no more inherent, or property his own, than you or I. When left a little to himself, this great Believers stoop'd to equivocation & falsehood to save his life, when it was in reality, in no danger. Let us learn a lesson from him in this case, likewise, Not to presume upon our past experience, upon the ~~ground~~ ^{ground} of ~~confidence~~ ^{confidence} as tho' these could warrant our standing to morrow. We cannot see by the light of yesterday, nor subsist long upon yesterday's food. We need continual supplies, help every moment. Therefore let us not be high minded but fear. So long as we feel our own weakness, & lean upon an Almighty arm we are safe, but no longer.

Your anecdotes are always pleasing, & often instructive. If you can be content with the humble business of a Haberdasher of such small wares I will deal with you as long as you please. I think however Bueers answer was more smart than sold, if College caps them, were like those worn now - for tho' the outside of the cap is of a square form, the crown is quite as round, & as shapeable to the head, as the ^{three corners} crown of your hat.

I thank you for your account of Mr. Graham, I hope neither he nor you will bear any trouble, much less expence, to procure the Solter Enquiry. I do not want it, & perhaps should not read it. Recollections 3 Vols. will satisfy me. I put off about 20 sets (all I could get from Mr. Turnbull) among my friends; but I find that they are now to be had at a Bookseller, tho' not so cheap as mine were. I may be thankful, if I have been any way instrumental in promoting an enquiry after them.

The profanation of the Lords day is undoubtedly a great sin. But many sin thro' ignorance. They have neither good example to lead them to (Church, nor good instruction when they go. It is ^{one of the many} ~~one of the many~~ ^{Conjunct} ~~Conjunct~~ sins, which form our National character. But I do not think it the lowest. And I think the guilt of it, lies heavily upon the great, the Magis states & the Clergy. If the hungry sheep look up, they are not fed, or the places where there is food for them, ^{where} I see Multitudes customarily breaking the Sabbath, I think, ^{such}

was my practice once; & I hope, some of you will know better before you die. I obtained mercy, Grace might in my case, & Grace is still upon the throne.

I have known more instances than one of dreams resembling Mr. Tooleys and they are worth recording when verified by the event; but this is not always the case. Dreams are to me, a sufficient proof ^{of Christ} that we are surrounded by Invisible Agents & liable to impressions from them, when our senses are asleep, & perhaps when they are indisposed by nervous disorders, but not when we are in perfect health or distinctly awake. N. B. It is a great mercy that some of these Agents are under restraint, or we should be ~~scared~~ scared by dreams & terrified by visions every night! 2^d Infer from the dreams, that there is a power belonging to the Mind, adapted to the Unseen State, which the dormant when we are awake, is active in sleep. Then we seem to proceed by intuition we are engaged in scenes of which we had no consciousness before, & yet we know all that is going forward, take a part in the business, & are engaged & interested as if we were quite at home. This appears very wonderful to me. I think we know very little of our own powers at present. 3. The same dreams are important, perhaps momentary, perhaps prophetic, as I believe that mentioned in my Narrative was; yet there is so much uncertainty in their general character, that we should be cautious of laying much stress upon them at the time. I had once a young lady a month at my house, who had the singular faculty of dreaming ^{that} she had a sermon every night. And she usually told us the text, the heads & much of the discourse ^{at breakfast}. The preacher was sometimes one whom she knew & some times an utter stranger. But when she married she lost her gift. And, poor thing, she has since met with many things, which she never dreamed of.

Now for Mr. Campbell - His case is a strong proof of the power of habit. He would have been afraid to shorten his prayers, when the general voice of his people pronounced them too long. We know the Gospel too well to expect to be heard for his much speaking. I think very long prayers, more blameable, than long sermons. A peculiar attention is due when speaking to the Most High. And if the attention be overstrained by the length of the service, it is lost time to the Heaver. Weariness of mind in prayer, & the thought still returning, when will you have done, is worse than unpleasant, especially to persons of weak judgment, who charge their consciences with guilt, for the Speakers indiscretion.

The holiness of sinners & angels, which you seem to compare, differ not only in degree, but also in kind. A hare or a greyhound can run swiftly, but they cannot fly like an Eagle, nor had they been made to fly they would have had wings. We hope to be as the angels before long, but at present, in our compound state of Spirit & matter, the distinction between us & them, is no less real than that between birds & beasts. The holiness of a sinner, consists chiefly of low thoughts of self, & high thoughts of the Saviour. These will always be in proportion - The lower we appear ^{to} ourselves, the more highly we shall esteem him. The more his glory strikes us, the more we shall sink in our own eyes. Could you find the man who has most of these properties, you would find the most holy man upon Earth. And as we advance in these, we shall in the same degree attain to every thing else that properly belongs to Holiness. Why are we liable to any yet for idle frolics, & other evil tempers? but because we think too highly of ourselves, & suppose we are not treated as we ought to be. Why are we so apt to be captivated by the gay games of the world? but because we are so faintly impressed with a real sense of the excellency of Jesus. We say indeed that his loving kindness is better than life, but if we really &

and fully thought so, hard things would be easy, & bitter sweet, & there would be no longer room for impatience or discontent in our hearts. But alas! all within us, & all around us is defective & polluted!

