

‘We are all brother-journeymen in one shop’

John Newton as Pastor

David T. Wood

In the final years of his life, Rev. John Newton was asked by Richard Cecil if and when he was ever going to give up preaching. Newton’s answer was apt. He replied, ‘I cannot stop. What! Shall the old African blasphemer stop while he can speak?’¹ Again, this time just months before his death, Rev. William Jay visited his 82-year-old mentor and friend. At this point in his life, Newton was hardly able to speak, but managed to utter these profound words: ‘My memory is nearly gone; but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Saviour.’² Both anecdotes form a perfect summation of Newton’s *self-understanding* – as a sinner saved by God’s grace, and *calling* – to be a minister of the Gospel for as long as the Lord gave him breath.

Most people, of course, are familiar with Newton’s famous hymn, ‘Amazing Grace’ but remain woefully uninformed about his life.³ Even those who are aware of John Newton tend to know only the dramatic story of his conversion from a slave trader to an evangelical Christian, while remaining ignorant of his work as a pastor – a vocation which occupied 43 of his 82 years!

This study intends to introduce John Newton as a faithful pastor by exploring his call into ministry and his pastoral experience in both Olney and London. Finally, this essay will argue that Newton’s pastoral practice was *shaped by his conversion experience, grounded in pragmatism, nurtured by his network of friends, and sustained through spiritual exercises.*

Shaped by his experience

It was in Liverpool that Newton began to take in Gospel preaching wherever he could find it. A diary entry from 23 February, 1755 captures this growing hunger to hear God’s Word faithfully preached. He writes, ‘Sunday, 23rd. Rose at five. Went to the Tabernacle, and heard Mr Adams on Matt. V.6; a very comfortable sermon. The forenoon at Mr Brewer’s. In the afternoon heard Dr Jennings.’⁴

In September, 1755, Newton met George Whitefield and was struck by the power of his preaching. In fact, over the course of five days, Newton recorded in his diary no less than fourteen encounters with Whitefield.⁵ From this point onwards, Newton sought out as much Gospel preaching as he could regardless of whether it came from a Dissenting pulpit or one in the Church of England. In April, 1756, Newton met with John Wesley. By 1758, through the encouragement of Rev. James Scott and Rev. William Grimshaw, Newton had begun to prayerfully consider the subject of ministry.⁶

In the summer of 1758, Newton spent six weeks examining his heart and conscience to see if God was truly calling him into ministry. Newton recorded this process of vocational discernment in his *Miscellaneous Thoughts and Enquiries Upon an Important Subject*.⁷ Following a regimen of prayer, meditation, fasting and prayer, Newton concluded this process with words of surrender to the Sovereign will of God. He wrote:

If it shall please thee, O Lord, to magnify thy mercy to a poor wretch who not long since was possessed by a legion of unclean spirits wounding and tearing himself all about him...O Lord, call and I will answer, send and I will go...let me know thou hast accepted me and encourage me to go forth.⁸

Having surrendered himself to God’s Sovereign call, Newton found that locating a parish in which to answer the call was more difficult than he anticipated. In late 1758, Newton applied for ordination to the Church of England and went to three clergymen for testimonials, but was refused.⁹

Newton’s discouragement continued in 1759. His diary captures this sense of frustration well: ‘Yesterday was a cold, unfruitful Sabbath indeed. Made some faint essays at prayer. When shall these heavy, tedious intervals be over? Oh, when shall I be all eye, all ear, all heart, in serving and waiting upon God?’¹⁰

While waiting for a ministry position, Newton was given opportunity at times to preach. In April, 1760, Newton preached a message in Yorkshire which was, in his opinion, an unmitigated disaster. He describes the experience:

The moment I began my eyes were riveted to the book, from a fear that if I looked off I should not readily find the line again. Thus with my head hanging down (for I was near-sighted), and fixed like a statue, I conned over my lesson like a boy learning to read, and did not stop till I came to the end.¹¹

Church positions were offered, refused, re-offered, considered and re-considered until 26 February, 1764, when, thanks to the intervention of William Legge, second Earl of Dartmouth, Newton secured the curacy in Olney, Buckinghamshire.

