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# TWENTY-FIVE LETTERS,

HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED,

OF THE

REV. JOHN NEWTON,

RECTOR OF OLNEY AND ST MARY, WOOLNOTH, LONDON.

FROM THE YEARS 1757 TO 1779.

“ Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name.”—*Malachi* iii. 16.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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IT is hoped that the honoured name of JOHN NEWTON, may insure a favourable reception for the small Volume of hitherto unpublished Letters, now presented to the Public. To those who are already familiar with his writings, the following Letters must be welcome; for they exhibit much of that searching knowledge of the human heart, which his great natural ability, and large Christian experience, enabled him to turn to such good account, in his familiar correspondence. Letter-writing with him, was no idle pastime: it was evidently his chief aim, in this mode of intercourse with his fellow-creatures, to make his letters a means of improvement and edification,—the medium for expressing his own sincere and undisguised opinions, and for suggesting to the minds of his correspondents those views and principles, which might most contribute to strengthen, or to comfort them in their Christian warfare. To do this well requires a great combination of

qualities ; and these Newton eminently possessed. He was affectionate, candid, and sincere,—entirely free from that narrowness of mind which starts from every slight difference of opinion as dangerous to religion ; and yet so strong in his own faith, and so strict in his own practice, as to give him the power, as well as the right, to speak as one having authority. Perhaps no one ever wrote so many letters exclusively on religious topics, and yet preserved so much freshness and vigour both of thought and expression. He does not deal in vague generalities, but in speaking of the evil of the human heart, he goes directly to his own case, and reasoning from it, says boldly, *I*—not *we*. His descriptions of the misery of sin have, therefore, all the interest of a personal narrative, and they thus speak home to the consciences of others much more powerfully, than if they were given as the general, not the individual, experience, of a regenerated mind. His letters may indeed be said to unite the advantages of the essay, and the private diary, while they are free from the dulness of the former, and from the exaggeration of feeling which frequently disfigures the latter. They speak from the heart, to the heart, in a very remarkable degree, so that no one can ever feel for a moment that he is trifling

with his subject, or that he prescribes to others what he has not practically felt to be *the truth* in his own experience. It is this singleness of aim and perfect truthfulness of character, which make his writings (open them when and where you may) so attractive and so permanently useful. They breathe no sectarian spirit; they are applicable to all times, and all seasons; and it is most refreshing, in these days of fierce contention even amongst real Christians, to meet with sentiments so truly enlightened, so candid, and so pious, as the following, in a volume of his already published letters:—"Observation and experience contribute, by the grace of God, gradually to soften and sweeten our spirits, but then there will always be ground for mutual forbearance and mutual forgiveness on this head. I am not, indeed, an advocate for that indifference and lukewarmness to the truths of God, which seem to constitute the candour many plead for in the present day. But while I desire to hold fast the sound doctrines of the Gospel towards the persons of my fellow-creatures, I wish to exercise all moderation and benevolence. Protestants or Papists, Socinians or Deists, Jews, Samaritans, or Mahometans—all are my neighbours;—they have all a claim upon me for the common offices

of humanity.' As to religion, they cannot all be right; nor may I compliment them, by allowing the differences between us are but trivial, when I believe, and know, they are important; but I am not to expect them to see with my eyes. I am deeply convinced of the truth of John Baptist's aphorism (John iii. 27)—'A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.' I well know, that the little measure of knowledge I have obtained in the things of God has not been owing to my own wisdom and docility, but to his goodness; nor did I get it all at once,—he has been pleased to exercise much patience and long-suffering towards me for about twenty-seven years past, since he first gave me a desire of learning from himself. He has graciously accommodated himself to my weakness, borne with my mistakes, and helped me through innumerable prejudices, which, but for his mercy, would have been insuperable hindrances. I have, therefore, no right to be angry, impatient, or censorious, especially as I have still much to learn, and am so poorly influenced by what I seem to know. I am weary of controversies and disputes, and desire to chuse for myself, and to point out to others, Mary's part—to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his words; and blessed be his name, so far

as I have believed in him, I am favoured with a comfortable certainty. I know whom I have believed, and am no longer tossed about by the various winds and tides of opinions by which I see many are dashed one against the other ; but I cannot, I must not, I dare not contend ; only, as a witness for God, I am ready to bear my simple testimony to what I have known of his truth, whenever I am properly called to it."

Natural strength and vigour of intellect, were combined in Newton with great tenderness of conscience. What he had once been, and how much had been forgiven to him, never seemed long absent from his mind ; and so far from his feeling it to be a matter of indifference to him, in his converted state, how the early years of life had been spent, it never ceased to throw a shade of deep sorrow over his whole Christian course, that he had passed his youth in that practical Atheism, which he felt, indeed, to be forgiven by the Saviour whom he loved, but for which, even to his latest hour, he could not forgive himself. His expressions of self-abasement were very strong, and very often repeated throughout his correspondence, and especially in the following Letters. Had there been the slightest insincerity in his character, he might have been suspected of

dwelling too much on this part of his personal history ; but with him no one can doubt for a moment, that “ out of the abundance of the heart the mouth spoke ;” and on this subject we find the following ingenuous confession made, in writing to a friend, in the third volume of his works : — “ I take it for granted that they are the most excellent Christians who are most abased in their own eyes ; but, lest you should think that I am something, because I can say so many humiliating things of myself, I must prevent your overrating me, by assuring you, that my confessions rather express what I know I ought to think of myself, than what I actually do.” Nothing can be more characteristic of the man than this sentence ; and if, as the excellent Mr Adams says in his *Private Thoughts*, “ Humility is, knowing that we are not humble,” Newton had attained to a high degree of this Christian grace. This is not only to be observed in his deep self-knowledge with regard to the deceitfulness of the human heart, even in holy things ; it is also strikingly exhibited in the candid and charitable view he invariably takes, of the differences of opinion among Christians. He entered the Church from conviction, but he continued to maintain the same friendly intercourse with Dissenters to the end of his life, and

he was able to rejoice in the good done by others, without, and within, the pale of the Church of England, in a spirit which showed he cared more for the pearl of great price, than for the framework in which it was set. On his taking up his residence in London, he thus writes to Mr S— concerning his manner of preaching :—

“ My inclination and turn leads me chiefly to insist on those things in which all who are taught of God agree ; and my endeavour is, to persuade them to love one another, to bear with one another, to avoid disputes, and, if they must strive, to let their strife and emulation be, who shall most express the life of the Son of God in their temper and conduct. I preach my own sentiments plainly, but peaceably, and directly oppose no one. Accordingly, Churchmen and Dissenters, Calvinists and Arminians, Methodists and Moravians, now and then, I believe, Papists and Quakers, sit quietly to hear me. I can readily adopt No Popery for my motto ; but Popery with me has a very extensive sense. I dislike it whether it be on a throne, as at Rome ; or upon a bench, or at a board, as sometimes in London. Whoever wants to confine me to follow his sentiments, whether as to doctrine or order, is so far a Papist. Whoever encourages me to read the Scriptures



and to pray for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and then will let me follow the light the Lord gives me, without being angry with me, because I cannot, or will not, see with his eyes, nor wear his shoes, is a consistent Protestant. The depravity of human nature—the Deity of the Saviour—the influences of the Holy Spirit—a separation from the world—and a devotedness to God,—these are principles which I deem fundamental ; and though I would love and serve all mankind, I can have no religious union or communion with those who deny them : but whether a surplice or band be the fittest distinction of a minister,—whether he be the best ordained, by the laying on, or the holding up of hands,—whether water baptism should be administered by a spoonful, or a tubful, or in a river, in any river, or in Jordan (as Constantine thought)—are to me points of no great importance. I will go farther : though a man does not accord with my views of election, yet, if he gives me good evidence that he is effectually called of God, he is my brother ; though he seems afraid of the doctrine of final perseverance, yet, if grace enables him to persevere, he is my brother still. If he loves Jesus, I will love him, whatever hard name he may be called by, and whatever incidental mistakes I may think he holds. His dif-

fering from me will not always prove him to be wrong, except I am infallible myself." \*

The following Letters are addressed to a father and son, of the name of Jones, who were highly respected merchants at Hull. They were members of the Independent Church—the denomination of Christians which Newton had once intended to unite himself with, as he fully states in his admirable letters, entitled “Apologia,” addressed to a Dissenting minister. It would appear from some of the letters, that the elder Mr Jones was not without naturally strong prepossessions in favour of his own Church communion, and we may easily suppose that it must have been no small trial to him, to have lost such a support as Newton would have been ; but it is most pleasing to observe that it made no change in their friendship. Newton never attempts to combat the prejudices of his old friend, but continues to write to him, and to regard him, as the faithful and tried servant of their common Master, with all the respectful affection of one who felt himself to be younger in the Christian race than he whom he addressed, and who desired to learn from, rather than to teach, one who had walked with God from youth to age, and who was now calmly

\* Works, vol. xi., p. 213.

waiting his summons to his eternal home. The manner in which he congratulates his old friend on being so near the end of his race, would be indeed startling to those who have been accustomed to attach gloom to the contemplation of death ; but in this instance, it marks the perfect understanding that existed between these soldiers of Christ, who felt even to the last the strife, and the conflict of their high calling, but who, "fighting manfully under Christ's banner," were enabled to delight in the frequent contemplation of that "rest which remaineth for the people of God."— In connection with Newton's friendship, it may not be uninteresting to the reader of this little volume, to hear of the singularly peaceful death of the elder Mr Jones. It well became a life of such unpretending and consistent piety as his. His family were all assembled at family worship, one of his sons officiating as chaplain, when a change was observed to come over his features ; and, on going up to him, they found that his "spirit had returned to God who gave it."

It is impossible to read so many letters with the date of Olney attached to them, without being reminded of that great and good poet, who owed so many of his happiest hours, after his first establishment there, to the society and friendship

of Newton. It is seldom, indeed, that one small town has been able to boast of two such inhabitants at one time,—of two men whose writings still remain as powerful to uphold truth, and to denounce evil; as when they came fresh from the renewed hearts of the poet and the pastor, whose different gifts were made so singularly instrumental in rousing the times in which they lived, to faith, hope, and charity. It has often been thought, and said, by the admirers of Cowper, that Newton had been injudicious in his friendship; and that, from a want of comprehension of the peculiarly sensitive character of the poet, the mode of life they led at Olney, had been one cause of the recurrence of Cowper's illness. This is not the fitting place to enter upon this question, and it would not have been alluded to, except as a sort of apology for introducing into this preface, a very affectionate memorial of the feelings of Newton towards his gifted friend. This little poem has already appeared in print, but it does not appear to be so generally known, as to make its insertion here altogether useless. To those who love Cowper and reverence Newton,—and we know that they are not few, even in these stirring and stormy times,—any record of such a friendship as theirs must be welcome.

## LINES ON COWPER.

BY NEWTON.

“ For twelve years we were seldom separated, when at home, and awake. The first six I passed in daily admiring, and striving to imitate; the last six, I walked pensively with him in the valley of the shadow of death.”

Strangers we were, and sojourners; our home  
A world to sin, and death, and sorrow known:  
Yet known to *hope*,—for there the Son of God  
Had left His blessing when that world he trod:  
Blessings unnumber'd had his hand bestow'd,  
And one was—friendship on the pilgrim's road.

I had a friend beloved; and well we knew  
Union of heart, confiding, fond, and true.  
We dwelt together, and I watch'd him still  
An untired pilgrim toward the heavenly hill,—  
A soldier, 'mid a troop of hostile foes,—  
A Christian, finding 'neath the cross repose.  
I watch'd him, and admired, when lowly bent,  
He owned the cup of grief in mercy sent;  
For he had watch'd earth's treasures fade away,  
And sought in God his refuge and his stay.

I heard him, and admired, for he could bring  
From his soft harp such strains as angels sing,—  
Could tell of free salvation, grace, and love,  
Till angels listen'd from their home above.  
I woke my lyre to join his rapturous strain—  
We sang together of the Lamb once slain.

Thus passed our life away. The sun had shone  
Till years (as mortals call them) six were gone ;  
Then (as eternal wisdom will'd) a change  
Came o'er the scene—mysterious, awful strange !  
Yes, he *was* changed ! no more his grateful song  
Proclaim'd him happier than the day was long ;  
No more his music-wakening hand was flung  
O'er earthly lyre, with heaven's own amaranths hung.  
How shall I tell the tale ? he knows not here,  
The sigh of anguish, nor the pang of fear ;  
No longer dwells in frame of clay confined  
That emanation from the eternal mind.

My friend, I watch'd thee, when that earthly frame  
Encircled (union strange) the ethereal flame,  
And there were hidden sufferings, that no eye  
Of skill'd and kind physician could descry ;  
And there were doubts, and fears, and terrors given,  
Till peace on earth was gone, and hope of heaven.

My friend, I watch'd thee treading day by day  
Through the dim valley of death's shadowy way.  
Did I not walk with thee ? Did I not turn  
From brighter scenes these mysteries to learn,

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When thou didst mourn the loss of heavenly grace,  
And deem that God had turned away his face ?  
*That could not be ; His oath was firmly taken—*  
“ My people shall not, cannot be forsaken ;  
Their earthly sorrows make them doubt my love,  
They will not doubt it, in my heaven above.”

**THE SUPPOSED MEETING IN HEAVEN.**

My friend, my friend ! and have we met again,  
Far from the home of woe, the home of men ;  
And hast thou taken thy glad harp once more,  
Twined with far lovelier wreaths than e'er before ;  
And is thy strain more joyous and more loud,  
While circle round thee heaven's attentive crowd ?

Oh ! let thy memory wake ! I told thee so ;  
I told thee thus would end thy heaviest woe ;  
I told thee that thy God would bring thee here,  
And God's own hand would wipe away thy tear ;  
While I should claim a mansion by thy side :  
I told thee so—for our Emmanuel died.

# LETTERS.

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TO MR ROBERT JONES.

*Liverpool, 17th March 1757.*

DEAR SIR,—Your late obliging letter deserves an early acknowledgment, and calls upon me to improve, to the utmost of my power, a correspondence so agreeable and advantageous. I thankfully accept your terms; and as I shall always be glad of your farther favours, so, when opportunity and disposition suits, I shall write without either ceremony or apology; for I think time, amongst Christians especially, is too precious to be wasted on forms.

I would be thankful if the Lord blessed those hints I offered you (relating to the happy change which, I trust, passed upon your son) as a means of comfort to you, or any concerned therein. It is an honour I am utterly unworthy of. May the praise be His, both for the hopes He has given



us in the matter, and for the opportunities His providence afforded, that the knowledge of it might reach you for your comfort under so trying a dispensation.

