

**General Topics :: Letters of John Newton****Letters of John Newton - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/12/18 18:13**

Hi friends,

I just wanted to recommend the Letters of John Newton to you. They were originally published under the title "Cardiphonia", and you can still find some copies under that name floating around. However, Banner of Truth Trust recently reprinted his letters and titled the book "Letters of John Newton".

They are rich in a multitude of ways, containing both sound theology and pastoral care and affection.

You can read some of them online: [http://www.puritansermons.com/newton/newt\\_b.htm](http://www.puritansermons.com/newton/newt_b.htm)

With care in Christ,  
Taylor

**Re: Letters of John Newton - posted by crsschk (), on: 2008/12/18 23:12**

Hi Taylor,

Just ordered this last night along with another that appears to be pretty compelling from the reviews I read.

We have a number of posts floating around here primarily from Grace Gems on John Newton. I have been very influenced by his ... disposition, his spiritual heart but I think I really want to say even more convicted in a healthy way. Have lost my moorings of late, many challenges in present circumstances, a lot of it has been pretty overwhelming - fatigued, responsibilities at work, the prayer life has suffered.

I am really looking forward to these two books, something of a Christmas present to myself - One of the reviews said that after reading it they felt a warmth they had not felt in some time.

**Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2008/12/19 0:07**

Mike could you put the title of that other book, I am curious?

**Re: Letters of John Newton - posted by ccchhrrriiisss (), on: 2008/12/19 0:29**

Thank you for this, brother!

:~)

**Re: Letters of John Newton - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/12/19 0:48**

This is a real treasure trove Taylor!

Greg and Mike, the mods, have both posted a few excerpts from these letters recently and I must say I have never been moved more by any man's writings.

I would encourage all who have not sampled to drink deep. It's the good stuff!!!

Thanks again.

Grace and Peace

**Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2008/12/19 1:27**

My copy came tonight! Thanks for the recommendation!

**Re: John Newton's Letters - posted by crsschk (), on: 2008/12/19 8:45**

Quote:

-----Mike could you put the title of that other book, I am curious?  
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Sure brother;

John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition: Between the Conversions of Wesley and Wilberforce -

D. Bruce Hindmarsh

### Synopsis

Dr Hindmarsh draws upon extensive archival and antiquarian sources to provide a serious, scholarly consideration of the life and religious thought of John Newton (1725-1807). In addition, he uses the theme of Newton as a 'sort of middle man' to explore the religious understanding of a whole generation who knew themselves as 'evangelical' although this was different from those who later adopted the term as a badge of partisan loyalty. The author shows how Newton is related to other Church of England evangelicals, Methodists, and various Dissenting bodies, and how his life sheds light on little explored aspects of the Evangelical Revival which contribute to an understanding and reassessment of the eighteenth-century church. In addition to discussion of themes in historical theology, pastoralia, and spirituality, an analysis of conversion narrative, the familiar letter, and hymnody contribute to an understanding of the relationship between religion and culture more generally.

<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/John-Newton-and-the-English-Evangelical-Tradition/D-Bruce-Hindmarsh/e/9780802847416/?itm=5>

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Great to see these responses - There is a sense of Newton being the wishful representative of what SI is all about at its core ... Just that sheer honesty of heart.

*I know not the length of your college terms, but hope this may come time enough to find you still resident. I shall not apologize for writing no sooner, because I leave other letters of much longer date unanswered that I may write so soon. It gave me particular pleasure to hear that the Lord helped you through your difficulties, and succeeded your desires. And I have sympathized with you in the complaints you make of a dark and mournful frame of spirits afterwards. But is not this, upon the whole, right and salutary, that, if the Lord is pleased at one time to strengthen us remarkably in answer to prayer, he should leave us at another time, so far as to give us a real sensibility that we were supported by his power, and not our own?*

Loneliness—Mathematics—Academia

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/12/19 9:54**

Quote:

-----I am really looking forward to these two books, something of a Christmas present to myself - One of the reviews said that after reading it they felt a warmth they had not felt in some time.  
-----

I agree. The spiritual depth of the letters is amazing, and the wisdom therein is very valuable.