The six years between discerning the call of God to enter ministry and landing his position in Olney were difficult years for Newton. What enabled him to persist, however, was the encouragement he received from a growing network of evangelical friends and his decision to surrender his life completely to the Sovereign Will

of God. For Newton, it was the same experience of God's Providence and Grace that had saved him from destruction while at sea that sustained him during the uncertain waiting times between 1758 and 1764. This sense of Providence, combined with a firm resolve to surrender himself to God's call, is captured well in a letter Newton wrote to his dear friend Alexander Clunie in the summer of 1762: 'As to laying aside all thoughts of the Ministry, it is quite out of my power: I cannot, I will not give up the desire; though I hope I shall not run before I am sent.'¹²

Throughout his ministry, Newton never forgot the lessons learned at sea and during those years of waiting before entering ministry. Remembering God's grace and Providence served to sustain his passion and commitment as a pastor. Three years into his curacy in Olney, Newton records this prayer in a diary entry:

Thou has given an apostate a name and a place amongst Thy children – called an infidel to the ministry of the gospel. I am a poor wretch that once wandered naked and barefoot, without a home, without a friend; and now for me who once used to be on the ground, and was treated as a dog by all around me, Thou hast prepared a house suitable to the connection Thou hast put me into.¹³

His epitaph, written by himself, again underlines Newton's self-understanding as a sinner saved by grace and called to be a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It reads:

John Newton
Clerk
Once an infidel and libertine,
A servant of slaves in Africa,
Was,
By the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ,
Preserved, restored, pardoned,
And appointed to preach the faith
He had long laboured to destroy.¹⁴

By the time Newton began his ministry at St Mary Woolnoth in 1780, his reputation had spread throughout England. Though often tempted towards pride, Newton retained a remarkable sense of humility by remembering the past life out of which God had rescued him. In fact, his diaries reveal that the temptation towards grandiosity was something that Newton was continually aware of and struggled to resist - especially during his curacy in Olney.¹⁵ Even in London, Newton's struggle continued (though with greater mastery and wisdom). In 1799, meeting with members of the Eclectic Society, the question was raised, 'What is the best preparation for the pulpit?'. Newton's response was, 'Pay less attention to dear self – "How I come off."'¹⁶

Given the expanding recognition Newton received during the course of his ministry, it is amazing that he never developed an over-inflated view of himself. His humility – which was one of his enduring strengths as a pastor - was largely shaped by the memory of his past, in particular his experience at sea and his long wait to enter ministry, as well as the difficulties experienced during his ministry years. Newton's most famous hymn, 'Amazing Grace', serves as a testimony to his own spiritual autobiography – the belief that God, in His Providence, had 'saved a wretch' like him, had found him when he was lost and, when 'blind', had given him eyes to see.

Grounded in pragmatism

The events known as the Evangelical Revival in England and the Great Awakening in North America marked a distinctive shift away from the rationalistic tendencies of the hyper-Calvinism of the early eighteenth century towards a growing emphasis on religious experience and the importance of cultivating a lively exercise of faith in every area of life.¹⁷

Though Calvinist in theology, Newton refused to allow divisions along Calvinist and Arminian lines to eclipse God's call to live out a warm, affective faith. Accordingly, we find him as early as 1755 writing about Methodism that '...though I think them wrong in some things, I believe their foundation is good.'¹⁸ Again, in 1775, Newton displayed his pragmatism on such matters by writing,

I feel much more union of spirit with some Arminians than I could with some Calvinists; and if I thought a person feared sin, loved the word of God, and was seeking after Jesus, I would not walk the length of my study to proselyte him to the Calvinist doctrines.¹⁹

On 14 February, 1803, Newton poignantly summarized his view towards Calvinism by saying to his fellow Eclectic Society members, 'Calvinism should be diffused through our ministry as sugar is in tea; it should be tasted everywhere, though prominent nowhere.'²⁰

Newton's moderate Calvinism reflected a wider ecumenical tendency which also characterized eighteenth-century evangelicalism. Although he was ordained to the Church of England, his ministry style was more akin to that of Dissenting ministers than to the High Church tradition in which he found himself serving. And

though his position in Olney was with the Church of England, the demographics and the history of Olney, in many respects, suited his preaching and ministry style quite well. The Olney parish had long historical connections to Nonconformity, with much of the population being of Flemish-French Huguenot descent. As late as 1712, Dissenters made up 25 per cent of the population. Newton was in a perfect position to take advantage of the Puritan-Nonconformist constituency in Olney.²¹ In fact, when he began his ministry there, he noticed that there were many Dissenters amongst his rapidly growing congregation, and present at his sermons.²²

Newton also did not hesitate to make himself available to preach in pulpits surrounding his parish – Dissenting or otherwise. In October, 1770, he visited Northampton but was not permitted to preach at the church. Undeterred, he spoke several times at his friend’s home, twice to children in the school and again on the Wednesday and Friday evenings that week. His preaching attracted a wider audience than just the regular parishioners. At one occasion, he noted that ‘seven or eight ministers or preachers were present.’²³

In 1785, Newton visited his friend Walter Taylor at Portswood and because no pulpit was open to him, ended up preaching in Taylor’s home to over five hundred hearers! He noted in his diary, ‘We are often full.’²⁴