The subject of your letter will, I hope, be useful to me. I stand in need of continual helps, admonitions, and encouragements; and, blessed be God, I am not wholly without them. Though the power of the Gospel in this place, either in ordinances or conferences, is very short of what I have been partaker of in London, yet I cannot complain that I am (as you think yourself) wholly in a barren land. We have the root of the matter amongst us, if not that rich variety of gifts which some are favoured with; and the Lord has indulged me with the correspondence of some of his dear children and honoured servants, from whom I am separated in the flesh: and I can say with Bishop Leighton, that I know not so good news from any quarter of the world as from a fellow-traveller heavenwards—none so interesting, none so agreeable. I have likewise a tolerable collection of the writings of those who, having been once encompassed with the same temptations, and subject to the same infirmities, with myself, have left their record behind them, that God is faithful to his word. Some of these set

before me the riches of the unchangeable covenant of grace ; some urge me to aim at a conversation suitable to my profession ; some point out the dangers and evils that beset my path ; some assist my meditations on that crown of life which the Lord has reserved in a better world for those whom his grace enables to continue faithful to the end ;—and something of all these important points the Lord has given me to know experimentally for myself. What could have been done for me that the Lord has not done ? yet still I am a cumberer of the ground ; I am, by grace, kept from such sins as would dishonour my calling openly, and stumble my brethren, but the wickedness of my heart is amazing. I may especially mention three sins most unsuitable to men in general, but still more to believers, and, above all believers, most unsuitable to me,—I mean pride, ingratitude, and insensibility. The instances in which the two former discover themselves are more in number than the hairs of my head ; yet I am so much under the power of the third, that, for the most part, I sit still as if nothing were the matter. Thus much for the dark side. Blessed be God, amidst so many causes of mourning in myself, it is still my duty and my privilege to rejoice in the Lord : in him

I have righteousness and strength, pardon and peace. I have sinned—I sin continually—but Christ has died, and for ever lives, as my Redeemer, Priest, Advocate, and King. And though my transgressions and corruptions, my temptations and my enemies, are very many and very prevalent, the Lord, in whom I trust, is more and mightier than all that is against me. From this consideration I would adopt your inference, “What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” It is to be lamented that any persons should so mistake the doctrine of free unchangeable grace, as to imagine it has a tendency to introduce licentiousness; but much more to be lamented, if a real believer should give occasion to such a reproach by his remiss, careless, or worldly behaviour. I hope I do in my heart detest and abhor the thought of continuing in sin, that grace may abound, but I fear my practice condemns me of it; for sure there are many who are not favoured with such a view of God’s unchangeable love as I am, who walk in heaviness, and darkness, and fear, and yet are more zealous, humble, and sensible,—more abounding in good works, more impressed with a sense of sin, and more careful in redeeming time than I am. My path lies between two

dangerous extremes—legality and presumption ; and I am continually inclined to one or the other, according to the difference of my frames. Thus I am made up of contradictions. \* \* \* \* \* I have been rejoiced to hear of the amendment in your house, and that Mrs Jones' health is in some measure restored. We all in our turns experience the tender mercy of the Lord : though he will not let us want trials either for the exercise and growth of our faith, or the purging and quickening of our hearts, yet he considers our frame, he remembers that we are but dust ;—therefore he will not suffer us ordinarily to have sorrow upon sorrow, to be swallowed up with grief, but tempers our experience, so that our song must be of judgment and mercy all our days. Or if at any time he seems to lay more than usual upon us, we have his promise, that as our day is so our strength shall be ; and those who have lived longest can best declare, that he is not unmindful of his word, upon which he has caused us to hope.

I began this letter about a fortnight since, but was interrupted, and one way or other prevented writing till now, and even now I have constrained myself to write any thing, rather than be longer silent. I beg a frequent remembrance in your

prayers, and hope I shall not be unmindful of you. Mrs Newton desires her respects. We should be glad to see you again in Liverpool, if the Lord should, in his providence, give you a more favourable call here than your last was ; but there is a better world, where, after a few more years or days of vanity, we trust to meet to part no more. I commend you to God and the word of his grace, beseeching the Lord to have you in his continual keeping, to favour you with much of his presence here, and, when he shall call you hence, to give you the faith of Abraham, that you may cheerfully follow him into that unknown land, where all old things shall be done away.—I am, &c.

TO MR JOSIAH JONES.

*Liverpool, 3d August 1757.*

DEAR SIR,—I am greatly obliged for your late favour, and shall always be glad to cultivate so agreeable a correspondence. In order to make it both pleasant and profitable on both sides, I take the liberty to propose that all constraint and ceremony may be mutually laid aside, that each of us shall write freely whenever opportunity and temper are most suitable, without taking pains

to apologize either for too seldom or too often. Above all, let us look up to the Lord in the beginning of every action, that we may accustom ourselves never to think, speak, or act, or write, as of ourselves, but to consider ourselves as servants, as priests, as temples, of the living God. This is the way to find comfort in our own hearts in every employment, as well as to receive wisdom and power, to become useful to others.

I congratulate you on those warm desires you express after the things of God. May you find, as surely you will, by growing experience, that the Lord has never commanded or suffered his children to seek his face in vain. As to the difficulties and snares you complain of, my poor advice is in the words of Hezekiah, *Answer them not*,—think them not worthy a complaint. I would recommend to you such considerations as these:—Be persuaded that there is no possible way of life in this world without snares and difficulties of some kind or other. *2dly*, Be assured that the hand and providence of God is as actually and immediately concerned in fixing the circumstances and manner of your life and abode, as in fixing the sun in the firmament. He knows what you are, your strength, temper, and constitution; and he knows, and has already fixed, the

way in which he will have you glorify him ; and every complaint we give way to is, in effect, though our hearts are blind and easily imposed on, no less than preferring our own will and wisdom to his. *3dly*, There is nothing in circumstances of any kind, strictly speaking, as such, that can hinder us at all in our Christian course. As nothing from without entering in can defile a man, so nothing from without can hinder him. It is out of the heart proceed unbelief, pride, self-will, vanity, &c., and these are the things that prove our hindrances. For my own part, I have often lost the improvement of present opportunities, and neglected present duty, by letting my thoughts run upon what I would be, and how I would act in some other station, to which it was quite unlikely, and sometimes impossible, I should ever be called. But I hope I now begin to see the folly of this. My present way is the best way, all things considered, in which I could be fixed ; and those things I am apt to call difficulties and hindrances, are only the appointments of Divine wisdom to exercise, strengthen, and manifest my graces. If there were no corruptions within, nor temptations without, many Scripture exhortations to watchfulness and prayer would lose their significancy. If we were to meet with no opposi-

tion, reproach, or ill usage on account of our profession, it would be needless to call us to consider Him, who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. If all things were agreeable and smooth, according to our own fond desires, the graces of gentleness, forbearance, patience, long-suffering, meekness, and resignation, would have no place. It is often as true in spirituals as in temporals. We know not what we ask. Let us rather expect things disagreeable to the flesh, remembering that even our Lord pleased not himself. Let us often remember how our Christian life is described in Scripture ; it is called a trial, a race, a wrestling, a warfare, a crucifixion, a death,—all terms importing violence and suffering. Let us, therefore, cheerfully take up our cross daily, and follow our Lord in the way of self-denial, the way in which he walked himself, and which he has appointed expressly for us, and let us in this way cheerfully commit our souls to him as to a faithful and compassionate Saviour, who beholds all our strugglings, and will never suffer us to be tempted above what we are, or shall be enabled to bear.

I am not (at present, at least) explaining my idea of the life of faith,—what it is to act under the continual apprehension of Him who is in-



visible,—to live in the world as being not of the world,—to be free from fear in the greatest apparent dangers, and to enjoy communion with God in the midst of the greatest hurries. I am no advocate for the doctrine of absolute perfection; but surely there are degrees of perfection attainable even here, which the generality of Christians are little aware of. We must give all the glory of our whole salvation to the Lord alone. We are not of ourselves sufficient to think a good thought, to perform the smallest duty, or to resist the least temptation,—this we should always bear in mind. But we should consider, likewise, that diligence, watchfulness, and self-denial, are the means, in the use of which we are constantly to be found. For want of these, how often have I languished and gone mournfully, when the Lord has given me cause to go cheerfully.

I consider self-denial under these heads:—As it respects our own righteousness, our own wisdom, and our own wills. It is too often confined to the first, but surely a progress in self-denial of the other two, is worthy our highest and closest study. I must break off. May the Lord himself teach you effectually to do and to bear his will, and bring you at length to that glorious state, where sin and sorrow shall have no more

entrance. Mrs Newton joins me in respects to all your good family. I shall be glad to hear soon, and frequently, both from you and Mrs Jones.—I am, &c.

TO MR JOSIAH JONES.

*Liverpool, 6th December 1757.*

DEAR SIR,—It is now late in the evening, and I have a message from Mrs Jones, that she has a parcel to go to Hull to-morrow. This reminds me of my delay in answering your very obliging favour; and however short the notice, I cannot omit the opportunity. I rejoice with all my heart, at the happy account of your experience you have obliged me with. I trust the Lord, who has begun the good work, will carry it on by his grace, and at length perfect it in glory.

It is a high honour, and a singular privilege, that you have been called, so early in life, to devote your first-fruits and strength to his service. O may this consideration animate you with joy and gratitude! A gentleman with whom I am lately acquainted, and who has but lately tasted the goodness of the Lord, though he experiences much of that peace (which, arising from a sense of pardoning grace, passeth all understanding,) yet

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can hardly bear the reflection, that he lived more than forty years in the world to no purpose, or worse than none. You will happily escape the grief and trouble of so long a review; and I trust, if you are spared to see so many years, will be able to look back with a comfortable assurance, that you have not laboured in vain, nor spent your strength in vain.

Another peculiar blessing you are favoured with is, that you set out under the direction and encouragement of pious parents, who can confirm every promise they recommend to your hope, by their own experience of the faithfulness of the Lord, and can bear their testimony, that the good way in which they rejoice to see you setting out, is indeed a way of pleasantness and a path of peace. I may properly address you in the words of Solomon,—“Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not.” You have likewise their advice, which I see you make good use of, in that you seem prepared to expect a measure of difficulties and trials in your Christian course; for many persons who have not this advantage, rushing on in the warmth of their first zeal, before they have sat down to count the cost of their undertaking, have been greatly disconcerted and cast down upon the appearance of difficulties

which they were not aware of, and perhaps have gone on, weary and heavy laden for many years, before they could learn that none of the real disciples of Christ are exempted from a fellowship with him in sufferings. The Lord, who delivers us from the condemning and the commanding power of sin, could, with a word, and in a moment, totally free us from the being of it, and make us now, as we shall be hereafter, equal to the angels in holiness ; but since he is rather pleased to accomplish our deliverance gradually, we may be sure it is for wise and gracious ends, and because he knows how, and designs to overrule this remaining evil to the advancement of his glory. Something of his wisdom herein we can discern even now, but the view will be abundantly more bright and satisfactory when we are brought to see *face to face*. Hereby we see more of the evil of sin than we possibly could have done, if our sanctification were instantaneous and complete. We might know, indeed, that we obtained a great salvation ; but the extent and importance of it is best seen, by the warfare between the flesh and spirit which still subsists in us ;—if such things are done in a green tree, what would have been done in a dry ?—if now, after we have been sprinkled by the blood of Christ,

and enjoy a measure of divine grace, we yet feel such mournful effects from our own corruptions and our enemies' malice, we may thereby figure to ourselves what would have been the dreadful consequence, had we been for ever left to the full rage and influence of both. *2dly*, By our slips and falls, we learn a lesson of humility, the first and the last, the hardest, and the highest lesson, in the school of Christ. We often speak of our insufficiency and unworthiness, but we seldom understand aright the meaning of these words, but when we are forced to feel them true. *3dly*, Hereby Christ is made more precious to us when our insurmountable evils encompass us about like bees,—when we see them more in number than the hairs of our head ;—then, and then only, we are properly apprized both of the exceeding value and the absolute necessity of that better righteousness than our own, whereon our hope is founded. *4thly*, Hereby our faith is tried, exercised, manifested, and increased ;—we are called, like Abraham, “against hope to believe in hope ;” to believe that our numerous foes, which are now ready to ride over our heads, shall at length be bruised under our feet. If we consult with flesh and blood we cannot believe this now. But if it had been done at first, and at

once, these would have no room for the exercise of faith at all. It would then have been the object of sight. But in waiting for the accomplishment, when we see so many obstacles, the triumph of faith consists. *5thly*, In this method, the glory of the Divine attributes are more remarkably illustrated,—power, in supporting our weakness, faithfulness in bearing, mercy in pardoning our offences, and, especially, wisdom in baffling and confounding Satan, by those very things he intends for our destruction. Doubtless it must vex and astonish that restless enemy to see all his aims disappointed,—that his surprisals put us more on our guard; and that even our wounds prove, in the issue, an advantage, by urging us more earnestly and frequently to apply to our Great Physician, and his healing balm. It were easy to enlarge upon this head, but I have been too long. Let us only be careful to use this comfortable doctrine aright. We read of some who turn the grace of God into wantonness, and we know there are such in our days,—unhappy wretches, who make Christ the minister of sin. As Christians, we cannot do so. But we are renewed but in part. There is something within us (this corruption I have been speaking of) which can join with the devil in extracting poison from

the most precious and wholesome truths. Let us remember, that as it is the will of God, on his part, to put our enemies before us by little and little, it is likewise his will that we, on our part, do strive against them to the uttermost, and make no league with them—not the least of them—no, not for a moment.

The life of a Christian is a life of faith in the Son of God. He, undoubtedly, is the greatest Christian who most exemplifies, in his own practice, what is recorded in the Gospel, of the temper, converse, and actions of the holy, the harmless, and undefiled Jesus, and depends the most absolutely upon him, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The means by which we advance in this life are self-denial, watchfulness, prayer, and a patient waiting upon the Lord in all divine appointments. Pride, unbelief, and self-will are the great avenues (if I may so speak) by which the devil plays the temptations of the world upon us:—he is more cunning and active than we can conceive, and attacks different persons, and the same person at different times, in very different ways—sometimes by sap, sometimes by storm. We have need of the whole armour of God, and a continual eye to the Captain of our salvation. To

Him I recommend you, who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you blameless before his glorious presence with exceeding joy. Amen.

I hope you will favour me with a letter soon, and pray for—Yours, &c.

TO MR ROBERT JONES.

*Liverpool, 7th December 1757.*

DEAR SIR,—I hope you do not judge of the regard I have for your correspondence, by the length of time I take to answer your letters. I think I could not spend my time more agreeably, than in keeping up a punctual and quick intercourse with the many dear Christian friends the Lord has given me, with whom I have formerly had sweet converse in the things of God, in whose prayers I trust I have a share, and by whose writings my soul is so often refreshed and edified. (In all these respects, your acquaintance is especially valuable to me.) But my proper business abroad and at home, together with the incidental duties and circumstances of every day, engross me so much, that I cannot find time for this satisfaction. I find, indeed, that time is short; for though I generally rise early, it is often night before I should be aware of noon, were it not for the intervention of different meals which suc-



ceed each other so quick as though I were born but to eat, drink, talk, and sleep. Well, there is a time, or rather an eternity at hand, when we shall get above all these necessary impediments, when nothing shall either obstruct us in the course of our communion with God, or divert us from it.