Below is one of my favorite sections:

*But how must I attempt your comfort? Surely not by strengthening a mistake to which we are all too liable, by leading you to look into your own heart for (what you will never find there) something in yourself whereon to ground your hopes, if not wholly, yet at least in part.*

***Rather let me endeavour to lead you out of yourself; let me invite you to look unto Jesus. Should we look for light in our own eyes, or in the sun? Is it indwelling sin distresses you? Then I can tell you (though you know it) that at Jesus died for sin and sinners.*** I can tell you that His blood and righteousness are of infinite value; that His arm is almighty and His compassions infinite; yea, you yourself read His promises every day, and why should you doubt their being fulfilled? If you say you do not question their truth, or that they are accomplished to many, but that you can hardly believe they belong to you, I would ask, what evidence you would require? A voice or an angel from Heaven you do not expect.

*Consider, if many of the promises are not expressly directed to those to whom they belong. When you read your name on the superscription of this letter you make no scruple to open it: why, then, do you hesitate at embracing the promises of the Gospel, where you read that they are addressed to those who mourn, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who are poor in spirit, &c., and cannot but be sensible that a gracious God has begun to work these dispositions in your heart?*

Enjoy!

**Re: - posted by ccchhhrrriiisss (), on: 2008/12/19 10:12**

Thanks Mike...

I might order this too. It sounds like something quite similar in tone (or at least attitude) to Bunyan's *Grace Abounding unto the Chief of Sinners*. I am presently looking for a new copy of it (as my last disappeared...hopefully into good hands). Thanks for the recommend!

:)

**Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2008/12/19 17:05**

I recently finished the Penguin Paperbacks version of *Grace Abounding*, purchased at discount on [monergismbooks.com](http://www.monergismbooks.com). This is it: (<http://www.monergismbooks.com/Grace-Abounding-to-the-Chief-of-Sinners-p-16243.html>) *Grace Abounding*

**Re: - posted by ccchhhrrriiisss (), on: 2008/12/19 18:10**

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

I recently finished the Penguin Paperbacks version of *Grace Abounding*, purchased at discount on [monergismbooks.com](http://www.monergismbooks.com). This is it: (<http://www.monergismbooks.com/Grace-Abounding-to-the-Chief-of-Sinners-p-16243.html>) *Grace Abounding*

Thanks! What a bargain!

:)

**Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2008/12/19 18:36**

Another great collection of letters are those of Samuel Rutherford-  
(<http://www.monergismbooks.com/Letters-of-Samuel-Rutherford-PP-p-16283.html>) Letters of Samuel Rutherford(paper back)

There is also an unabridged version-  
(<http://www.monergismbooks.com/Letters-of-Samuel-Rutherford-Unabridged-p-16326.html>) Letters(unabridged)

And also a very helpful little pocket sized book of excerpts from the letters(very good)-  
(<http://www.monergismbooks.com/The-Loveliness-of-Christ-p-17559.html>) Loveliness of Christ

The majority of these letters were written while Rutherford was imprisoned, yet they exude and exalt Christ.

**Re: - posted by Fuegodedios (), on: 2008/12/19 19:18**

Thanks for the recommended books. I actually wanted to buy the John Newton Letters. I will add this to my list of many books I want to read. Thanks

**Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/12/19 21:24**

While we're on the subject of John Newton, I would invite you to also study his hymns. They are all comprised of real meat; in one hymn alone you often get a full meal.

Take the following hymn for example:

How David, when by sin deceived,  
From bad to worse went on!  
For when the Holy Spirit's grieved,  
Our strength and guard are gone.

His eye on Bathsheba once fixed,  
With poison filled his soul;  
He ventured on adultery next,  
And murder crowned the whole.

So from a spark of fire at first,  
That has not been descried;  
A dreadful flame has often burst,  
And ravaged far and wide.