His preaching was seldom governed by the Church calendar, but rather was pragmatic, extempore, experimental, and designed to reach as wide an audience as possible. The primary role of the preacher, in Newton’s thinking, was to awaken sinners through the plain preaching of the Gospel. When asked what constitutes effectiveness in preaching, Newton replied that his approach included ‘...a solemn determination to bring forth Jesus Christ as the great subject in all my discourses.’ Preaching, in essence, was ‘Truth spoken in simplicity and affection.’²⁵

When asked what the best preparation for the pulpit was, his advice was not to be too anxious about it, for anxiety in preaching often led to the neglect of the Holy Spirit.²⁶ For him, the aim of preaching was essentially to produce effect and turn people’s attention to the person and work of Christ.²⁷

Historian Bruce Hindmarsh has noted that Newton’s style demonstrated a knack of pithy proverbial expression, combined with an ear for local colour and anecdote plus a willingness to express emotion from the pulpit.²⁸ Often, Newton’s conversations with his parishioners during the week formed the content of his messages. His desire was to preach in a manner that the ordinary auditor could grasp and appreciate. As a result, he avoided preparing messages which would be too lengthy for his parishioners to bear. In a letter, he writes, ‘Overlong sermons break in upon family concerns and often call off the thoughts from the sermon to the pudding at home that is in danger of being overboiled.’²⁹ Again he displays his characteristic pragmatism when in the same letter, he observes, ‘Perhaps it is better to feed our people like chickens, a little and often, than to cram them like turkeys till they cannot hold one gobbet more.’³⁰ These characteristics served him well throughout his ministry life and made him a popular preacher wherever he went.³¹

A closer look at Newton’s diaries shows that though he was a popular preacher, he was often an unprepared one. In September, 1774, Newton notes that for several weeks he did not have a text to preach on until the hour of preaching approached. Though he viewed this as evidence of depending on God’s grace, he nevertheless prayed about his lack of relish for God’s Word although he has been pressing it upon others. On 11 January, 1776, he writes, ‘Caught at a text almost upon the Pulpit stairs.’³²

Ministry in Olney

Newton’s first impressions of Olney were rather positive. He writes to Clunie, ‘Those who know and love the Gospel, of whom I hope there are many about me, receive me with the greatest kindness.’³³ When looking at his parishioners, Newton mentally divided them into three categories, of *hearers*, *professors*, and *believers*. His goal was to minister in such a way as to move hearers and professors into the category of believers. By the end of his first year, Newton was encouraged by what he saw. He wrote to Clunie that ‘There is, without doubt, an awakening and reviving work in and about Olney, though not attended with any noisy, or very remarkable appearances.’³⁴

Although only one sermon was required on the Sabbath, Newton’s practice was to preach in the morning and the afternoon, followed by a third lecture given in the evening to committed parishioners. The morning message was focused towards ‘believers’ whereas the afternoon message was directed towards reaching ‘sinners’. This practice went above and beyond the requirements of the Church of England which only required matins and evening prayer. On average, he ended up preaching in Olney roughly 5-6 sermons every week.

In addition to this, he showed a deep commitment to caring for his parishioners. Upon arrival in Olney, he began regular visitation and determined to call on everyone in his parish for an hour each every year. His diary reflects the routine into which he quickly settled. An entry on 19 July, 1764, reads, ‘My time passes pretty evenly. In the forenoon I write and read. In the afternoon walk about an hour or two among the people, and

sometime drink tea with them.’ On 25 July, ‘Walked to Emberton, and spent a pleasant hour with M. Cooper and seven or eight of her companion-cottagers.’³⁵

Pastoral care included a willingness to not only care for the souls of his parishioners, but also their bodies. Newton was often called upon to offer treatments and remedies to illnesses and ailments afflicting his parishioners. During his curacy he employed an ‘electric machine’ that treated rheumatic disorder, and weighed up the benefits of smallpox inoculation.³⁶

Newton’s manner with his parishioners was casual, in contrast to the formality that usually characterized eighteenth-century High Church clerics. During the week, he wore his seaman’s jacket rather than formal clerical clothing and often spoke at ease with the people he encountered when out on walks. Not everyone appreciated Newton’s informal manner of pastoral care. In a rather disparaging remark a neighbouring cleric, William Cole of Bletchley, described Newton as ‘A little odd-looking man of the methodistical order and without any clerical habit.’³⁷

In addition to taking care of the practical, spiritual and physical needs of the adults in his parish, he quickly established a thriving children’s ministry in Olney. Shortly after his arrival, he started a service for children. The first time he held the service, 89 children showed up! By February, Newton was informing his friend Clunie that 175 children were present. By March of the same year, over 200 children were attending the service. Rather than following a catechism, he treated them much as he would adults and would ‘reason with them, and explain the Scriptures to them in their own little way.’³⁸