All your friends here are greatly pleased and encouraged by the letters Mr Josiah has favoured us with. I sincerely congratulate you upon this event. If it is matter of joy to us, what must it be to you, to see the work of God so seasonably and graciously renewed, in your family,—to see the prayers and instructions you sowed on his account, year after year, now springing up all together in the fruits of faith and holiness. Here, too, you may perhaps perceive a ray of the Divine goodness and wisdom in the dispensation of last year, when the same stroke by which the Lord took one of your sons to himself, was made instrumental of good to another. In this sense, both life and death is ours in the persons of our relatives as well as our own :

Heaven gives us friends to bless the present scene, Resumes them, to prepare us for the next.

I hope, if the Lord spares you to see your little grandson grow up, you will have farther

matter of joy and praise in him. He promises a very happy disposition. That I never had children of my own, is perhaps the reason why I am not fond of them, as it is called, and cannot accommodate myself to their little ways so much as many do, and as I am sensible I ought; but there is something in him that breaks through all my coldness, and constrains me to take a particular notice of him.

We live here as you left us, in Christian peace and fellowship. I know not (as I write this at the watch-house, and have not your last favour by me) whether I informed you that Mr Whitford's settlement here is quite over. He is comfortably fixed at Bolton, his former place, and the Lord owns and honours him much. He and his people are soliciting ordination upon the independent plan, but I am sorry to find, that the having been made useful among the methodists, is, in the eyes of some good men, so great a blot, as requires long time, and much purgation, to wipe off. I hope you will bear with me if I differ in some lesser things from a judgment I so greatly respect. You mention in one of yours, that the spiritual stones must first be prepared, before the building can be properly undertaken; but, with submission, I apprehend a good work-

man would find sufficient employment for a while in this preparatory work, without attempting to build a church at all ; and while there are thirty thousand people in Liverpool, who do not, and cannot hear Mr Oulton, I cannot see what prejudice it could be, either to him or his people, if the Lord should please to send another, or even several, faithful labourers amongst us ; and though the Lord did not see fit to succeed our design with respect to Mr Whitford, I cannot, upon the maturest examination, repent of the pains I took in it, but am still ready to fall heartily in with any other prospect of the like kind. The great work which the Lord is carrying on in different parts of the land, in different and almost opposite ways, confirms me more and more, that it is my duty to own his hand wherever I see it, and to promote it to the utmost of my power, without greatly regarding those less essential points, in which the best of men have at all times been divided.

I have now your esteemed favour before me, and perceive I have run into a needless repetition. I shall, for the future, avoid the almost only point in which I am permitted to differ with you. I hope I am in some measure faithful to the measure of light I have received, and endeavour

to lie open to conviction. I dare not say I have no prejudice, but I may say that I do not willingly cherish any. Our gracious Master bears with all our mistakes and weakness, and upon this plea I hope to find forbearance from my brethren. Yet a little while, and that which is imperfect and in part shall be done away. Nothing that grieves, nothing that defiles, nothing that divides, shall ever have entrance into that triumphant Gospel Church.

Mrs Newton desires her respects. I commend you to God and the word of his grace, entreating the charitable continuance of your prayers and advice in behalf of—Dear Sir, yours, &c.

TO MR JOSIAH JONES.

*Liverpool, 12th April 1759.*

DEAR SIR,—Many of your letters to Mr Oulton and F—— I have read with pleasure. I have sincerely rejoiced on your account, and have put up my weak prayers on your behalf, that God may perfect what he has begun in you, and bring forth, with a glorious power, the fruit of those seeds of grace, which at present you complain are almost buried and lost in weakness; and I have good confidence in this matter, that it shall

be even according to your desire,—according, did I say, yea, exceeding abundant, beyond all you are at present able, either to ask or think. Fear not, only believe. I have read your scruples and considered them, but I shall not attempt to give them a particular answer. Shall I give you my advice,—I am not worthy to advise,—but I will tell you how it is with my own soul. If there was the least limitation in the blessed Gospel,—if the worst of sinners were excluded,—if the feeblest sincere desires were liable to be rejected, I must have lain down in despair long ago, and I must certainly do so after all, for I have no better plea yet than that which I began with (blessed be God, no better can be either needful or possible). When Satan, or my own unbelieving heart, attacks me with *ifs* and *buts*, I cannot reason much with them; if we come to particulars they have me at advantage; much of what they lay to my charge is too true; yea, more than all they can surmise would be my just desert,—but I deny this consequence. I am, it is true, a sinner; nay, one of the chief of sinners. I *was* a hardened, obstinate rebel; and now, I *am* a slothful, unprofitable servant. But when I consider the unbounded mercy of God,—the merits, sufferings, intercession, love, and power of

Christ,—the condescension, variety, extent, and unchangeableness of the Divine promises,—then, I say, no matter what I was, or what I am, provided only God has shown me the necessity of salvation, made me willing to be saved in his own way, and taught me to ask for those things which he has engaged to bestow. If these things are so, I say I have the truth and power of God on my side; either I, as well as less sinners, must be saved, or it would appear at the great day, that Christ was either not able, or not willing to make good his own promises. Excuse such a shocking expression,—but the case is really so,—unbelief flies in the face of all the Divine attributes, and, under the specious pretence of humility, robs God of his highest glory—the pardoning iniquity *freely* for his own name's sake. But then the doubt returns as to sincerity. The devil will allow these things are true to real believers, but how are you sure you are one: many have made false professions and fallen off at last: you cannot judge your own heart, and therefore may be deceived. I have been sometimes pinched at this; for though there are undoubted marks, and evidences, of a work of God laid down in the Scripture, it is not always easy to apply them, without falling into a legal temper, and then

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they can afford us no comfort. They are something like a dial, which will direct you with a glance when the sun shines, but are of no use at other times. When the Spirit of God shines into the heart, and witnesses with our spirits, then we can both distinguish the evidence, and trace the growth of our graces; but, alas! sin, like a thick cloud, often interposes; our sun withdraws, and what can we do? However, there is one mark which seldom fails. Had our Lord said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," and said no more, alas! what comfort would this have been to me, who am so full of impurity even in my solemn minutes; but he has stooped so low in compassion to me, to you, and to all that seek him, as to say, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Now, though I might question and scruple, whether I have any righteousness or no, yet, if I can be judge of any thing at all—if I can tell whether I am asleep or awake, hot or cold, in Liverpool, or in Yorkshire, so sure I am that God has inspired me with a hungering and thirsting, which nothing worldly can satisfy. This is the experience of every day, abroad or at home, alone or in company: I still feel a void. I feel that I want a

conformity to God, a sense of his presence and of his love, to make the happiest scenes of life agreeable to me. In proportion as these withdraw, or advance, I find myself more or less satisfied with myself, and every thing about me. Now, I can well remember when I had not these desires. I am sure I did not give them to myself, neither can they proceed from evil influence, because their direct tendency is, to destroy sin and promote holiness, therefore they must be of God; if so, they must be prevalent in the issue, or, as the promise runs, they shall be satisfied, for God is not like the unwise builder, who began a work at unawares, which he was not able to finish. No: His hands that laid the foundation must, and will, bring forth the top-stone with joy, and give us everlasting reason to cry, Grace, grace, unto it. God had promised to rebuild the second temple; he raised up Cyrus on purpose to set the work on foot; he sent his prophets to encourage the people: how many difficulties, stops, and oppositions, did that work meet with? yet it was accomplished in its appointed time.

Let us pray earnestly for a Gospel spirit. Nothing but the love, and mercy, and grace of God can subdue the power of sin. All hard thoughts of him weaken our hands, put out our eyes, and



deliver us bound into our enemies' hands. Love and confidence are inseparable. Never can we give ourselves wholly to God, and devote our all to his service, while we look on him as a hard Master, and are afraid he will have the advantage against us in the end. On the other hand, let us closely study, and carefully obey, his commands. Let us neither confound, nor divide what God has joined—faith and holiness. Gospel principles and legal practices promote each other. It is easy to dispute about words, but may you and I rather attend to things—follow the Lord so far as we know, and pray that we may know him more,—confess we have no strength of our own, but faithfully make use of what he imparts. Let us fight against all sin, and beware we do not, in any degree, make the grace of God an occasion of licentiousness; and if, in our continual conflicts with our many enemies, we are sometimes (too often) wounded, let us not sorrow as those who have no hope. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who knows our frame, and remembers we are but dust, and will shortly do that for us which we cannot for ourselves—bruise Satan under our feet.

Our little family is, through mercy, well, and joins in respects to all yours. Show you have

forgiven me by a speedy answer. May the grace and peace of God be with you.

TO MR ROBERT JONES.

*Liverpool, 20th February 1760.*

DEAR SIR,—Mrs Jones favoured me with a sight of Mr Josiah's letter, which I read with a mixture of concern and pleasure,—a real concern for the great loss you and your family have sustained, and a pleasure to observe the comfortable circumstances with which so heavy a trial was attended. Your sorrow is not like the sorrow of those who have no hope. With respect to yourself, you can consider the visitation as conducted by the hand of Divine wisdom, and Divine love ; you can number it amongst the “ all things,” which are appointed to work together for your good ; you can look forward to that bright approaching morning, when all shadows and darkness, all sorrows and trouble, shall flee away, and every source of mourning shall be dried up for ever. With respect to the subject of your just grief, you saw her (like Him in whom she trusted) victorious and triumphant in the greatest extremity ; you saw her depart in peace, and now you can see her no more in the flesh ; your faith

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can follow her into a better world, where she is rejoicing and adoring before the throne. Happy change, to be absent from the body and all its attendant pains and infirmities, and to be present, for ever present, with the Lord, the Fountain of life and joy. Yet, though these cheering reflections, and many more than I am able to suggest, are strong upon your mind, you cannot but feel your loss. The Lord Jesus, who was clothed with our flesh and blood, who was partaker in our infirmities, who knows whereof we are made, and still retains a sympathy with his suffering members, has not prescribed to us the vain insensibility of the Stoics; he allows our tears, and has sanctified them by his own example. When our grief is restrained within just limits, when it neither leads us to repine at His disposal, nor unfits us for His service, it is allowable and just; and an indifference to the strokes of His rod, is rather the effect of stupidity than grace. To prevent those who fear Him giving in to a sinful extreme in the matter, He has graciously promised us strength suitable to our day; and that, when our afflictions most abound, His grace and consolation shall much more abound. This has been the experience of thousands; I hope and trust it will be yours.

I mean not, therefore, to offer you motives of resignation and patience; you have them nearer at hand, and from a far superior source. I would only inform you of the sincere concern I take in your affliction, and that I offer my poor prayers to our common Lord, entreating him to enable you to bear this intimation of his will, in a manner suitable to that profession with which he has honoured you for so many years; to give you a full proof of all those consolatory truths with which you have attempted to comfort others in their affliction; and, when the appointed hour of your deliverance from these scenes of mortality shall arrive, to make the account of your dismissal as satisfactory and edifying to your surviving friends, as the purport of Mr Josiah's letter has been to us.

At the same time, I willingly embrace this opportunity, to renew a correspondence which, by my negligence, and to my great loss, has been too long interrupted. I will not trouble you with a longer letter at this time.—Mrs Newton joins me in respects and condolence.—I am, &c.

TO MR ROBERT JONES.

*Liverpool, 11th February 1762.*

DEAR SIR,—Will you still admit so uncertain

a correspondent, and once more excuse my long silence? Indeed, I love and honour you, though I have been so negligent,—have often reflected, with pleasure, on the short opportunity I enjoyed of your acquaintance, and commended you and yours, to the blessing of our Lord and Saviour.

Since my last my dispensations have been various, but in the main, peaceful and easy. The Lord is exceeding gracious unto me, though he is pleased, as yet, to overrule the earnest desire he has given to me, to serve him in the ministry. Yet the desire still remains. I have reason to believe He has bestowed upon me some measure of a gift for that exercise, which is at present confined within the walls of my own house. If He is pleased to open a door, and give me a clear call by His people and providence, I hope I shall gladly embrace it: till then, I desire to be satisfied with what He sees best for me, and to remember, that I am indeed utterly unworthy the high honour I have aimed at.

That I may not be wholly idle, I have entered upon a great undertaking,—to explain and illustrate all the Greek words in the New Testament, for the use chiefly of the unlearned, with critical and practical observations. In the course of the latter, I shall find opportunity to interweave what

my experience, observation, and reading may suggest, under the various topics of the Christian doctrine, and Christian life. I have gone through nearly the one half of my designs, and the specimens I have sent to several judicious and spiritual friends, have induced them to encourage me to proceed with a view to publication, of what I first began chiefly for my own improvement. If the Lord shall enable me to complete my plan, and permit it to come abroad, I suppose it will be a pretty large quarto, as the MS. will contain about 140 large sheets of close writing, 66 of which are finished. But, if health and opportunities should be continued as at present, I think it will be three years, at least, from this date, before it is fit for the press.

As to my experience, it runs mostly in an even thread. My consolations are not so abundant and powerful as, I believe, some of the children of God are favoured with, neither are my trials and temptations so great as many meet. The Lord, I hope, is leading me gradually to discover and abhor the evils of my own heart. I see myself a sinner that must perish for ever, without a Saviour; and blessed be his grace that I am enabled to see Jesus just such a Saviour as I need,—gracious, compassionate, faithful, and mighty to

save. I renounce and disclaim every other hope but Him; I believe (Lord, help thou my belief) the gracious promises He has made. He has given me to know something of His excellency; so that, though feeble, worthless, helpless in myself, in Him I have righteousness, strength, and peace. He keeps me from falling away from His truth in these dangerous times of error and apostasy, and I trust He will keep me even to the end. I have daily proof, how insufficient I am to keep myself: too often I wander and trifle. I sin against His goodness, and wrong my own soul, but I find Him a good Shepherd; He seeks me out, and brings me back, when I have foolishly given my enemies advantage against me. He is pleased, of His free mercy, to interpose on my behalf. He pours oil and wine into my wounds, and sets my feet again in the paths of peace. Oh! help me to praise Him. Come, dear Sir, and magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his glorious name together. I doubt not you can join with me in what I have said; nay, you have more to say, you are an older soldier; you have been long exercised in the field of battle, have stood many a brunt, and received many a deliverance. I know it affords you pleasure, and fills your heart and lips with praise, to look

back upon the way by which the Lord has led you so many years through this barren wilderness—how many comforts and blessings he has crowned you with—how he has prevented your fears, repaired your losses, and enabled you to rejoice in him, when creature comforts have proved empty cisterns, and baulked your hopes. Your long experience stands as a fair pillar, inscribed with the name Ebenezer; and when you *are*, as in a little time you may *hope to be*, dismissed from your labours and warfare, you will have much to say of the faithfulness and goodness of God, to encourage those around you to follow in your steps. May the Lord grant you a triumphant and glorious entrance into his rest, that your sun may set without a cloud, and that you may praise his name with your departing breath!