When sin deceives it hardens too,  
For though he vainly fought  
To hide his crimes from public view,  
Of God he little thought.

He neither would, or could repent,  
No true compunction felt;  
Till God in mercy Nathan sent,  
His stubborn heart to melt.

The parable held forth a fact,  
Designed his case to show;  
But though the picture was exact,  
Himself he did not know.

"Thou art the man," the prophet said,  
That word his slumber broke;  
And when he owned his sin, and prayed,

The Lord forgiveness spoke.

Let those who think they stand, beware,  
For David stood before;  
Nor let the fallen soul despair,  
For mercy can restore.

This sober hymn recounts David's notorious failing with Bathsheba, but Newton is able bring it home to us in a very close and personal way. In a few short stanzas he is able to crack the shell and extract the kernel of truth as it pertains to us under the New Covenant. You'll find everything there: the subject, the cause, the result, the warning, and finally, the rest oration. It's a blessed parallel, a perfect fit, and it further teaches us what good, solid hermeneutics look like. It whets your appetite to dive deeper in the scriptures to discover your own treasures. What New Testament gems can be uncovered from the account of Joseph and Potiphar's wife? Of Samson and Delilah? Of Elijah and Jezebel? It's exciting to think we will spend our lifetimes mining this trove and never reach the bottom. When I think of the Bible, I remember this old cartoon I saw when I was a child of Ali Baba and the thieves. They had broken into a treasure chamber, and all you could see was an ocean of coins and sparkling diamonds and rubies. You could see half-open treasure chests protruding from the mounds of coins which were totally gorged with jewelry and more gold coins and emeralds. Treasures upon treasures. I remember the ecstatic thieves diving into this abyss of gold coins, going down beneath the surface, and coming back up with sapphire crowns and scintillating necklaces and shimmering cutlasses and all kinds of glittering stones cascading down their heads like water. It was as if the sea of riches had no bottom, no horizon - it just went on and on and on.

That's how I see the Bible, only the Bible's riches are far more marvellous. They can transform you from the inside out and give you supernatural wisdom. The wisdom from above is priceless, to be sought more ardently than mere silver and gold and corruptible stones. The treasure den in the Ali Baba story had a door; God's wisdom and choicest riches come from above, from a doorless eternity. The only requirement to enter into this exceedingly abundant storehouse is to simply "ask" of God; He is waiting on His throne to give us from His storehouse more riches than we can possibly fathom.

O dear Lord, we thank thee for thy Word.

**Re: John Newton's Letters - posted by crsschk (), on: 2008/12/21 0:04**

### **On Dreaming**

1 When slumber seals our weary eyes,  
The busy fancy wakeful keeps;  
The scenes which then before us rise,  
Prove something in us never sleeps.

2 As in another world we seem,  
A new creation of our own,  
All appears real, though a dream,  
And all familiar, though unknown.

3 Sometimes the mind beholds again  
The past day's business in review,  
Resumes the pleasure or the pain;  
And sometimes all we meet is new.

4 What schemes we form, what pains we take!  
We fight, we run, we fly, we fall;  
But all is ended when we wake,  
We scarcely then a trace recall.

5 But though our dreams are often wild,  
Like clouds before the driving storm;  
Yet some important may be styl'd,  
Sent to admonish or inform.

6 What mighty agents have access,  
What friends from heav'n, or foes from hell,  
Our minds to comfort or distress,  
When we are sleeping, who can tell?

7 One thing, at least, and 'tis enough,  
We learn from this surprising fact;  
Our dreams afford sufficient proof,  
The soul, without the flesh, can act.

8 This life, which mortals so esteem,  
That many choose it for their all,  
They will confess, was but a dream,\*\*\*  
When 'waken'd by death's awful call.

\*\*\*Isaiah 29:8

([http://www.puritansermons.com/newton/newt\\_b.htm](http://www.puritansermons.com/newton/newt_b.htm)) John Newton

**Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/12/21 7:48**

Bitter and Sweet

Kindle, Saviour, in my heart,  
A flame of love divine;  
Hear, for mine I trust thou art,  
And sure I would be thine;  
If my soul has felt thy grace,  
If to me thy name is known;  
Why should trifles fill the place  
Due to thyself alone?