Newton maintained this approach to children throughout his life. At an Eclectic Society gathering on 22 January, 1798, the question was raised, ‘What may be done towards the interests of the children of a congregation?’ Newton responded in his characteristically pragmatic way, ‘What is agreeable to children is agreeable to children of six feet high....Talk to children about God abstractedly, and it is all in vain. But they can think on the One who is now in heaven, though once a child.’³⁹

Like his Methodist friend John Wesley (though less methodically so) he also began to establish *ecclesiola* in Olney. In his third year there, he established new groups ‘to be divided into small flocks of eight or ten, or twelve at a time, for conversation....’⁴⁰ In 1765, he also started a regular prayer meeting on Tuesday evenings which, like so many other initiatives in the early Olney years, grew rapidly. The service was largely informal, with extempore prayer at the beginning of the service, followed by a hymn and concluding with a talk on a topic such as John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Prayer meetings were also established, on Sunday evenings and early on Sunday mornings at 6:00 a.m.

He also distinguished himself as a champion of lay initiatives and involvement. These, though theologically sound, often created unexpected problems for the pastor.⁴¹ As Bruce Hindmarsh has pointed out, Newton’s encouragement of lay participation ended up with certain parishioners challenging his pastoral authority later in his ministry at Olney. By 1776, Newton already felt the need to preach a sermon on Romans 11:13, ‘I magnify my office.’ During such challenges, Newton’s friend William Cowper wryly noted, ‘Instrumentality is generally taken up with some Reluctance, and laid down with a great deal more.’⁴²

The hymns Newton wrote for the volume he co-authored with Cowper⁴³ were intended largely for congregational use and for the spiritual health of his parishioners (including children). They contained devotional exercises which, in turn, cultivated spiritual growth. These exercises were three-fold. First, he encouraged his congregation to practice *recollection* – that is, the practice of reminding oneself of one’s past sinfulness and need for God’s mercy. Second, to exercise *repentance* by focusing their attention on the Atonement of Christ and the benefits received through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Third, he called his people to the place of *resolution* – committing themselves to a deeper resignation and obedience to God.⁴⁴

All three exercises were designed to promote a lively exercise of faith. By maintaining a high focus on one’s conversion experience and on past sins forgiven, Newton believed that authentic Christian behaviour and actions could be sustained, both in his own life and in the lives of his parishioners.

Leaving Olney

Throughout his ministry in Olney, Newton showed a common touch. Though he once described the people there in less than flattering terms, he understood them well.⁴⁵ For him, *form* ought never to supplant *function*. Whether it was preaching more often than required, preaching in a manner that was accessible to the common people, establishing a creative children’s ministry, or introducing multi-varied prayer and ministry forums, his sole aim was to lead his people towards Christ as a great Saviour and to the point where they experienced a lively exercise of faith.

However, ten years on, it seemed increasingly evident that Newton was growing tired the people of Olney

and his ministry there. Even with a cursory look at his diary at this point, one can discern a growing restlessness, a loss of passion, and a deepening desire to leave his curacy in Olney for a new position. In March, 1776, he prayed, ‘O my Lord I am weary of this course. Return I pray the[e]. How long. It is winter with me, I cannot melt the ice, and soften the ground, and make that flourish which is ready to die.’⁴⁶ About this time, he notes that many of the people were complaining about his preaching, suggesting that it lacked power. In his diaries, he begins to observe that attendance was starting to drop. In response, he prays for both a personal and corporate revival, yet on 18 December, 1776 records this diary entry: ‘How little did I once think that even a call to a removal would be pleasing – and can I now anticipate the thought and seem to wish for it.’⁴⁷

By 1777, he is thinking of leaving Olney. After Christmas that same year, he struggles with wandering thoughts and thinks again about leaving.⁴⁸ By August the next year, he notes again that the congregations seem to be thinning. Again, in April, 1779, he observes that the ‘congregations [were] smaller than usual.’ So when John Thornton’s letter arrives on 19 September, 1779 offering him the rectorship of St Mary Woolnoth in London, he responds with alacrity, accepting the offer on the 21st!

Ministry in London

After 16 years at Olney, Newton left his ministry there and moved to London, aged 54. He ended up serving at St Mary Woolnoth for 27 years, until his death in 1807. Shortly after his arrival, he realized that ministry in London was going to be rather different from that of Olney. He bade farewell to the daily round of visitation to which he had become so accustomed. Gone were the cottage prayer meetings, the children’s meetings and the talks on *Pilgrim’s Progress* in the Great Hall. Newton’s work at St Mary Woolnoth consisted primarily of pulpit duties, while most of the more mundane tasks were carried out by his curate.⁴⁹