And if there is so much pleasure in looking back, what joy must it afford to look forward! I congratulate you, dear Sir, that you are so far on your journey and so near your Father's house. With you, most of the bitterness is past; a few steps more will put you in possession of all your hopes—will put a final period to all your sorrows and complaints. For my own part, I am too much a coward. I shrink at the thought of the evils awaiting the longer period of life that



may be, perhaps, reserved for me. I am ready to wish myself in your place, though I have, as yet, done nothing, suffered nothing, for Him who died and suffered so much for me. I am ashamed of the thought. Lord, make me willing to stay, and careful to improve my appointed space. The happy end, at the farthest, is not far off. I, likewise, shall be sent for in my turn. There, I trust, we shall meet again. Though it is not likely we shall see each other in the flesh, happy hour, blessed prospect, to be absent from the body, and all its attendant evils, and to be present, for ever present, with the Lord,—to see him as he is, without one interposing cloud, and to be like him, transformed at once into his complete resemblance, so to behold and imbibe his glory, as to shine forth like the sun in his kingdom, to have all tears wiped from our eyes, and to drink full draughts of the rivers of pleasure at his right hand! Lord, it is enough! Alas, what a wretch am I, if ever I complain again. Courage, dear Sir; let us comfort and animate each other with these words. Our Saviour is now absent, but he is absent on our behalf. He is pleading our cause, preparing us a place, and he will come again to take us unto himself.

I wish you a comfortable and suitable frame

in the solemnity of to-morrow. What causes of mourning, what causes of rejoicing have we!—Mrs Newton is well, and joins in respects. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

TO MR ROBERT JONES.

*Liverpool, 28th May 1762.*

DEAR SIR,—I am much obliged to you for your kind and early answer to my last, which is much more than I deserved. I greatly esteem your correspondence, and hope I shall no more lose the benefit of it by my own remissness.

Mr Walley read me a part of yours to him. I rejoice to hear that it is so well with you, that you are waiting for the full salvation of God, and do assuredly know in whom you have believed,—thus the promise is fulfilled, “And even to old age I am He.” May His love sweeten the remaining part of your journey; and as you draw nearer to the glory which shall soon be revealed, may your foretastes be still sweeter, and your prospects brighter and more prominent.

I thank you for your caution and advice, with respect to the proper plan of ministerial service. I have often thought upon this point, and examined it, I hope, with some degree of

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attention ; and it is most likely, that if ever the Lord permits me to enter on his public service, it will be in a way which you would not disapprove. I do give the preference to that Church order which is generally called Independent, on many accounts, but cannot, I confess, think it so absolutely necessary as you seem to do. A Gospel Church, constituted on all points upon the Apostolic model, is, I apprehend, a desideratum not yet to be met with. I allow the expedience of coming as near to it as conveniently may be, and being much upon our guard against the inventions or imposition of men. But the glory of a Gospel Church consists, as I apprehend, not in having such a particular number of officers chosen in a certain manner, and distinguished by certain names, but in the power and presence of the Spirit of Christ, witnessing to his own people and ordinances. That is, in my judgment, a glorious Church, whether congregational or parochial, where the minister is lively, spiritual, and exemplary ; where the Gospel is preached with earnestness and in purity ; where the people walk in unity and brotherly love, have a quick appetite and savour for all the means of grace, and adorn the Gospel they profess, by humble, cheerful, universal obedience, not conforming themselves to

a vain world, but shining as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. With such a Church, however outwardly constituted, I could cordially join ; and where this life and spirituality was greatly wanting, I could not be satisfied with the most exact and complete scheme in outward things. I have read many pieces of Dr Owen, particularly his book on the Constitution and Order of a Gospel Church, or to that purpose. I greatly esteem his writings, and desire to search for the truth daily, being sensible, in some measure, of my ignorance, and how prone we are to be biassed by prejudices, and prepossessions. I would gladly improve your excellent advice to follow him, and, indeed, all the Lord's servants, so far as I find he or they follow the Lord, and to follow neither him nor any other farther than this. I must not, nor I need not, call any man master ; for one is my master, even Christ. I desire to pray for the teaching of his Spirit, that I may understand his Word, and for the power of his grace, to subdue my stubborn will, that I may not dispute it, nor set up my own wisdom against his ; and I humbly trust his promise, that in his own way and time he will lead me into all necessary truth ; and for this I beg the continuance of your prayers and advice.

I sympathize with you in your painful bodily affliction ; but, oh ! what comfort to consider, that all our concerns, even the minutest, are under the care of infinite wisdom and love.—Have you tried the electrical machine ? . . . .

Oh, happy hour, when we shall attain to that happy land, where the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick ; pain, and sorrow, and sin shall be for ever excluded ; and mortality, with all its connections, be swallowed up in endless life ;—there the Lord himself shall wipe away all our tears ! This expected promised period is drawing nearer every moment,—the interval is short,—every throbbing pulse beats a sharp moment of the pain away, and the last stroke will come. We are directed to comfort one another with these and the like thoughts. Afflictions are the pathway to glory ; and, though not joyous but grievous to the outward man, they bear a precious fruit ; they are light and momentary, in comparison of what we have justly deserved, and in comparison of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory to which they lead. We are, likewise, sure that our strength shall be proportioned to our trials. We have a permission, yea, a command, to call upon our God in the day of trouble ; we have a promise that he will be with us in it, and deliver us ;

from it. Farther, by these things we have the honour of being made conformable to our Saviour; and as sure as we suffer with him, and for him here, we shall reign with him for ever. We have reason, therefore, to rejoice evermore,—to give thanks in every thing, even in all our tribulations, since, by these, our graces are strengthened and our God honoured. By these we are taught more of the sweetness and the certainty of the promise than we could otherwise know, and are quickened to watchfulness and prayer, and to have our hopes and affections unfixed from the creature, and centred upon the Lord, the only proper object.—I am, &c.

TO MR JOSIAH JONES.

*Edmond Street, Liverpool, 2d August 1762.*

DEAR SIR,—Mr Hunter let me see a letter from you lately, in which you express a willingness that our correspondence should be revived. I readily accept the proposal, and shall be very glad to exchange letters with you as in time past.

Though I have none of yours to answer, I have at times seen several from you to him, and with pleasure observe that you have received grace to persevere in waiting upon the Lord. Too

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many there are, who make a warm profession for a while, but at length either stop short or turn back. If you and I, my friend, are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul, we have reason to ascribe the difference to the free grace and power of our God, and not to any wisdom or excellency in ourselves more than others; for surely there is in us, likewise, an evil heart of unbelief, that frequently tempts us to depart from the living God. Indeed, we are in ourselves so weak, helpless, and careless, and the snares, temptations, and enemies around us so many and dangerous, that if the Lord did not keep us night and day, and renew us every hour, we should wander, and faint, and die in the wilderness, and never attain to the promised land. What reason, then, have we to rejoice that the Lord, the God of truth, power, and love, vouchsafes to be our Shepherd.

I have passed through many exercises since I last wrote to you. I trust the issue of them all has been, to give me a farther conviction of my nothingness, and a more endearing and practical sense of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. I trust the great desire of my soul is that He may be all in all to me, that my whole dependence, love, and aim may centre in

Him alone ; and to this point I believe the Lord is leading me, though often by a way which I know not, and at which, like the murmuring Israelites of old, I am ready to repine. I find the principle of self-love and self-seeking is far from being extinct in me, but I hope it is weakened ; and though there is that in me which is prone to seek great things and smooth things, I hope it is opposed by a better principle of the Lord's planting, which is well pleased that His wise and holy will should take place in all things. Thus, my life is a warfare. I am often wounded, —sometimes drooping,—sometimes almost cast down ; but, blessed be the Lord, I am not destroyed. The Lord secretly and seasonably interposes in my behalf, and gives me experience of that gracious promise—(Ezekiel xxxiv. 16)—“ I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick.” At times I am weary of the conflict, and desirous to depart that I may sin and sorrow no more ; but that word, “ My grace is sufficient for thee,” encourages me to wait the Lord's time. What is before me I know not, but he knows it well, and he likewise knows my weakness, and how to proportion my trials and his supports, that I shall



not be overpowered, but, in the end, come off more than a conqueror through Him that has loved me.

In general, I find the way of duty is the way of safety and comfort. When I have a relish and diligence in the use of the means of grace, the enemy can seldom get advantage of me, especially when my heart is inclined to frequency and fervency in secret prayer. When I have the spirit of prayer every thing else is easy, but it is strange to say, how often my greatest privilege is my great bondage; and when this is amiss, I get little refreshment in any other exercise,—reading, conference, hearing, and even speaking myself of the things of God (for I have a little weekly lecture in my own family), often leave me dry and unimpressed, but I believe my winter, as well as my summer seasons, have this use and subserviency, to carry on the Lord's work in my heart. By these things I feel my own insufficiency, the total depravity of my nature, and see more cause to rejoice in the knowledge of a Saviour, who is able to save to the uttermost. I bless God for that word, uttermost!

I have endeavoured to give you a brief and artless picture of my mind, to engage your confidence, and to invite you to a return in the same way.

You, I doubt not, have your peculiar trials, and fears, and supports, likewise; and a communication of these things (within a certain degree, which prudence must direct) is, I believe, one of the most proper subjects of Christian correspondence. May I not now, at least, expect to hear from you?—Mrs Newton joins me in respects to you and your father, whom I greatly love and honour. May the Lord bless and keep you in his heavenly kingdom.—I am, for His sake, &c.

TO MR JOSIAH JONES.

*Liverpool, 1st November 1762.*

DEAR SIR,—The great encouragement to Christian communication either by word or letter, is to know and remember that the Lord is near, and that he is able to do that for us, and by us, which we cannot do for ourselves, or for each other. When the two disciples were exchanging complaints in their walk to Emmaus, Jesus, unexpected and unperceived, joined in their conference, and they soon found the effect. Their fears were dispersed, and their hearts burnt within them; but without Him they must have parted disconsolate as they met. And thus it is still; His eye and His heart is upon them that fear Him—that hope in His mercy. He takes notice of

their distresses, and has an appointed hour to relieve them. He does not, indeed, send an angel from heaven to tell them that they are greatly beloved, but He has a thousand ways of comforting them with equal certainty. Sometimes He teaches them immediately by himself; He directs their thoughts to some sweet and precious promise, which, though perhaps given originally to a particular person, and enjoyed by thousands of his children in successive ages, yet seems at last so exactly suited to our own case, as if it had been recorded for us alone. Sometimes He puts a seasonable word into the heart of a fellow-worm, and so blesses the application, that it is attended with an effect far beyond the hope or design of the person who offers it. But whatever are the means, the work is His own, and to Him the praise is alone due; and this, I say, is my encouragement; for otherwise, who am I that I should pretend to answer your complaints, or to encounter with that Goliath of unbelief who, I perceive, has laid hold of you? But, in the name of the Lord, I am bold to attack him; and who knows, but that Jesus, on whom you say your whole dependence is placed, may so direct my pen in writing, and so whisper to your heart while you are reading, that you may be enabled

to escape out of your enemy's hands, as a bird from the fowler's snare, and find yourself suddenly safe, and at liberty, in that city of refuge which the Lord has prepared and pointed out for us to flee to. To this effect, I have made my prayer to my God before I began to write. May my poor prayer be speedily followed by your praises.

Methinks I can easily assign two main causes of your spiritual troubles. The first is, the temptations of Satan. Had you continued in his way, he would have let you alone; while you were content to be lulled asleep, he was far enough from desiring to awake you; but now he expects to lose you, he will be sure to rage to the utmost length of his chain. But you will say, Perhaps it is not a temptation, but a truth that troubles you. You think you cannot be under a delusion in the view you have of your own heart. You see and feel yourself a vile sinner, and cannot be mistaken in this. I answer, that I doubt not it is from the good Spirit of God that you have a sense of your lost and helpless estate by nature; but, then, I am certain that the Spirit of God does not lead you to draw such dark, uncomfortable conclusions. The Spirit, in his own proper actings, convinces not only of sin, but of righteousness and judgment also. The Spirit of God agrees

with the Word of God ; and what is the language of the Word to an awakened sin-sick soul ? Is it not to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,—to put your trust in him ? Does it not say, “ Be not afraid, only believe ; ” “ though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be white as snow.” The Spirit convinces not only of sin, but of righteousness and judgment also, shows us that the prince of this world is cast out, and that our ascended Saviour has fully completed his undertaking,—that he is gone to the Father, and we see him no more, because his suit is accepted, and he ever remains before the throne, to intercede for sinners. The Spirit, I doubt not, taught you that good confession which you witness in a part of your letter ; but these dark surmises, so inconsistent with that profession, which cloud and intermix with it, are from another spirit. This persuasion (to allude to the apostle's words) cometh not of Him that calleth you. To these assaults of the enemy I shall only oppose, for I have not room or time to enlarge, those comfortable and instructive words of our dear Saviour :—“ Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat ; but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.” You see He has forewarned you of the very evil you

feel ; He has promised to intercede for the very thing you want ; and shall not His prayers prevail ? Resist the devil with this weapon, and he will tremble before you.

Another great cause of your distress, and what gives the adversary a main advantage against you, is the remainder of a legal self-righteous spirit. Excuse my freedom ;—I am your friend, and therefore choose to come plainly to the point. I have often detected unbelief in my own heart, muffled up, and disguised in the mask of humility, when, indeed, all the pretences to humility have been founded in a secret desire of self, to be something, and to have something of its own. I find this mistake deeply rooted in my heart ; it is not yet removed, though I hope it is weakened. I have suffered by the cheat a thousand times, and yet am almost ensnared by it again every day, and I doubt not but it is in a measure so with you. You say that Christ has laid the top-stone to redemption work, and that he gave assurance of this before he died, by saying, "*It is finished,*"—and you say well. Yet you put away the comfort of this precious truth, because you are impressed so little with these things,—because your heart is so hard, and your corruptions so many. My dear friend, is not this to build with

one hand and to pull down with the other? Does not what you say amount to this, that if you were holy, and good, and happy to a certain degree, then you would take comfort in the Gospel? that is, in plain English, if you had a great deal of merit of your own to trust in, then you would trust in Christ! But, believe me, you will never be in a fitter condition, never have a better right or ground to rejoice in Him as your righteousness and salvation, than when you see yourself most entirely stript of every plea. Your complaints, to be valid, should run in another strain. If you could say that Christ has not suffered enough,—that his wisdom, grace, power, faithfulness, and mediation, are grown weak and ineffectual to the purposes of salvation,—this would be dreadful news indeed, not to yourself, but to me, and to all that see themselves sinners. But to acknowledge that He is all that tongue can speak, more than heart can conceive, and yet to despond for such reasons as you assign, is indeed without any just ground. I know you are sick of a grievous disease, but you know as well that your Physician is almighty. You cannot deny He has taken your case in hand. You read in the Bible that many who are now in glory have made as heavy complaints as you can do,—wit-

ness Job, the Psalmist (lxxxviii.), Jeremiah (in Lamentations iii.), the Apostle Paul (Rom. vii.), and others. Let me advise you to be content to be saved as a poor sinner, give yourself into the Lord's hands, wait his time and way, and he will strengthen your heart. What He does now you know not, but you will know hereafter that all His dispensations are in wisdom and love. He is now humbling you, that he may exalt you in due time. He is emptying you, that he may fill you. Read Micah vii. 4, 8, 9; and, in general, meditate upon the free precious promises; and may the Lord write them in your heart, and give you the experience of a dear friend of mine, who, after walking three years on the borders of despair, has lived for near that time, and continues, on the very suburbs of heaven, and rejoices almost incessantly, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—Mrs Newton joins in respects to you and your father, whom I truly honour in the Lord. May the God of all grace fill his latter days with joy and peace in believing, and may you be comforted by his example and memory, and walk in his steps, till, at length, we all meet before the throne. I shall expect to hear from you before long, and beg a frequent remembrance in your prayers.—I am, &c.