The death of Mr. Young, & of many others who are daily ^{are} removed, are encouragements to us ^{to} trust the Lord when our call shall come. They who are born of God, belong to his heavenly Kingdom. They who are not, belong, at least for the present, to the Kingdom of the Wicked One. Neither the one nor the other, while in the body can have a full perception of what awaits them. But at the approach of Death, the respective scenes begin to open. The souls dark cottage tatters & decays.

Let in new light thro' this ho —

It is not necessary to suppose that the Believer upon his dying bed, is strictly speaking better, than the Believer who are around him, listening with admiration to his words. But now ~~he~~ he stands upon the threshold of glory, he sees more, & therefore he can say more than he did formerly. And often the Impenitent Sinner before his departure has such discoveries as testify not only himself, but all who are about him. But what papers within the Curtains sit on to aspire abroad. We

We observe, that Christians who walk uprightly & humbly, generally express the same feelings when they come to die; or rather they give intimations of views & feelings which they could find no words to express.

I am very glad to hear that Mr. Gardiner (to whom my love) & his friends, are comfortably provided with a Minister. Give my love to Mr. Black, to the few whom I personally know, & to all who love the dear Jesus.

I thank the Lord for preserving you from falling in to the hole. My fall last winter, has convinced me, that I ought to be heedful to my steps. While we walk upon the ground, we should look down, as well as up words. The story of the Psittle & the Bullet I have heard told of one of Cromwells Soldiers. I think it is upon record in print.

I have seen Mr. W's alms paper, attested by Mr. Jones & another Minister. It gave me pleasure. I hope all his wounds & back tidings are now healed.

I could wish our Gracious King had some about him, who could better explain to him, the meaning of Antinomian. I suppose the King himself abuses to grant his pardon, upon the footing of his Mercy, & does not sell them. If Mr. Tyne whom wrote his letter from his heart, (& who can dis-trust a dying man) I can not doubt but he died well & happy.

Now I will tell you a story. I cannot call it an Anecdote, because it was in the News paper some years ago; but possibly you may not have heard it.

A German Prince travelling thro' France, visited the Arsenal at Toulon where the Gallies are kept. The Commandant as a compliment to his rank said, 'It was welcome to see any one Galley slave, whom he should choose to select. The Prince, willing to make the best use of this privilege, spoke to many of them in succession, enquiring why they were condemned to the Gallies? Injustice, Oppression False accusation, were the ^{only} causes they could assign they were all innocent & still awaiting. At last he came to one, who when asked the same question, answered to this effect. My Lord

Lord I have no reason to complain. I have been a ~~very~~ wretched desperate wretch. I have often desired to be broken alive upon the wheel. I account it a great Mercy that I am here. The Prince fix'd his eyes upon him, gave him a gentle blow upon the head, & said, You wretched wretch, it is a pity that you should be plac'd among so many honest men; by your ^{own} confession you are bad enough to corrupt them all, but you shall not stay with them another day. Then, turning to the officer, he said This is the Man, Sir, whom I wish to be released.

Was not this a wise decision? Must not all who hear the story, allow that the Man who was so sensible of his guilt, & so submissive to his punishment, was in all probability the most worthy of pardon, & the most likely not to abuse it? Tho' the ways of God & his thoughts are higher than ^{ours}, yet upon some occasions, & when their own concerns are not in question, Men, by their judgements, shew that they can form no just objections, to his.

I have gone thro' most of your unanswered sheets, but I have miscel'd one or two, & cannot just now find them. But I have done pretty well for once. This letter must pass for 2 or 3, & plead excuse for my silence a good while to come.

Think of me, if we live to y. 18 Dec. It stands first in the list of my memorable days. It calls one to the especial exercise of ~~prayer & praise~~ ^{humiliation & praise}. Not that the subject is out of my thoughts the year round. The Lord's goodness, & my own folly & ingratitude, during a course of forty years, suggest matters for daily meditation. The four years since my bereavment, have been more free from sorrows & cares, than any former period of my life. And therefore I ought to number them among the happiest I have seen. Blessed be his name, who can make loss gains, & cause comforts to spring from our crosses. For the rest, the Lord deals so bountifully with me, that I have not a wish to form. I have health, peace, plenty, friends, acceptance, I can still preach, & have reason to hope I am in a measure useful. I am very happy in domestic life, so that I still find Home is Home. What can I desire more? Tho' merry, I know & feel that the world can offer nothing to amend my situation. The lines are fallen to me in a pleasant place. He who brought me out of the house of bondage in Africa, has dealt with me in the wilderness! How wonderfully has he led me about, & kept me as the pupil of his eye!

But I am drawing near 70, & cannot be far from Jordan. I am at present willing to live; & I trust, when the time comes, the Lord will make me willing to die. It is easy to talk of Death while he is at a distance. But I rely upon his promise of strength according to the day, to enable me to meet him with composure. Let us pray for grace to live to day, & to leave to morrow to his wise disposal.

I commend you to his blessing. Miss Carlett presents her best wishes,

I am Your affectionate friend

John Newton

N.B. 28 Nov. 94