Although Newton’s position at St. Mary Woolnoth was less demanding than his curacy in Olney, he nevertheless often found himself lamenting the busyness of the city compared to the simpler life in the countryside. During an Eclectic Society meeting, he observed, ‘In the country, it is easy to lift up the leather latch, and walk in and converse. In town, one has to wipe one’s shoes, send up one’s name and speak as if afraid to be understood.’⁵⁰ Two years after his arrival, he longs for moments of solitude. He writes, ‘I cannot avoid living in a crowd and continual hurry in London and the Lord is pleased to carry me through, yet it is desirable to be a little alone....’⁵¹ By 1784, he still misses the countryside, but arrives at a point of relinquishment. He writes:

Oh, how I long sometimes to spend a day or two among woods, and lawns, and brooks, and hedgerows, to hear the birds sing in the bushes, and to wander among the sheep and lambs, or to stand under the shadow of an old oak, upon a hill-top! Thus I lived at Olney. How different is London! But hush! Olney was the place once; London is the place now. Hither the Lord has brought me, and here He is pleased to support me; and in some measure (I trust) to own me. I am satisfied. Come, I hope I can make a good shift without your woods, and bushes, and pastures.⁵²

In London, he took a similarly pragmatic approach to ministry as he had in Olney. And as in Olney, his efforts were met by initial success. This is hardly surprising given the fact that by 1780, Newton’s reputation had grown to the point where he was a leading figure among evangelicals in his day.⁵³

His adage that ‘There should be doctrinal, experimental and practical matter in every sermon’ was lived out in his preaching at St Mary Woolnoth.⁵⁴ He writes, ‘Some of my new parishioners are rather pleased, and some who do not quite relish what I say seem to believe that, at least, I speak from my heart and mean well.’⁵⁵ Newton’s congregation became as diverse as London itself, with both Dissenters and High Churchmen gathered together to hear him preach. Once again, his pastoral approach was ecumenical, with the major emphasis on leading as many people as possible to a lively experience of faith in Jesus Christ. He describes his congregation and his pastoral methods accordingly when he writes:

My congregation is made up from various and discordant parties, who, in the midst of differences can agree in one point – to hear patiently a man *who is of no party*. I say little to my hearers of the things wherein they differ, but aim to lead them all to a growing and more *experimental knowledge* of the Son of God and a life of faith in Him [emphases mine].⁵⁶

His initial popularity was so great that many ‘strangers’ arrived at his church from all over and took up the seats of the regular parishioners. This led to so many complaints from the regular parishioners that the churchwarden offered him a creative solution. Newton describes this in a letter to his wife:

[The churchwarden] proposed with many apologies my letting another clergyman preach now and then for me; hinted that it should be no expense to me, and thought that if it was uncertain whether I preached or no the people would not throng the church so much. I could not but admire the scheme. I thought it would exactly answer the design. But I said I could not possibly comply with it.⁵⁷

Whereas at Olney it was his regular practice to visit the homes of his parishioners, it seems that in London,

visitations were primarily carried out by Newton *receiving visitors* into his own home. For example, he hosted Tuesday morning breakfasts at his house and was often visited by 40 or more people in single day. These discussions were often recorded by younger men like Richard Cecil for posterity's sake.

Perhaps the clearest example of his pragmatic, non-partisan approach to ministry is found in the establishment of the Eclectic Society in January, 1783. As Bruce Hindmarsh notes, the establishment of the Eclectic Society and its regular gatherings at 'The Castle and Falcon' were the 'perfect institutional embodiment of his ideals – a non-partisan group of evangelical believers, gathered in a spirit of friendship for "improving" spiritual conversation.'⁵⁸

The backgrounds of the Society's members were diverse – clergy and lay, Dissenters and Churchmen. The topics discussed were practical: 'What constitutes effect in preaching?' 'What determines the popularity and unpopularity of different preachers?' 'How do you preach to children?' In fact, the pragmatic nature of the discussions reflected many of the concerns and issues which Newton himself had regularly encountered in Olney and, now, in London.

What remained consistent throughout his ministry was his focus on what *a true Christian* rather than a *true church* looked like or did not look like. For him, it was more important to lead an individual towards a lively exercise of faith than to follow ecclesiastical requirements to the letter. In Newton's approach to ministry, personal experience and conversion trumped ecclesiology. In both Olney and London, he showed himself to be a practical theologian with an eye to evangelizing - to offer plain truth to plain people, leading them to a place of faith that was experiential and vibrant.

Nurtured by networks

Newton valued friendships deeply. They nurtured his soul following his conversion; they helped him enter ministry; and they shaped and extended his ministry at Olney and London.