TO MR ROBERT JONES.

*Olney, 12th October 1765.*

VERY DEAR SIR,—We received Mr Josiah's letter, and were very glad to hear that he and Mrs Jones arrived safe at Hull. But before I address my answer to him, I think it behoves me to acknowledge my fault, I might say my folly, in dropping your agreeable and useful correspondence. It was not owing to any abatement of my regard, but I gave way to hindrances so long, that at last I was ashamed to write at all.

The steps of Divine Providence going before, and leading me to Olney, were very remarkable. I cannot doubt but my call into the Established Church, and the place of my residence, were from Him. All the essays I had made before towards the ministry had been, by one means or other, frustrated; but when His appointed time and work came, every thing gave way. I had given up all applications,—insuperable difficulties seemed to forbid the thought of renewing them, yet I came in without trouble, and with great advantages.

The Gospel seed was first sown in Olney by Mr Whitfield and his brethren, about the year '39. We have several precious souls of so long

standing in the kingdom of God. Soon after a little place was built, a society formed, and Mr Whitfield's preachers came frequently. But, in the year '54, the Lord brought Mr Moses Browne to be vicar. By him the Gospel was preached in the church; and then the Methodist preachers withdrew, and went where they were more wanted. The gentleman who gave Mr Browne the living resided in the parish, and soon became his open enemy. With such a head, the spirit of opposition and enmity exerted itself with great courage. Mr Browne went through a great deal—was often abused to his face—put in the spiritual court; but, in the interim, the old gentleman sold his estate, with the advowson, to Lord Dartmouth. By the favour of such a patron, Mr B. was held up; and at last the Lord gave him the victory, and put his enemies to shame.

At length, a large family and small income induced Mr Browne to think of a removal. He accepted the chaplainship of Merden College; and, upon his promise to resign Olney, Lord D. was pleased to tender it to me. This view brought me from Liverpool; and, by his lordship's mediation, I easily was admitted to orders by the bishop of Lincoln. The resignation, however, has not yet taken place. I am Mr Browne's

curate, but I do not account this a disappointment, as I am so happily situated in every other respect.

I have a large church, which will hold (with a gallery built since I came here) near 2000 people, and it is very well filled,—people coming from all parts, to the distance of five and six miles round, to hear the Gospel. In the town, I have the pleasure of seeing my poor labours acceptable and useful. The Lord has a lively, loving, thriving people here, and I hope some are savingly added to them from time to time. The ordinances are highly valued, prayer-meetings diligently attended. We are all in perfect harmony amongst ourselves, and have little or no opposition from without. The violence of that spirit has been wearied a little, and most of the chief opposers removed, in a course of twelve years. Here are two meetings, an Independent and Baptist. I am sorry to say, the chief marks of coldness and disgust we meet with, are from some whom we would willingly call our brethren. But they are not all so; there are some of the men lively in both denominations, who join with us upon proper occasions, and rejoice in our prosperity.

Thus, Sir, have I, who was before a persecutor,

a blasphemer, a poor slave to Satan's legion, been redeemed from the misery I plunged myself into on the coast of Africa; snatched, by a miracle, from sinking into the ocean and into hell; called from the lowest and most hardened degrees of profaneness and Atheism; and, at last, honoured with a dispensation to preach the glorious Gospel. O the wonders of free grace! Help me, dear Sir, to praise, and help me with your prayers, that I may be preserved humble, watchful, faithful, and dependent,—that I may never forget where the Lord found me, nor what great things he has done; but that a constraining sense of his love may animate me to spend, and be spent, for the service of his truth and people, and that I may account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

I am favoured with a good state of health, innumerable domestic mercies, and suffer no inconvenience from preaching, though I speak pretty loud. The Lord is exceedingly good to me in public services, both with respect to the liberty I find in my own mind, and the acceptance I meet with from the people. His good Spirit is pleased, in a measure, to bless all his ordinances. We have a lecture on Thursday evenings, a prayer-meeting on Tuesdays. The Lord's own

day, also, is begun and closed with social meetings for prayer ; and I trust we find that we do not seek Him in vain.—I am, &c.

TO MR JOSIAH JONES.

*Olney, 22d January 1766.*

DEAR SIR,—I gave a brief answer to most of the particulars in yours of the 14th September, in mine to your father, since which I have been favoured and refreshed, with his valuable, kind, and judicious letter of the 29th November, for which I thank him now, and hope more expressly to thank him ere long. At present my business is, to look up to the Lord for a word to you, suited to the friendship between us, and the great end we ought to have in view by our correspondence,—to quicken and animate each other's souls in the ways of godliness. You are now entered upon life, and stand in the various relations of a husband and father. You are encompassed with mercies on every hand, and are peculiarly favoured with the prayers, advices, and example of a parent who has walked with God to a good old age, and whom you must soon expect to leave you. My dear friend, your advantages and obligations to glorify God in the world are equally great, and I trust God has

given you such a desire. Fear not, therefore ; be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. His grace shall be sufficient for every duty, service, and suffering, to all who seek Him. But though you need not distrust His power, promise, and faithfulness, you will do well to be jealous of your own heart, and of your own situation. Beware of the world ; beware of idols. Be watchful against formality or carelessness, in the use of appointed means. The path of duty is the path of safety ; and we should never be easy but when we either enjoy the Lord, or have the testimony of our consciences that we are seeking him with our whole hearts. We walk in the midst of snares, and have an enemy near at hand who envies our privileges, and wants nothing but permission to sift and shake us as wheat. Need, therefore, there is to say continually, " Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe."

We live in a day when too many professors have a name to live and are dead. Too many who, though we would hope they are not destitute of some spiritual truth and grace in their hearts, yet are drawn, through an attachment to present things, to live sadly below their privileges and callings. They have but little of the comforts of the Gospel in their own souls, and bring in

but a small revenue of glory to God. If we were to ask them the cause, they would speak out; they could tell us that there was a time when they, likewise, were warm and lively in their souls,—when they little expected such a change as they have lived to see. They did not grow cold all at once, but by imperceptible degrees. Worldly attachments stole upon them; they became remiss in secret duties,—content with being found in a round of outward appointments, entangled more and more by the temptations which they neglected to shake off in time, and now that blessedness which they once spoke of is gone. They have lost the savour and relish of spiritual things; their strength is departed; and, though at times they cry out, “O that it was with me as in times past!” they find themselves unable to recover what they have lost, and unable to set heartily about seeking the Lord for deliverance. Instances of this sort should be warnings to us. As rumoured robberies endear our gold, so when we hear what subtilty Satan employs, and what advantages he gains over others, it should make us redouble our diligence and guard, lest we, likewise, should be stript and spoiled of our best things, grieve the Holy Spirit, and be appointed to walk in darkness. It is a mercy to be kept from back-

sliding in life, from bringing an open reproach upon our profession ; but there is a backsliding in heart, likewise, which is exceedingly uncomfortable, and often proves an inlet and occasion to the other.

Faithfulness to the means of grace is our part ; but then let us bear in mind, that except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Diligence and dependence stand well together. Those know not what they mean who would separate them as inconsistent. (Phil. ii. 12, 13.) Let us look to Jesus in his offices, power, compassion, grace, and example ; when he and his glories are presented to the eye of faith in the light of the Word and Spirit, then obedience is easy, and temptations lose their force. Surely He is All in All to believers,—their wisdom, righteousness, and strength. Yet He has said, “ If ye love me, keep my commandments.” He has promised to manifest Himself to those who diligently attend to His Word, and no otherwise have we a Scriptural right to expect it.

I have written to you thus freely, not having any particular reason to suppose you need an exhortation of this sort, but that it is suggested to me by my own heart ; and I believe all our hearts are alike.



We are in health and peace by the Lord's goodness ; and I hope his work among us is not at a stand. Mrs Newton joins me in respects to Mrs Jones, and to your father and family. I beg a remembrance in your prayers. Friday evening is a usual season with me for meeting my friends in Yorkshire at a throne of grace.— I am, &c.

TO MR ROBERT JONES.

*Olney, 8th August 1766.*

DEAR SIR,—I acknowledged, and in part answered, your kind favour in my last to your son ; but I am afraid you begin again to think me ungrateful. Indeed, I greatly value your correspondence, though my various calls make me too remiss in improving it.

I have nothing particular to offer respecting our affairs here, beyond what I have already said. Through mercy, we go on in a quiet, steady way. The prayer-meetings, which you so much approved, are still kept up with spirit. The Lord gives a savour of his Spirit in them, which makes them well attended. I have reason to subscribe to what you say of their expediency, for I think nothing has been more visibly useful to strengthen my heart, and to unite the people

closely together in the bonds of love. All who have been awakened since my coming to Olney, promise fair to stand, except a few who have died happily in the Lord. Our whole number is not very large, but a more steady, diligent people I never saw; and appearances give me ground to hope, that the Lord will graciously call more to the knowledge and obedience of his faith.

There is much to be lamented, I confess, in Mr Wesley's scheme, but I hope he is not an enemy to the Gospel, though very dark with respect to some of its glorious truths. I have, however, the most satisfactory evidence that the Lord works by him and his brethren, and that, amidst all the chaff of opinions which he too earnestly contends for, he has a sincere aim to the glory of God and the good of souls: and [some of his preachers and people I know to be excellent persons, though there are too many ranked under his banner, who do him little honour, but rather cause the ways of truth to be evil spoken of. Yet I account it a part of the happiness of my present situation, that Mr Wesley has no society here, nor for half a score miles round me. We are perfectly united in doctrine and in judgment, and my people are, in general, as much strangers to the disputes that prevail abroad, as if they had

never been started. I heartily thank you for your good wishes and good advice. Your letters always warm and instruct me ; and it is with some regret that I think I must probably soon resign so valuable a friend to a better world. Yet, when your Master calls, I shall not be unwilling to let you go. You have had your time of suffering and exercise, and it is but reason you should at length enter into His joy. May He pour down an abundance of His good Spirit upon those whom you shall leave behind you, that they may rejoice in their parent's God, and bear an honourable testimony to His cause, when you shall cease to be seen. Then, with what joy will you meet them at the great day, and say, "Here I am, and the children which Thou didst give me." I hope the Lord will support Mr Josiah against the smiling and the frowning world. The enemy will probably employ both, to shake his stedfastness. I know not which is most dangerous to frail flesh and blood ; but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient to make those who trust in him, more than conquerors over all that stands in their way. The dissipation and darkness of mind you experience in sudden illness is, doubtless, uncomfortable, but the reflection you make upon it is a sufficient balance. It is one mercy,

and a sure mercy, that our state does not depend upon our frames. Whether we are in a storm, or in a calm, the good Pilot is always and equally with us. His care and his love are unchangeable, and his righteousness (the blessed and only ground of our hope) always invariably the same. You may safely trust Him in the dark; but it is probable that, when the hour of your departure actually arrives, you will find your prayers answered, and that He will manifestly stand by you and strengthen you, to set your seal to His faithfulness and goodness with your departing breath. He who has so often shown you how little you can do without Him, may take occasion then to show both to you and to others, what He can do in you; but, whatever your passage may be, a safe arrival at the haven of rest will make rich amends for all. Methinks those are the most happy, who are nearest their expected change. According to the common course of things, it is probable that you will be singing songs of triumph and everlasting praise, while I must yet suffer and strive in the field of battle: but I trust my time will come to triumph likewise. The Lord make me faithful and diligent till his hour comes. I could wish at times to depart, that I may be with Christ, and have done with sin for ever. Yet,

if He is pleased to make me in any degree subservient to the glory of His name, and the good of His people, I would be content and thankful to live a little longer ; and I hope no other prospect but this makes me very desirous of continuing here, though, by the blessing of His indulgent providence, no one has a greater concurrence of those mercies which make life agreeable. But, alas ! sin mingles with all, and I groan, being burdened.—Yours, &c.

TO MR ROBERT JONES.

*Olney, 14th March 1769.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I have been to blame in omitting to write for so long a time. It was far from my intention, when I received your former letter. I purposed to answer it soon, but one thing or another insensibly delayed, till at length I thought I must wait until I could hear whether you were still resident in this land of shadows.

Till I received your last letter, I was in hopes that the settlement of Mr Burnet had put a happy and satisfactory end to the difficulties that had long attended the settlement of a minister in Hull. As it is otherwise, I hope the Lord will bless you and your friends in what you have seen necessary to do ; and, indeed, when peace cannot

be maintained, a separation seems the only tolerable expedient; for, if a people are disunited in judgment and affection amongst themselves, or with respect to the minister, little edification can be expected. I hope and pray, that your new settlement may be for the glory of God and the good of souls.

Though I should be glad to show my regard upon every occasion in my power, yet I must beg to be excused from transmitting your letter, or making a representation of the case to the gentleman you mention. It is true he is pleased to favour me with some degree of notice; but I have made a point of it in my own mind never to trouble him with applications about buildings, partly because I do not know that his kindness to me gives me sufficient warrant to take so much liberty with him, and partly because my acquaintance amongst the Dissenters might put so many cases of this sort in my way, that if I ventured to speak for one or two, I might seem unkind or partial to others. I was, therefore, constrained to refuse Mr Walley and my friends at Liverpool, when they spoke to me to the same purpose; and I think, if I could have thought it proper in any case, I should have done it in favour of a people whom I dearly loved, and with

whom I had lived in much Christian communion (Church membership excepted) for many years.

But, besides this general reason, I must add, that I think it would be highly improper for me to interpose with him in an affair of this kind at Hull, where he himself is so well acquainted, and has so many connections, and was personally upon the spot within these two months.

I hope you will accept these reasons in good part, and be assured of my sincere regard, though I cannot do you service in this particular.

I am glad that your life is yet prolonged, and that the Lord has given you to see your children's children in peace. You can say, when you look back, "Surely mercy and goodness have followed me all my days;" and you can look forward with pleasure and comfort, knowing that a mansion in glory is preparing for you; and that, when you are absent from the body, you shall be present with the Lord. Happy are they whose course is nearly finished, and who are upon the point of being taken away from the evil to come. The times look dark to me; but whatever storms arise, Jesus will be the Pilot and the Sanctuary of his people. His grace is sufficient for us, and he has engaged to give strength according to our day. May we be kept faithful,

and preserved in the hour of temptation, if any part of our lot should be cast in times of trial.