'Tis a strange mysterious life  
I live from day to day;  
Light and darkness, peace and strife,  
Bear an alternate sway:  
When I think the battle won,  
I have to fight it o'er again;  
When I say I'm overthrown,  
Relief I soon obtain.

Often at the mercy-seat,  
While calling on thy name,  
Swarms of evil thoughts I meet,  
Which fill my soul with shame.  
Agitated in my mind,  
Like a feather in the air,  
Can I thus a blessing find?  
My soul, can this be pray'r?

But when Christ, my Lord and Friend,  
Is pleas'd to show his pow'r  
All at once my troubles end,  
And I've a golden hour;  
Then I see his smiling face,  
Feel the pledge of joys to come:  
Often, Lord, repeat this grace  
Till thou shalt call me home.

John Newton

**Re: Letters of John Newton - posted by crsschk (), on: 2009/1/30 11:11**

Wondering just what you all are gleaning from your reading of these things, the books mentioned ...

Thought I might call it up to attention again.

I have been really busy and can only grab short times of reading but that which I have has me already thinking out ahead to more and more - Briefly, one of the things that has really stood out to me is the parallels to even this setting, this forum. It is a form of 'letter writing' in it's own rite and perhaps the challenge is that rather than the more personal letter that is one to one - It's one to many ...

At the same time though it has been also a humbling and a conviction, just how far yet there is to go - where I have failed to be as charitable as I ought amongst other things ...

Have been going back and forth between the two books mentioned earlier - One being more of a discourse and extrapolation of his life, the style of his writings and so forth ... too early to tell and frankly some of it sits a bit skewed in making much ado of the 'style' of writing, the comparisons to the novel and it's development - it's done fairly enough ... maybe it's the slight sense of too much tweaking with someones expressed honesty? Too didactic? Again, still early ...

A couple of things that caught my attention and had me searching all about for more info. One, *The Eclectic Society* which was mentioned in the same book and a bit to follow, the other being the *Authentic Narrative* that looks to be the next up on the list somewhere down the road. Even within that *Narrative*, some names that influenced him have me also wanting to know more about them as well.

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### Newton clips from Cornerstone course

Here are a few highlights from the Cornerstone course--John Newton session. They are pretty raw, but I thought folks might like to see and interact with them:

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Yes, he was a sea captain—a backslider from his mother's evangelical faith—who worked in the slave trade and had many adventures and near-death experiences. And yes, it was a storm at sea that first turned him back to God in prayer, (although his ship didn't capsize).

But Newton didn't get hauled out of the water, dry himself off, and write the famous hymn. No, "Amazing Grace" belonged to a second, and Newton believed, far more exciting and important, phase of his life. The part where he became the Anglican curate of an impoverished English midlands town, then the rector of one of London's most prestigious parishes. And became the most influential person to shape evangelicalism in its crucial "teen years" after the heyday of John Wesley.

To Newton, those years as a lonely soul wrestling with God through dangerous situations in exotic locales did not hold a candle, for excitement and eternal significance, to his long career as a pastor.

... the hundreds of warm Christian friendships he built over the years, and the work he did to bring Christians together across boundaries of class, denomination, and theology. **These** were the touchstone of his years as pastor—and what he would really want us to remember him for.

Newton was the ultimate Christian boundary-crosser and bridge-builder. He was a Calvinist who accepted Arminians, a state-church pastor who encouraged independent churches, friend of prominent personalities who was comfortable in the

e company of the working poor.

In an America more pluralistic than ever on its Christian scene—<sup>^</sup>not to mention the many non-Christian religions—<sup>^</sup>John Newton is a man worth knowing.

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Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,  
that saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind but now I see.

Though some today wonder if the word "wretch" is hyperbole or a bit of dramatic license, John Newton clearly did not think so. In fact often, throughout his life, he referred to himself as "the old African blasphemer."