William Legge, the second Earl of Dartmouth, was one of the few noblemen of the age with evangelical sympathies. He had heard about John Newton from another evangelical, Selina, Countess of Huntingdon. Newton had himself written a couple of letters to Dartmouth expressing his desire to enter ministry and his frustration at not being able to do so in the Church of England. As it turned out, Dartmouth controlled the living of Olney. He initially offered the curacy there to Thomas Haweis, who happened to be a good friend of Newton's but, graciously, Haweis suggested to Dartmouth that he offer the living to Newton instead.⁵⁹ This idea appealed to Dartmouth, who was becoming increasingly impressed with Newton, especially after reading a manuscript copy of his autobiographical *Authentic Narrative*.

Thus, through the intervention of Dartmouth, Newton was finally able to begin his pastoral career in the Church of England. Throughout his time at Olney, he regularly corresponded with Dartmouth, a number of these letters being published in *Cardiphonia*. These letters, in turn, were a major influence in the life of another key evangelical - Hannah More – and led to her conversion.⁶⁰ Dartmouth's frequent visits to Olney at one point prompted Newton to reflect, 'Much affected with his kindness and generosity, and the Lord's goodness to us.'⁶¹

During his curacy at Olney, Newton would often make appeals to Dartmouth to send financial aid to the poor in times of crisis - as for example in 1776, after a particularly heavy snowstorm, when the latter responded by sending £20 to distribute.

Another key friendship was that of John Thornton, the evangelical philanthropist. In a time before many of the great evangelical societies had been founded, Thornton gave away half of his annual income (between £2000- £3000 a year) to evangelical causes. Upon Newton's arrival in Olney, Thornton wrote:

Be hospitable and keep an open house for such as are worthy of entertainment – help the poor and needy: I will steadily allow you £200 a year, and readily send whenever you have occasion to draw for more.⁶²

Newton used much of the money received from Thornton to purchase books to distribute to his parishioners (including his growing children's ministry). Reflecting later on Thornton's openhandedness, he estimated that he had received more than £3000 from his friend during the years at Olney. This support not only gave Newton a constant stream of much-needed resources for ministry, it also had a profound impact upon his spiritual life. At one point, he speaks of Thornton's generosity by writing, 'What astonishing dispensations have I seen, and still the Lord seems to lead me in a peculiar way – a way that calls for peculiar humility, self-abasement, watchfulness, and prayer.'⁶³

Newton's influence in the evangelical world of the eighteenth century was greatly increased by his indefatigable commitment to letter-writing.⁶⁴ This mode of communication served many purposes. First, it was used to arrange pastoral visits and to schedule locations where he was to preach. It was also employed to offer spiritual encouragement and counsel. The familiar letter was the appropriate vehicle for telling others about where revival was happening as well as to indicate to other evangelicals where opportunities to minister lay.

Newton's gift for letter-writing was so appreciated that it once prompted a certain Scottish cleric to note, 'Tis pity Mr Newton should do anything but write letters.'⁶⁵ At times, Newton must have felt that this was all he was doing! After his arrival in Olney, he writes, 'My leisure chiefly taken up this week with writing letters. Indeed my correspondence is so large, that it almost engrosses my time (pulpit preparations excepted), and I know not well how to contract it.'⁶⁶

His style of letter-writing was greatly influenced by the Augustan emphasis on *politesse*, simplicity, spontaneity, substance, casualness and ease. His friend John Berridge once wrote that Newton had the distinct ability to communicate with substance while at the same time being intensely personal.⁶⁷

However, as both his ministry and his importance as a correspondent developed, he began to develop a style that was increasingly free from formal constraints. Instead, his letter-writing, like his preaching, came to focus on cultivating in his correspondents a lively, experimental expression of faith.

With the publication of the *Authentic Narrative* and his decision to correspond using the pseudonym, 'Omicron', Newton's stature in the evangelical community grew so much that, as Aitken observes, he had 'changed from a private correspondent into a public epistolary chaplain...'⁶⁸

Newton's commitment to offer spiritual encouragement and counsel through epistolary means carried on unabated during his ministry in London. In 1794, he writes in frustration to John Campbell, 'I have about sixty unanswered letters, and while I am writing one I usually receive two; so that I am likely to die much in debts.'⁶⁹

Influential as Newton's *Authentic Narrative* and *Olney Hymns* were, it can be argued that his greatest legacy is to be found in his published letters. *Omicron* (1771-1774), *Cardiphonia, or the Utterance of Heart: In the Course of a Real Correspondence* (1779), with other volumes, comprise over five hundred letters, making him the leading evangelical commentator of his age. These letters reached and influenced such figures as Henry Venn, John Berridge, Joseph and Isaac Milner, John Ryland, William Romaine, John and Charles Wesley, Thomas Scott, John Thornton, William Legge, Hannah Wilberforce and, of course, her nephew, William Wilberforce.