I had designed a long letter, but have been prevented by company, and I am desirous to answer yours by the return of the post. The Lord still gives us the blessing of peace at Olney, and many tokens of his gracious presence. My people (I mean the awakened) are lively and unanimous,—ordinances much prized, and closely attended,—evident marks of growth,—and our numbers still increase, though as it were insensibly, one now and then. I beg an interest in your prayers,—shall be always very glad to hear from you, and hope not to be negligent in writing hereafter.—Yours, &c.

TO MR ROBERT JONES.

*Olney, 14th June 1770.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Your last obliging favour of the 16th May was not only very acceptable, but, I hope, profitable to me. I thank you for it, and acknowledge it thus early, in hopes of hearing from you more frequently. . . .

When I think of your situation, and the peaceful frame of spirit in which the Lord enables you to wait for that glory which shall shortly be



revealed to you, I could almost wish myself in your place. It is, indeed, possible you may yet outlive me, but it is not probable. I have more exercises to meet with, before I shall have done with sin and sorrow. But as to you, your years, and the infirmities you speak of, seem to intimate that your warfare is wellnigh accomplished, and that it will not be long before the Lord, whom, through grace, you have loved, and trusted, and served in an evil world, will give you the crown of life, and wipe all tears from your eyes. Oh what an unspeakable change will take place in that important, awful, welcome moment which we call death! The forerunners of death are indeed often painful and formidable; but death itself, what is it to a believer but to shut our eyes upon pain, grief, and temptation, to open them the next moment in the presence of God and the Lamb! Amazing transition, to exchange, as in a glance of thought, the infirmities of sinking nature, for the glories and worship of heaven—to be transported from weeping friends, to join with that glorious assembly, in tuning our golden harps to the praise of redeeming love! And now, by the Lord's help, I will not wish myself in your place. I would be willing to wait *my* threescore and ten likewise, if I may be any way instru-

mental to his service, or subservient to the good of his people. I ought not to be impatient. I was the chief of sinners—a vile blasphemer of the name and grace of Jesus, yet I have obtained mercy; and it has pleased Him not only to pardon me, but to put me into the ministry: He has given me a happy situation, and encompassed me with goodness on every side. Shall I, then, think the time long, or His service wearisome! I desire ever to be willing to depart and to be with Jesus; but if He should appoint me a longer stay upon earth, there is a view in which life appears valuable—as an opportunity of bearing testimony to His truth and grace, and proclaiming to all around me that faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. O for a resigned will, and grace to be always engaged in His work, and then let the Lord do as seemeth him good.

I rejoice in your happy settlement with Mr Lambert. He and his charge will have a constant place in my heart. Give my love to him, and tell him I beg a remembrance in his prayers. I should be glad to know if your prayer-meetings are at any time on a Tuesday evening. That is our chief opportunity, though we have two others on the Lord's day, morning and evening. I have great reason to be thankful that the Lord was

pleased to incline us to meet in this manner. To His blessing on these exercises I ascribe, in a great measure, the continuance and increase of that harmony and spirituality with which our people are in general favoured. We have many seasons of refreshment from His presence, and many instances to record (some of them exceedingly remarkable), in which we have found him a God hearing prayer. How little did I think, in the days of my ignorance and madness, for what the Lord had reserved me! Alas! that I have yet to complain of slothfulness, stupidity, unbelief, and a heart poorly impressed with a sense of His goodness. But He is gracious. He pardons, heals, supports, and strengthens. The enemy has thrust sore at me that I might fall, but the Lord has been my stay, and I trust he will be my shepherd, my sun, my shield, my guard and my guide, even unto death, and then I shall praise him better. . . . .

Mrs Newton is well, and joins in affectionate respects to you and your son. And now, my dear Sir, I commend you and yours to our covenant God, entreating him to comfort and bless you, and to enliven your declining years with near, and sweet, and abiding manifestations of his goodness and glory. We shall not, perhaps, see

each other in this life, but we have an eternity to spend together. May His grace, love, and peace, be with you.—I am, &c.

TO MR JOSIAH JONES.

*Olney, 10th April 1771.*

DEAR SIR,—Your favour of the 23d February found me at London. It always gives me pleasure to hear from you. It is a mercy that we can call upon each other to praise the Lord for all his goodness. He has shown us his salvation, and revealed the name of Jesus to our hearts. In Him we have a peace which is no way dependent upon the changes incident to human life. We are interested in a covenant ordered in all things, and sure; and in exceeding great, precious, and suitable promises, respecting all our concerns in time and to eternity. God in Christ is our Father and our Shepherd. Heaven is our home; and all things we meet by the way are appointed and overruled in a subserviency to our sanctification and happiness. It may well, then, be said unto us, Fear not, for the Lord is with us. Infinite wisdom is our guide,—almighty power is our defence,—and the riches of the everlasting love, our portion. Here, indeed, we may expect some trials and difficul-

ties, but His grace shall be sufficient to support and comfort, to sanctify and deliver. Oh! happy state, to be a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. How little did we think of it once: we were once afar off, but are brought nigh by the blood of Christ, in whom we have righteousness, life, and peace. He was wounded for our transgressions; He died that we might live. Surely, then, it will be our desire and delight to live not to ourselves, but to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood. . . .

I want more diligence, wisdom, and resolution in the disposal of my time. Too much of it seems to run to waste, and no one can be under greater obligations to redeem it than myself—for, alas! how many past years of my short space seem spent in misery and madness; and still I fall lamentably short. If, through grace, I am not wholly unfaithful, yet I have cause to confess myself an unprofitable and unworthy servant. But I have obtained mercy. The Lord pities, pardons, and accepts; but, oh! may I ever walk softly and humbly *beforehand*, under the remembrance of what I have been, and the sense of what I still am.

Through mercy, we still walk in peace, and have reason to hope the Lord is with us. Mrs

Newton joins in love to you, and to your father. I hope we shall meet, according to your purpose, in July, and that we often meet at the throne of grace. I saw a sweet little girl of yours at Mr River's,—may the Lord bless *her*, and each of your children, with his grace, that you may have much comfort in them here, and meet them at last in his kingdom.—Believe me to be, &c.

TO MR ROBERT JONES.

*Olney, 11th June, 1771.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I received your favour of the 6th April, the same day in which I sent my last to your son. I would be thankful if mine of the 6th November afforded you any satisfaction. . . .

My soul has been in a faint and languid state of late; indeed, this is my frequent complaint; but, through mercy, I am not satisfied that it should be so. I am kept waiting for a season of more life and power; and, in the meantime, I see the foundation stands sure, so that, at the bottom of all my conflicts, I have a peace which Satan is not permitted to shake. I rest upon the Rock. What the Scripture reveals concerning the person, offices, names, characters, and relations of the Redeemer, I am enabled to receive, and from thence I derive my hope. I am poor—He is rich;

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I am weak—He is strong ; I am unworthy—but He is love ; I am nothing—but He is all in all. He is made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. How complete the provision—how suitable to our wants!—how rich the grace—how plenteous the salvation ! If the Lord is our teacher, we cannot be misled ; if He is our defence, we cannot be overpowered ; if He is our portion, we cannot but be happy. O that my heart might take fire while I am musing ! Come, my friend, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. You have much to praise Him for. He has led you safely, honourably, comfortably, through a long course of years ; and now you are old and gray-headed, he does not, He will not, forsake you ; yea, He reserves the best things for last. And surely none has more cause to praise Him than I. Ah ! Sir, your case is not like mine. You never abjured the Gospel, or treated Jesus as an impostor. You were not a blasphemer and a profligate. You were not lost in the wilds of Guinea, beyond the reach of recovery by any ordinary means. From such a state He was pleased to call me, and to lead me by a series of dispensations, little less than miraculous—first, to the knowledge, and then to the ministry, of the Gospel. O ! it is a

singular case : nothing like it, I am ready to think, in the history of the Church of God. Not even the case of Paul, for what he did, he did ignorantly, whereas I was an apostate.

The hour is approaching when I hope I shall praise Him better. I shall one day be freed from this body of sin, and all the impediments and imperfections under which I groan. It is probable, though far from certain, that your release will come first. You cannot have very far to bid it welcome. His presence shall gild the gloom which hangs over the dark valley. I believe, when the thought of death is much impressed upon the heart, and made the subject of frequent prayer before it arrives, it is a token for good, that the passage shall not only be safe, but comfortable ; for when He prepares the heart to pray, He will incline his ear to hear. I desire to have you much upon my mind before the Lord, and beg, in return, a frequent place in your prayers. I much need the prayers of the Lord's people, and doubt not but I daily feel the benefit of them. I beg to be remembered affectionately to Mr Lambert, Mr Josiah, and all who love the Lord with you. Mrs Newton joins me in affectionate respects to you and your son.—Believe me to be, &c.



TO MR JOSIAH JONES.

*Olney, September 1771.*

DEAR SIR,—I now return you the letter you left with us. I am thankful that I wrote it, since the Lord has been pleased to make it comfortable to your family.

I have often thought of you and Mr Lambert since you were here. I am glad we had the pleasure of seeing you both, though the visit was so short. Perhaps the Lord may bring us together again in this world; but if not, we shall by and by sit down with him in his kingdom. In the meantime, I wish you all prosperity. Mr Symonds has informed me of the event of your application at Bedford. It rejoiced me that you acted so disinterested a part, for which, I am persuaded, you will be no losers. There have been sometimes seen traces of a selfish, jealous mind in such concerns. I am glad it was far otherwise with you and Mr Lambert. You acted with honour; and it will reflect some honour upon me, as I had expressed my regard for you in the strongest terms.

I shall be glad to hear that your journey has been made useful to you, in point of health and spirits. I would recommend it to you to use

exercise and frequent change of air, when you can find leisure. It may, by the Lord's blessing, be very helpful to you. Though I know but little of your disorder myself, I know how to pity it. I have been an attentive observer of it in many cases; and I know that it affords a door by which Satan, when permitted, can more easily assault and distress the soul. But the Lord will support you under it, and, if he sees it good for you, he will surely remove it. Perhaps it is appointed to you for a season, as a preservative against the snares which the enemy might otherwise spread for your feet. The Lord does all things well, that is, wisely and graciously for his people, and never appoints them to walk in heaviness, without a need be.

My dear joins me in sincere respects to your father and to Mr Lambert. Tell him I am expecting his first letter, that we may enter upon a little barter in the writing way. My correspondence is so cumbersome to me, that I have almost promised myself never to begin a new one; but if a gentleman writes to me, then I may answer him. The Lord bless you both, and all who fear him, with whom you walk.—I am, &c.

TO MR JOSIAH JONES.

*Olney, 24th January 1772.*

DEAR SIR,—When I received your last favour I proposed a speedy answer, but have been hitherto prevented. I shall not take up your time or my own with apologies. A want of inclination to maintain a correspondence with you has not been the cause of my silence. I am glad you have obtained of the Lord a favourable and sanctified issue of the late afflictions in your families. I trust you will ever find that chastisements are mercies, and that every season of affliction is sent to prepare the way for a season of praise.

Give my love to Mr Lambert; tell him I rejoice in his success, and think with him, that a little visit to London, and an opportunity of observing the state of religious profession there, may make us not only satisfied but thankful that our lot is cast at a distance from it. There are, undoubtedly, many eminent Christians among the multitudes who outwardly own the Gospel there; but there is so great a mixture, such various winds of doctrine, and such a want of the spirit of mutual love, and so many snares and temptations abounding on every hand, that there seems a need of a double portion of grace and patience, to walk

stedfastly and honourably in such circumstances. The difference between living at Olney and London, both with respect to minister and people, seems to me almost as great, as between being safely in a port, and tempest-tossed upon the ocean. The Lord, who is ever attentive to the state of those who fear him, and has promised to give strength according to the day, is able, and gracious, and faithful, to keep his own wherever he places them. I account it a mercy, however, that he has fixed me at a distance from those difficulties by which many of his servants are exercised in the great city. I pray for them, and congratulate myself.

With regard to the question on which you desire my thoughts, I cannot expect to offer you any thing on it which has not already occurred to you; however, I shall show my readiness to comply with your request.—I apprehend that true evangelical repentance may be distinguished from whatever else may bear the name of repentance, by its spring, and its immediate object. Its source, or spring, is a divine light communicated to the mind, of which we are, by nature, utterly destitute. It is the gift of God, wrought by the powerful operation of his Spirit. By this light, a discovery is made to the soul of those

scriptural truths, of which, without it, we cannot, by all our sagacity and inquiries, obtain a more adequate notion than a blind man has of colours. God has not left himself without a witness in the natural conscience, and, by the force of this, sinners may be, and often are, put in fear upon principles merely rational. The thoughts of death—the persuasion of a future judgment—a conviction that their tempers and lives are contrary to the express precepts of Scripture—and some apprehensions of the greatness of that God with whom they have to do; and the impossibility of their escaping his hands;—these, and the like considerations, may be so impressed upon the mind (even without the ministry of the Word, but more especially when people sit under an awakening preacher), as to excite great uneasiness upon account of sin, earnest desires and endeavours to forsake it,—and these attended with success so far, as to cause a great and observable change of conduct,—and this may extend to a seeming delight in the ways, ordinances, and people of God; and yet, all the while, the persons so far wrought upon may be utter strangers to the spiritual light I have mentioned, and therefore their *repentance* will be ineffectual, partial, and temporary. When the lively impressions of fear wear off, they will

either return to their old ways, or settle in a self-righteous formality. Such wounds as these have received, may be healed without the application of the blood of Christ.

It would be impossible to describe this spiritual light to one who has had no experience of it, and needless to those who have ; and therefore to you I will be brief. It gives an apprehension of God, suitable to the revelation he has made of himself in his Word. The soul perceives a meaning in the words, eternal, almighty, omniscient, and omnipresent, which it never understood before ; and it perceives, likewise, his moral attributes of infinite holiness, purity, justice and truth, of which an unenlightened mind has no idea, at least, not as they are described in the Word. Our views of sin will always be answerable to the views we have of God ; and hence, the soul that sees the holiness and glory of God, immediately sees itself in a lost and ruined state ; sin appears to be exceeding sinful, not only as dangerous, but as evil and hateful. The ingratitude, rebellion, and perverseness of the heart is felt and acknowledged, and the sentence denounced against it is considered not only as inevitable, but just. Sin, with these aggravations, is seen, not only in past actual transgressions, but as having defiled and depraved

the very frame of our nature, so as to render us incapable of doing any thing that is good. Hence arises self-condemnation, and a conviction of the necessity of being delivered from it, not only for fear or wrath, but because it is, in the nature of things, utterly inconsistent with happiness, which is now known to consist in the favour and image of God.