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It was during this period of peak influence in his London parish that Newton founded the Eclectic Society, a group of like-minded "Gospel" clergy, to discuss the issues of the day. It was, he said, "the society that bears no name, and espouses no party." It included in its membership Anglicans, nonconformists, and even a Moravian or two.

The agenda of each monthly meeting was driven by a single question, submitted by one of the members at the end of the previous meeting. The members would take turns answering, and Newton kept minutes in a small journal.

The questions spanned theological issues, cultural trends, and the practical trials and dilemmas of church and family life—<sup>^</sup>from "How should we reconcile Paul and James on justification?" to "What are the particular dangers of youth in the present day?"

Newton insisted the group maintain a high tone of gracious humility. In responding to theological error and dealing with ecclesiastical foes, kindness always took precedence over sternness and persuasion over polemics.

"If we stretch our authority, we lose it," Newton observed.

In both its charitable tone and its parachurch format, the Eclectic Society became the model for other parachurch societies (including William Wilberforce's influential Clapham Sect) and agencies (including the great British missionary societies, two of which were birthed out of the Eclectic Society).

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### How Did Newton Build Bridges?

By ministering to the needy, engendering hope in hopeless places.

By building broad personal friendships, fostered by considerable personal correspondence.

By holding fast to his theological convictions, but not allowing them to prevent cooperation.

By working within the government-sanctioned religious system where possible, around it only when necessary.

By giving lay people power and responsibility, encouraging their freedom of thought (unfortunately, at the expense of his pastoral authority).

By gathering people with divergent views and encouraging civil conversation.

(<http://deadchristianssociety.blog.com/JOHN+NEWTON/>) Dead Christians Society



(Neat site!)

**Re: Letters of John Newton - posted by crsschk (), on: 2009/7/6 7:54**

**If I should meet a child who has lost his penny**

([http://www.gracegems.org/Newton/John\\_Newton1.htm](http://www.gracegems.org/Newton/John_Newton1.htm)) (Letters of John Newton)

"The Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone." 2 Timothy 2:24

John Newton's biographer writes, "When Mr. Newton moved to London--being of the most friendly and generous disposition, his house was open to Christians of all social ranks and church denominations. Here, like a father among his children, he used to entertain, encourage, and instruct his friends. Here also the poor, the afflicted, and the tempted found an asylum and a sympathy, which they could scarcely find, in an equal degree, anywhere else. Sometimes his whole day was so benevolently spent, that he was found both rejoicing with those who rejoiced--and literally weeping with those who wept!"

"I remember to have heard him say, 'I see two heaps in this world--of human happiness and misery. If I can take but the smallest bit from one heap--and add to the other, I shall be content. As I am on my way home, if I should meet a child who has lost his penny--and if, by giving him another penny, I could wipe away his tears--I feel I have done something. I would be glad, indeed, to do greater things--but I will not neglect these smaller acts of kindness.'

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." Colossians 3:12

**Re: Letters and notes of John Newton - posted by JoanM, on: 2009/7/6 11:06**

Dear Brother Crsschk

You wrote: "Newton was the ultimate Christian boundary-crosser and bridge-builder". AND from Newton -- "If I can take but the smallest bit from one heap--and add to the other ..."

Frankly, that is evangelism, witnessing the crossing of that great fixed gulf.

There is a wonderful example of this that Newton may or may not have been aware of as he put words and music (letter and notes) to what God put into his heart. You might almost call it evidence of the gifts and enabling that God gives in salvation. His purpose becomes worked out in all we do, large and small, visible and hidden.

(<http://pjcockrell.wordpress.com/2007/11/22/amazing-grace-just-the-black-notes/>) Enjoy redemption in a sorrow chant. Connected (bridged) by God's Amazing Grace. I would not even be surprised if the sorrow chant itself was redeemed by God as the gospel saturated hearts that first heard it in physical chains. (Godly sorrow is a precious gift.)