Newton as spiritual mentor

As Newton's reputation grew so did his influence upon the lives of young men who either were considering or had already entered ministry. Much counsel offered took the form of letter-writing. An example of this is a letter Newton wrote 'To a Student in Divinity'. When asked how to fill in one's sermon outlines, Newton counsels him:

You must not expect a mechanical sufficiency, such as artificers acquire by habit and exercise in their business. When you have preached well nineteen times, this will be no security for the twentieth. Yea, when you have been upheld for twenty years, should the Lord withhold his hand, you would be as much at a loss as at first.⁷⁰

Knowing that the young man was anxious about entering ministry, he assures him:

If you lean upon books or men, or upon your own faculties and attainments, you will be in fear and in danger of falling continually. But if you stay yourself upon the Lord, he will not only make good your expectations, but in time will give you a becoming confidence in his goodness, and free you from your present anxiety.⁷¹

In addition, it seems that many young divinity students and ministers visited Newton for advice. For example, he writes in his diaries on 29 April, 1773, that a Mr Collins, 'a serious young man of Cambridge' had visited him. On 3 June, 1775, his diaries mention him again, thus giving the impression that he had undertaken the task of mentoring this young man.⁷²

In 1774, he writes about a Mr Gurdon, who, according to Newton, was 'a valuable young man. I think he is for judgment and spirit one of the first of the younger ministers.'⁷³ Again, in June 1777, he records that two young men preparing for the church had settled in Olney to learn theology from him.⁷⁴

His commitment to mentoring young ministers is captured well in a conversation he records with Rev. William Jay. Newton tells him:

Some of us are going off the stage, but we rejoice to see others rising up and coming forward. But, my young friend, you are in a very trying situation, and I am concerned for your safety and welfare. I have been so many years in the ministry, and so many years a minister in London and if you will allow me to mention some of the snares and dangers to which you are exposed, I shall be happy to do it.⁷⁵

In London, he would receive ministers and friends at his home for breakfast once a week, in a surprisingly informal atmosphere. Richard Cecil noted that 'Young ministers were peculiarly the objects of his attention.'⁷⁶

Perhaps the most significant mentoring relationship Newton had was with Wilberforce. Its significance is captured well in Aitken's biography: 'Without William Wilberforce there would have been no successful parliamentary campaign in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century for the abolition of the slave trade. But without John Newton, William Wilberforce would not have been engaged in such a role...'⁷⁷

When he was eight years old, William Wilberforce had accompanied his aunt to hear Newton tell stories of

his former slave-trading life and how God had rescued him to be a minister of the Gospel. However, young William's mother was less open to this kind of 'enthusiasm' than was his aunt. Disliking Newton's 'methodism', she determined that her boy would not listen to him again. As a result, she was largely successful in shielding her son from such 'enthusiasts' for over a decade.

Later, at the age of 26, Wilberforce re-connected with his childhood faith and in doing so remembered his old spiritual mentor. At a point of spiritual crisis, he questioned whether or not he should abandon his parliamentary aspirations and enter into ministry. Seeking advice, Wilberforce arranged to meet clandestinely with Newton.

The two met on 7 December, 1785 – a meeting which had historic consequences. Wilberforce described the occasion in his diary the following day:

After walking about the Square once or twice before I could persuade myself I called upon old Newton – was much affected in conversing with him – something very pleasing and unaffected in him. He told me he always had entertained hopes and confidence that God would sometime bring me to him...When I came away I found my mind in a calm, tranquil state more humbled and looking more devoutly up to God.⁷⁸

During the meeting, Newton encouraged young Wilberforce not to leave politics, but to serve God in that sphere. The impact of this advice was crucial for, from this moment forward, Wilberforce committed himself to answering his own call from God to abolish the slave trade and bring about the 'reformation of manners' in English society. In Aitken's judgement, 'Persuading Wilberforce to stay on "the right track" and to combine the life of a Christian with the life of a politician was John Newton's finest hour as a pastor.'⁷⁹

Throughout his ministry, Newton displayed a 'common touch' that allowed him to establish and nurture friendships wherever he went. Whether it was through his letter-writing, conversations in the cottages of villagers, or breakfasts hosted in his home, his ministry was nurtured through an ever-expanding network of friends and acquaintances. Receiving, praying with and encouraging young ministers like William Jay or emerging politicians like William Wilberforce demonstrated Newton's wisdom, warmth and his desire to lead others into a lively experience of a lived-out calling.

Sustained through spiritual exercises

As discussed above, Newton maintained throughout his ministry a keen consciousness of his past sins, his guilt before a just and holy God, and an awareness of God's mercy and grace. This is aptly captured in 'Amazing Grace',

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

By 1764, the excitement and adventure that had characterized much of his life hitherto had been replaced with a relatively settled call into ministry. However, it remained Newton's practice to carry out spiritual exercises which would serve to help him remember God's mercy and grace shown to him in the hour he 'first believed'. Through these, he sought to cultivate the constant emotion of *thanksgiving* which, in turn, served as a motor for ethical conduct, a lively exercise of faith, and an effective ministry.