The repentance that takes its rise from this new sense of things, may, in its first beginnings, be called evangelical, as it is the effect of Gospel grace, and can only be produced by that Spirit which Jesus is exalted to bestow; and as it disposes to a reception of the Gospel way of salvation, and will assuredly lead to it. Whoever is thus wounded, can never be healed but by the blood of the Cross. However, the work is yet incomplete, and it is not evangelical repentance, in the full and proper sense of the word, till it is farther acquainted with the immediate object, and ordinance provided of God for the relief of convinced sinners.

This the prophet teaches us, Zech. xii. 10: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced," &c. Conviction leads to prayer; and He who answers the prayer of the miserable gives faith. God is made known in Christ, as recon-

iling the world to himself. The evil of sin is unspeakably aggravated, when Jesus is revealed as pouring forth his life in groans and tears, and agonies and blood, to make atonement for it. Here is the fullest display of its malignity ; and, at the same time, a door of hope is opened. Here mercy and truth meet together ; righteousness and peace kiss each other. The blood of Jesus, while it proclaims the awful and inflexible justice of God, who spared not his own Son, speaks better things than the blood of Abel to the trembling sinner. The first discoveries of this kind are often faint and indistinct, but by the Lord's blessing on the means of grace, they are increased. The incorruptible seed expands, grows, and becomes a tree. The light of the morning advances towards the perfect day, and in due time the sun of righteousness arises in the heart. As faith increases, repentance becomes more and more evangelical, simple, and ingenuous ; for it is not the terrors of the law that can effectually humble, soften, and change the heart,—this is done by the grace of the Gospel, and a sense of free forgiveness by the blood of the Lamb, and a free acceptance in his righteousness. But now the divorce is effected,—a real separation takes place between the soul and a love of sin.



Sin may war, but it never more can reign. There is a repentance produced never to be repented of.

The limits of my time and paper would not allow me to treat this important subject accurately and at large. I have only dropped a few hasty hints. May your heart and mine be filled with love to Him who has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and given us the grace of repentance, derived from the knowledge of Him, whom we pierced by our transgressions.

Accept our best love, and present it likewise to your father. Our neighbours whom you visited—Mrs Unwin and Mr Cowper—send their respects to you and Mr Lambert. We should be glad to see you again at Olney. Pray for us, and praise for us, for the Lord is still pleased to work amongst us.—I am yours, &c.

TO MR JOSIAH JONES.

*Olney, 9th September 1772.*

DEAR SIR,—I am a poor correspondent.—I hope you will not judge of my regard for you by the time I take to answer your letters; but, indeed, I cannot keep accounts even with my friends. I should, however, have made a point

of writing immediately, if I could have answered your inquiry about Lady Huntingdon's concern with the new meeting; but I knew nothing of the matter. I suppose you have obtained the information you wanted long before this. I saw a letter some time since from *her student* (who preached at Hull), the spirit of which I much liked, and cannot but wish him success, preach when he will. There are numbers at Hull sufficient for all the preachers; and I pray the Lord that they may all labour in the Gospel cause with a Gospel spirit of love, and may rejoice in each other's success, and strengthen each other's hands. It is a happy thing to be raised above the little views of a denomination or a party, to own all whom the Lord owns, and to be heartily glad when His work goes forward, whoever is the instrument, and in whatever way sent forth, provided the capital truths of the Gospel, and a suitable conversation are maintained and enforced. I believe God has given this spirit to you and Mr Lambert: it is a thriving spirit. In my judgment, the old dissenting interest has suffered greatly for the want of it. I can look around the land, and see some judicious and able ministers, whose characters, in the main, I greatly respect: the subject matter of their preaching is

clear, solid, deep, important; and yet they seem to have but little usefulness, are very thinly attended, and little apparent liveliness in their congregations. In some instances, I have been ready to ascribe the low state of such churches to their unwillingness to acknowledge the work and Spirit of God, when he was pleased to appear in a way which they did not expect. They had been praying and wishing for a revival of the power of godliness; but, alas! they thought, when it should take place, it would be on their side of course. But, when the Lord was pleased to raise up and send forth labourers, unfurnished with their learning and unconnected with their *order*, many of them could not rejoice, could not see His hand, or acknowledge the effects which were soon manifested throughout the kingdom. They availed themselves of such incidental miscarriages and blemishes as will generally attend a new work, as a plea for rejecting and condemning the whole. They endeavoured, in their public ministry, to be as unlike to these new preachers as possible, and rather to give up all pretensions to popularity, than run the risk of being suspected as favourers of Methodism. They have had their wish. Nobody suspected them of being Methodists, but many have lamented to

see the Gospel interest evidently declining under the hands of persons, who, were it not for the power of these unhappy prejudices, have seemed peculiarly qualified to promote it. But, as all who preach the Gospel in sincerity are the Lord's servants, he is not pleased if they act unkindly to each other; and generally those Dissenters, whether ministers or people, have been most thriving, who have been bold to avow and wish well to the Lord's cause, under the *men-despised* name which has sprung up of late years. I desire to learn to commit the care of carrying on the work, and gathering in souls, to the great Shepherd,—to be content that He will send by whom He will send, and to wish them all prosperity who appear to love Him, and to have a thirst for the good of souls. My own judgment and choice, and the leadings of Divine Providence determined me to the Establishment; and I have so much to attend to at home, that I am under no pressing temptation to ramble from my immediate charge. But I hope my heart is with all who preach the truth in love, whether church or meeting, one denomination of dissenters or another—whether regular or irregular—whether from Oxford or Treveka, or even from the Foundery,—for though Mr Wesley's senti-

ments and mine are widely different, yet, I am certain there are amongst his preachers some valuable men, who are faithful according to the light God has given them, and who have been instrumental to much good.

I have run on upon a subject on which I had no thoughts of writing a single line when I began. I rejoice to hear that your church flourishes. The account of the young man converted from Popery pleased me: I thank you for it. My desire for Mr Lambert (and for you likewise) is expressed, Psalm cxv. 14. My thoughts are often at Hull. I have little probability of visiting it any other way. I hope you will pray and praise for us. The Lord has given us a considerable addition in the course of the last year; and we walk in peace. As to myself, I have many causes of humiliation, and many of thankfulness. I wish I was suitably affected by them. The enemy thrust sore at me that I might fall, but the Lord is my stay. I am often wounded, often weary—prone to wandering, to unbelief, and a thousand evils; but because the Lord is my shepherd, my physician, my support, and my shield, therefore I am still alive to speak of his goodness. Well may I say, Who is a God like unto thee? Micah vii. 18.

We join in Christian love to your father, and Mrs Unwin and Mr Cowper join with us in respects to yourself and Mr Lambert. Please to give my love to Mr Milner when you see him. I hope he is well; but it is long since I heard from him.—Believe me to be, &c.

TO MR ROBERT JONES.

*Olney, 25th May 1775.*

DEAR SIR,—I have owed Mr Josiah Jones a letter much longer than I intended, and should have answered him about this time; but I must beg him to have a little more patience, while I acknowledge your's first,—for, as you stand upon the brink of Jordan, I make haste, lest you should be called home before I have an opportunity of thanking you for your late kind remembrance of me.

I felt the concern of a friend when I heard of Mr River's troubles; but I trust he will find present support and a sanctified issue. That gracious promise—"All things shall work together for good to them that love God," is not clogged with a single exception; and though some of his dispensations are afflictive, and startling to the flesh, yet it will appear in the end that he leads his children in a right way, and that all his paths

towards them are mercy and truth. There is a need be for every trial and disappointment they meet with, either to humble and prove them, or to give them thereby a fairer opportunity of glorifying Him in the world. Every change and failure in creatures and temporals, is a foil to set off His unchangeableness and all-sufficiency to the greater advantage ; and the turns and disappointments they meet with, give them a fairer occasion of observing His wisdom, power, and compassion engaged in their behalf—to make light shine out of darkness, and to help them in the time of need. He reminds us, sometimes in our own concerns, and sometimes in the cases of our brethren, that nothing is certain, nothing to be depended on but His gracious promises. Mr and Mrs Rivers, I trust, can rejoice that they have a treasure laid up beyond the reach of change, and which no unexpected events can deprive them of ; and though their family is large, and their faith upon that account may be sharply exercised, yet, that word of Abraham, “ The Lord will provide,” shall be surely accomplished to all who partake of Abraham’s faith. If *we* cannot see our way clear, it is sufficient that *He* is never at a loss for means and expedients to help us. We know not what passes in the invisible world

—what snares Satan might have been spreading for their feet—nor what worse consequences the Lord may have in mercy prevented, by permitting this trial to come upon them; but I doubt not that, as in time past, they have often thanked Him for what He gave, so hereafter they will see equal cause to thank him for what He has taken away.

I sympathize with you in what you feel for the afflictions of those dear to you, but you will not feel for them long; and when you meet them in heaven, it will be no grief either to them or to you, that, while you were in this pilgrimage state, you had a share in those tribulations which are, in one degree or other, the appointed lot of all who follow Jesus to his glory; and, indeed, when we look around us, we see cause of thankfulness to the Lord for the discriminations of his good providence. Many of our fellow-creatures, yea, many of his own dear children, have a rougher path appointed; some of the heirs of glory have scarcely bread to eat; some spend a great part of their lives in wearisome pain or pining sickness; some are disposed, by lowness of spirits, to such gloomy thoughts and black temptations, as deprive them of comfort in any outward situation of life. A little attention may presently lead our thoughts to cases which we



must acknowledge much more distressing than our own. But in the worst, we see the Lord supports his people. If, like the bush which Moses saw, they appear to be in the midst of flames, like that bush, likewise, they are preserved unconsumed, because the Lord is there. Trouble is laid upon their loins; they go through fire and through water; but at length they are brought out into a wealthy place. My dear Sir, I often think of you with pleasure, exercised as you are in many respects, and cut off by your deafness from much of the comfort of social life; yet you appear to me peculiarly happy. If you look back, what a long train of Ebenezers appear in your view! What proof have you had of the power and mercy of the Lord, while you have been following him so many years through this wilderness! How much have you to say of this good Shepherd, who has guided and guarded, fed, restored, healed and revived you, answered your prayers, and, in many instances, exceeded your desires! And now, you are almost at your journey's end, waiting for His full salvation; and O, what a glorious prospect is opening upon you when you look forward! You know whom you have believed, and to whom you have committed your all against that day. Your fight is nearly

over, your course almost finished ; supported by the power of God, you have kept the faith, and will soon be called to receive the crown of righteousness. You will be taken away from the evil to come, like old Methuselah, who died the year before the flood (for I much fear that the prosperity and peace by which this land has been long distinguished above all the nations upon earth is drawing apace to a close). But whatever storms may arise you will soon be in port—removed to that blessed state where neither sin nor sorrow can follow you. Fear not the passage, for He who has the keys of death and the invisible world will meet you there. The ark of the covenant will keep the waters low, and the moment you close your eyes upon these scenes of vanity, you will open them in the midst of the redeemed company, and will join in that song which shall never grow old. Then you will awake in righteousness, and be satisfied with His likeness ; the days of your mourning will be ended, and your sun shall go down no more. . . .

In answer to your kind inquiries, the Lord enables me to inform you, that we are, as a family, in health and peace. As a minister, I have much to be thankful for—much to be humbled for. I can say more of the sheep than of the under shep-

herd. I think I see many of them getting before me; yet the Lord is good to me; likewise my eye is not darkened, nor my arm withered. He anoints me with fresh oil, and my bodily strength remains firm. I love my work and my people, and I am happy in their affection and acceptance. My mercies and advantages are many and great, my trials light and few, except what I feel within—there I groan, being burdened. I am seldom, if ever, left to doubt either my acceptance in the Beloved, or my perseverance; yet it is the Lord's pleasure, and the effect of my own evil and deceitful heart, that I live sadly at a distance. Coldness and languor beset me in all my secret walk before Him, and I find it much easier to preach than to pray. When the eyes of mortals are upon me, I seem fervent and earnest, but too much otherwise when alone. This is my great burden—O! I am the chief of sinners, unworthy the lowest place in His house, but He has been pleased to put me among his children, and enables me to hope that nothing shall separate me from His love.—Please to give my love to Mr Lambert. Do, Sir, let me hear from you now and then, while you are continued on this side eternity, and pray for me,—and believe me to be, &c.

TO MR ROBERT JONES.

*Olney, 15th August 1776.*

DEAR SIR,—Till your son (who kindly called on us the other day) put me in mind that you expected to hear from me, I had no idea that your last obliging letter had lain by me so long unanswered. I somehow thought it could not have been above two or three months, at the most, since I received it; but when I looked at the date, I was sorry and ashamed. I seemed to myself to have made a point of not letting you wait a great while, for fear, as you are so far advanced in years, I might not (if my own life were spared) hear from you again. I am certain I feel a desire to have as many letters from you as I can, while you remain on this side Jordan. But what shall I say? Time is too swift for my slow pace. It flies past me before I am aware. I determined, however, that my next letter should be to you: may the Lord make it seasonable. I should be glad to be the instrument of imparting to you a pleasure like that which I have often received from a perusal of yours.

You have touched upon a point which is very

familiar to my experience,—I mean the advantage Satan makes of the reluctance, coldness, and wanderings which I groan under in secret prayer. These are the fruits of that unbelief and evil which are deeply rooted in my heart. The tree is my own, though of his planting, because the soil is mine. I hope it is declining; but as he has an interest in it, he does all he is permitted, to cultivate it and keep it alive,—and he is so far successful, that, whenever I would do good, evil is present with me. I sometimes think that the prayers of believers afford a stronger proof of a depraved nature, than even the profaneness of those who know not the Lord. How strange is it, that when I have the fullest convictions that prayer is not only my duty—not only necessary as the appointed means of receiving those supplies, without which I can do nothing, but likewise the greatest honour and privilege to which I can be admitted in the present life,—I should still find myself so unwilling to engage in it. It seems that if I durst, or could do altogether without it, I should be willing. However, I think it is not prayer itself that I am weary of, but such prayers as *mine*. How can it be accounted prayer, when the heart is so little affected,—when it is polluted with such a

mixture of vile and vain imaginations,—when I hardly know what I say myself,—but I feel my mind collected one minute, the next, my thoughts are gone to the ends of the earth. If what I express with my lips were written down, and the thoughts which at the same time are passing through my heart were likewise written between the lines, the whole taken together would be such an absurd and incoherent jumble—such a medley of inconsistency, that it might pass for the ravings of a lunatic. When he points out to me the wildness of this jargon, and asks, is this a prayer fit to be presented to the holy heart-searching God? I am at a loss what to answer, till it is given me to recollect that I am not under the law, but under grace,—that my hope is to be placed, not in my own prayers, but in the righteousness and intercession of Jesus. The poorer and viler I am in myself, so much the more is the power and riches of His grace magnified in my behalf. Therefore I must, and, the Lord being my helper, I will pray on, and admire his condescension and love, that He can and does take notice of such a creature,—for the event shows, that those prayers which are even displeasing to myself, partial as I am in my own case, are acceptable to Him, how else should

they be answered? and that I am still permitted to come to a throne of grace,—still supported in my walk and in my work, and that mine enemies have not yet prevailed against me, and triumphed over me, affords a full proof that the Lord has heard and has accepted my poor prayers,—yea, it is possible, that those very prayers of ours of which we are most ashamed, are the most pleasing to the Lord, and for that reason, because we *are* ashamed of them. When we are favoured with what we call enlargement, we come away tolerably satisfied with ourselves, and think we have done well. A thought of that sort, so contrary to the brokenness and abasement of spirit which becomes a pardoned dependent sinner, may be more justly offensive to the Lord, than all that darkness, confusion, and wandering, which we bewail, but cannot remedy. What, my dear Sir, is the proper attainment of an advanced and veteran believer, which distinguishes him from a young convert? Your years of experience qualify you to be a proper judge of this question. Is it that he has a greater command of his own thoughts,—that he has at length acquired some kind of sufficiency to maintain a spiritual frame of mind, and to stand proof against surrounding temptations? Or is it not

rather that, from what he has seen and felt in the course of his experience, he has acquired a quicker and more abiding sense of his own nothingness, and the desperate deceitfulness and wickedness of his heart, than he could possibly be possessed of at his first setting out; and therefore has made a nearer approach to the character of a broken and contrite spirit, which the Lord speaks of as his peculiar delight? It seems to me that they are the greatest Christians who are most sensible of their own weakness—are brought most into the spirit of a little child, and to whom, of course, Jesus, in all his characters and offices, is more immediately necessary and precious. When we are thus weak, we are strong. In this way we die to self; and instead of being impatient and uneasy (as we once were), that we have neither wisdom, strength, nor righteousness of our own, we are glad to be nothing, that Christ may be more illustriously manifested to be All in All. Surely, had I only needed Him now and then to help me (as we say) at a dead lift, I could not have felt myself so much indebted to Him, as by having found myself unable to take one step, or to think one thought aright, without Him from first to last.

I believe there is no degree of knowledge or experience that can secure us from being pain-



fully affected by the suggestions of Satan, if the Lord gives him liberty to assault us with violence; but though we cannot avoid feeling them, we have wherewith to oppose. Satan seldom tries to persuade me that I am a hypocrite,—though I think he might find enough in me whereon to ground his charge. I am, indeed, a poor creature; but if I can know whether I am hot or cold, in the house or in the street, cannot I tell, with equal certainty, what I love and what I want? Satan himself can hardly deny that a great change has taken place in my judgment, desires, and pursuits, since the dark days when I was his willing servant. For about twenty-seven years he has been thrusting sore at me that I might fall, and spreading snares for my feet; yea, he has cast me down, and taken me in his nets many a time,—yet still I have escaped—still I am alive. How was the change first wrought in me, and how have I been preserved hitherto,—surely not by my own power and goodness? It was then of the Lord; he opened my eyes; he said unto me, Live; he has guided me with his eye, pleaded the causes of my soul, and fought my battle. He made the promise; He caused me to hope in it. He revealed himself to me as a refuge,—but I saw Him at a distance, and could

not get near till He gave me power. These were important, real transactions,—a surrender on my part, an acceptance on the Lord's, and both often repeated. How can Satan himself dare to call them speculations or delusions: he knows they are not. He knows they have been effectual as mountains of brass, to secure my soul from his malice. He can easily prove me to be vile and unworthy; but if he could do any thing to the purpose, let him prove that Jesus did not die upon the cross, or that he did not rise from the grave, or that he is not now appearing in the presence of God for us. Then, indeed, I should sink in despair, and he would gain his end. The Lord, who has brought you through seventy-six years, will be with you to the end. Death has lost its sting,—and, when viewed near at hand by the eye of faith, is not frightful, but rather, as Dr Watts says, “he has an angel's face.”—Mrs Newton joins in affectionate respects to you.—I am, &c.

TO MR ROBERT JONES.

*Olney, 8th January 1777.*

DEAR SIR,—If the Lord is pleased to make any thing that I can offer acceptable and com-

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fortable to you, I ought to be thankful. This encourages and prompts me to write as frequently as I can. Of late I have been prevented. I was more than a month at London under a surgeon's hand. The operation was painful, but quickly over, and the wound was speedily and happily healed. Since that trial, the Lord was pleased to appoint me another month of exercise, by visiting my dear Mrs Newton with an alarming nervous disorder in her head. This proved sharper to me than the surgeon's knife. But we sought the Lord, and he helped us. He supported us in affliction, and He has delivered us out of it. He has sent His word, and healed her, so that we have much to praise Him for. Years of health are mercies,—intervals of sickness are mercies likewise,—to the flesh they are not joyous but grievous; but there is a need-be for them, and peaceful fruits of righteousness to be gathered from them, if not immediately, yet *afterward*. Afflictions are either medicines which our Physician and best friend sees our spiritual maladies require, or they are furnaces to prove and purify our graces; or, lastly, they are occasions which His providence appoints for the clearer manifestation of His power and love to us, in us, and by us. When He darkens our sky, and brings a

cloud over us, it is a ground on which he designs to paint his covenant rainbow. The rainbow is a beautiful and wonderful appearance, but it is never seen in fair weather. Suppose the general rule of entering the kingdom through many tribulations, had been dispensed with in your favour or mine. If we had gone to heaven as upon a carpet, without meeting one rough step or strong blast all the way, still we should have been losers. Our dearest experience of the wisdom, love, compassion, and faithfulness of our shepherd, have been gathered from the unpromising stock of afflictions. The Lord has been most signally seen by us, as stretching forth his mighty arms to support, provide, and defend, not in the plain of ease, but in the mount of difficulty. Had we missed those trials which we were, perhaps, most afraid of in prospect, and which we were most prone to think either unnecessary or severe, we had likewise missed such answers of prayer, and such gracious interpositions of a wonder-working God, as we now allow to be well with all they cost us,—not to say what still greater evils they might be designed to prevent. Satan is compared to a fowler; he is continually spreading snares and nets for our feet; and we too often, like heedless birds, are hasting to

them, not knowing that it is for our life. How frequently may the Lord, by a seasonable affliction, have interposed to rouse and warn our spirits, and thereby disappoint the enemy's design! How often do the Lord's people pray for a more experimental knowledge of the power and sweetness of his promises! These prayers are chiefly answered by afflictions, and cannot well be answered without them, since the greatest part of the promises are made to a state of affliction; and unless we are in that state to which they refer, how can we set our seal to them, that they are true? We may, indeed, in general, believe them to be true, though we have no occasion to try them; but when we have been in trouble, and found support, and encouragement, and relief from them, then we can say, "Now I know that the end is sure, for I sought the Lord in my trouble, and he heard and answered me."

In the course of a long life you have had many Ebenezers to raise, and now you have them to look back upon,—and it is a pleasing review, suited to fill you with praise and thankfulness for what is past, and to encourage you with respect to the few remaining conflicts which may yet await you. At your time of life they cannot

be many. You have reached the farther end of the wilderness, and will soon be upon Jordan's bank. You have only now, with Jacob, to wait a little for the fulness of that salvation which you have already seen, and embraced, and felt, and tasted, in its beginnings and earnestness. Happy thought! methinks, if my faith and love were in more lively exercise, I should long to be as near my great change as I suppose you to be. It is, indeed, uncertain who will go first; but, according to human probability, I may outlive you a few years; and I seem well content it should be so: if it may be, to be useful in His church, I ought to be content. This is the only motive I would willingly allow; but I fear my spirit cleaves to the dust, and that the many temporal comforts with which the Lord indulges me, make me but too well satisfied with this present evil world. Blessed Saviour! will it be necessary for thee to employ pains, and crosses, and bitter dispensations, to make me heartily willing to behold thee as thou art, and to be with thee. O for a more spiritual mind! Lord, quicken me, and enable me to wait thy summons with desire, as the weary labourer eyes the declining sun, and longs for its setting.—Best love to your son and daughter. I do hope to write to him

soon ; but I must take you first, for fear you should be gone out of my reach. Mrs Newton joins me in affectionate respects. That the Lord's presence may cheer your remaining nights and days, and then make your dismissal triumphant and glorious, is the sincere prayer of, &c.

TO MR JOSIAH JONES.

*Olney, 28th October 1778.*

DEAR SIR,—I am much obliged to you for giving me such early intelligence of the removal of my much respected friend—your father. I can easily conceive that, however you may rejoice for him, your loss is great, and you must, for the present, feel some pain and grief. But I trust the Lord will comfort you, and make up your loss abundantly from his own all-sufficiency. Reflection, prayer, and time, will make this and every trial light.

For my own part, not having so much personal interest in his life as you had, and chiefly viewing his dismissal as to his own concernment, I cannot say I grieved for the news. I had often felt for his infirmities ; his great deafness was a trial ; but when he wrote me word that he was appre-

hensive his eyes would fail him likewise, from this time I was prepared to hear of his death as an event (at his time of life especially) rather to be rejoiced in; for his situation would have been desolate and very distressing to you, had he lived to be blind as well as deaf. The Lord does all things well. You have reason to be thankful that he was spared to you and his family so long. He lived honourably, and died comfortably; he is now out of the reach of sin and sorrow; he is now before the throne. Shall we grieve for him? Rather let us rejoice. He is gone but a little before us. We hope, ere long, to see him again to unspeakable advantage. When we meet our friends in yonder happy land, we shall part no more.

Upon such considerations I am reconciled to my own loss, for I account myself a loser too. I set a great value upon his friendship,—took pleasure in the hope that I shared in his prayers. I have likewise been benefited by his correspondence. I might have had more of this advantage had I been more punctual in writing. I have often regretted that the multiplicity of my engagements prevented me from writing so frequently as my affection would have prompted me, and his kindness deserved; and I feel this



regret most sensibly, now that I can hear from him no more. All the letters I ever received from him I have by me, and shall preserve them as a treasure.

I am glad to hear that Mrs Jones' health is so much better than when you wrote last. May the Lord spare you long to each other. Perhaps I am better qualified to sympathize with you as a husband than as a son. A separation of this kind is, perhaps, the sharpest trial you and I are liable to. But all our concerns are in the hands of our best Friend, to whose goodness we owe all our comforts, and that blessing which alone could make them truly comfortable ; and we may trust Him, that He will take nothing from us that it would be best for us to have continued ; and, whenever the time comes, He is rich enough to make up every loss, and strong enough to support us under every affliction. This is a changeable world, and we must prepare (we know not how soon) to leave or be left by all we love below ; but, whatever changes, His love is unchangeable ; and whoever dies, He will still live, and still be the strength of our hearts, and our everlasting portion. Within these two years past, Mrs Newton has had frequent attacks of illness,—some of them have been very alarming. But when we

have been brought low, He has helped us. She has been relieved and restored again and again, and of late enjoys a comfortable share of health. We have lived together almost twenty-nine years, and have had, upon the whole, a richly favoured lot. It is my desire to commit the little uncertain remainder of life, with all that may yet be before us, to Him who has brought us thus far, and has promised to be our guide and guard even unto death.

We join in sincere love to you, and to Mrs Jones, and in begging a remembrance in your prayers.—I am, &c.

TO MR JOSIAH JONES.

*Olney, 13th May 1779.*

DEAR SIR,—We were at Northampton when your son's letter arrived, and I had thought of writing this post, even if I had not heard from you last. Miss Jones was much affected, but she seemed composed when we left her. I believe she feels her own loss, as well as a concern on your account. I have often heard her speak with great respect and affection of her mama; but she has, doubtless, written for herself before now, and I must try and write in another strain.

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Perhaps no one who has not been exactly in your case is better qualified to feel for you than myself. Mrs Newton's repeated illness has often made such a stroke painfully familiar to my imagination ; but I know imagination, when most busy, has formed but a faint idea of what I should probably have felt, had I been actually brought to the trial,—I mean so far as I should be left to my own feelings. But still I have been encouraged to hope and expect that I should find, as I trust you now do, the truth and sweetness of that promise of strength according to our day. The Lord whom we serve is an all-sufficient God. He affords us much comfort by the medium of creatures, but he can comfort and satisfy us without them. His smile can cheer us, though the whole creation around us should frown or fail. He is rich enough to make good every loss which he calls us to sustain. I compare creatures to candles. By the light they give us we may see that they themselves are wasting away ; and, when they are burnt down to the socket, and quite extinguished, the light of the sun can well supply their place. The Lord is our sun ; and whoever dies, while he lives, we may still say, and he can enable us to say, I have all and abound. I hope he will give you to know, in this time of need,

that his loving-kindness, and the light of his countenance, are better than life itself, or all its dearest comforts.

I can sympathize with you,—I hope to pray for you ; but as to the advice you ask, what can I offer but what you already know? Shall I advise you not to grieve? It would be cold, unfeeling advice. The Lord, who knows our frame, does not require us to be Stoics. He mercifully shows to us that these things, for the present, are not joyous but grievous ; at the same time, He has kindly provided that we should weep as though we wept not. Reasons abound in His Word why we should not merely submit to His appointments, but cheerfully acquiesce in them. For, besides that He has a sovereign right to dispose of us and of ours as He pleases,—besides that the consideration of our sinfulness and unworthiness, should stop our mouths from complaining,—we are farther assured that He loves us and cares for us, and chooses for us unspeakably better than we could for ourselves. He is kind and merciful in bestowing so many comforts upon us, and continuing them to us, when we hourly deserve to lose them ; but, when He resumes what He gave, or rather what he lent (for we have nothing properly our own), He is still

equally merciful and kind ; He brings no trouble upon us without a need-be, nor a day sooner than that need-be is required. If we could see the propriety of every event as it has place under His disposal, with all its causes and consequences, —all it is designed to produce and to prevent,— we should be filled with admiration, and cry out, He has done all things well. We shall certainly see things thus hereafter ; but here we walk by faith, and it is our duty and our comfort to believe now what, as yet, we cannot so clearly see. The time is short. The friends for whom you mourn are happy : now they are singing before the throne, and you ere long shall join them, and sing with them, and be for ever with them and with the Lord. In the meanwhile, the Lord, who has given you faith and grace, appoints you to the post of honour, and calls you to suffering, that you may have the opportunity of glorifying him in the face of the church and of the world, that the power of your principles, and the sincerity of your profession, may be evidenced to His praise. You can only serve him thus in the present life, and in the path of affliction. In the world whither you are going there will be no room for the exercise of patience and submission, and those graces which exhibit most of the mind

of a suffering Saviour. You are His, and not your own ; and it is an honour, indeed, to be called and enabled to suffer as a Christian. These are acknowledged truths, and, when the Lord himself is pleased to apply them, we feel their power and comfort. But they will not comfort you as coming from me. Glad shall I be if He makes me the instrument of reminding you, as from Himself, of what you already know. If the light of His Spirit breaks in upon your mind while you are reading, you will rejoice in tribulation. I pray that it may be so.—Believe me, &c.

THE END.

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