Once again, hymn-writing served as a formational spiritual activity both for his congregation and for himself. Each of his hymns contained three distinct yet related horizons. If we take 'Amazing Grace' as an example: first, there was the immediate *Scriptural context* of the hymn, 1 Chronicles 17 - observing God's grace displayed to His servant David; second was the *Christian context* which in the same hymn celebrated Christ's Grace to His Church; third and last was the *personal application* or remembrance of *Christus pro me*, here God's grace given to a 'wretch' like himself.

Like his theological forbears, the Puritans, Newton cultivated a deep understanding of the human heart which fed both his preaching and his pastoral practice. In the same letter to the student of divinity, Newton advised the young man:

[T]o study the living as well as the dead, or rather more. Converse much with experienced Christians and exercised souls...What you observe of ten persons in these different situations, may be applied to ten thousand. For though some circumstances vary, the heart of man, the aids of grace, and the artifices of Satan, in general, are universally the same. And whenever you are to preach, remember, that some of all these sorts will probably be before you, and each should have something said to their own peculiar case.⁸⁰

This practice led him to make profound observations about the manner and shape of spiritual growth in the life of the Christian. In the summer of 1772, writing under the pseudonym 'Omicron', Newton responds to a question raised by John Thornton, 'How does divine grace typically progress in a believer?' by turning to Mark

4:28 – ‘First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.’ From this starting point, he proceeds to delineate the stages of growth in a Christian’s experience.

The first stage is characterised by *Desire*. At this point, the believer is like a child – his or her heart is enlarged and they genuinely experience growth and excitement about their new life in Christ. However, the person is still immature and does not yet have a full sense of his or her sinfulness. The second stage is characterised by *Conflict*. Here, the believer enters into greater maturity and a concomitant sense of his or her sinfulness. During this stage, the believer experiences growth but because they see the sinfulness of their own heart, they increasingly perceive the necessity to lean on God’s mercy. The third stage is characterised by *Contemplation*. At this point, the believer has entered the stage of maturity and enters into what Newton called Fatherhood. The believer has a deep understanding of the deceitfulness of the human heart and therefore is completely reliant upon the mercy and grace of God. As a result, he has resolved that God is indeed good and his heart is full of goodwill towards his neighbour and thanksgiving towards God.⁸¹ It is indicative of Newton’s humility that he saw himself (despite his enormous popularity and stature) as only at the second stage in this growth process.

Throughout his ministry, Newton’s personal devotional life was directed towards cultivating union with God and a lively exercise of faith. To achieve this, Newton carried out spiritual exercises on a *daily, weekly, monthly* and *yearly* basis. *Daily* exercises were spent reviewing his day against the Scripture he had read and were recorded in his diaries. These diaries, faithfully kept during his years in Olney, often recorded the events surrounding his ministry as well as gauging his own spiritual temperature in the midst of these.⁸²

These diaries give a fascinating insight into the struggles he often experienced as a pastor. For example, he reflected on his often lukewarm spiritual temperature by writing in his diary in 1766, ‘My inward frame I know not how to describe. In general I seem unable to get near the Lord, and yet by grace am restrained from wandering very far away.’⁸³ Here one finds a clear picture of the second stage of spiritual growth that he describes six years later – a stage characterized by conflict yet with an assurance of God’s Providential care.⁸⁴

In addition to daily diary entries, he carried out *weekly* spiritual exercises which were directed towards preparing himself for the Sabbath.⁸⁵ *Monthly* exercises were directed towards recalling his past sins and preparing his heart for the Eucharist. His *yearly* practices were directed towards, first, recollecting God’s past mercies and grace in his life, especially during his years at sea; and second, using these recollections as a motor for cultivating a heart of penitence - of contrition for his sins - but thankfulness for the Cross. Finally, he would use certain anniversaries to heighten the resolve to keep his personal covenant, resign himself to God’s Providential leading in his life, and recommit himself to living out a life of vibrant obedience.

Newton was a pastor who was committed to prayer. This commitment helped sustain him throughout his 43 years of ministry. He recognizes this early on in his Christian life when he writes, ‘Prayer is the great engine to overthrow and rout my spiritual enemies, the great means to procure the graces of which I stand in hourly need....’⁸⁶ His diaries record that he often prayed for at least five hours a day, with a vast list of people for whom he prayed, and a desire to cultivate a deepening sense of gratitude for God’s mercy and grace in his life. Six years before his death, he reflected on the meaning of prayer during an Eclectic Society meeting, saying, ‘We should insist upon prayer. Prayer is said to be the key of the morning and the lock of the evening. Go out every day with this spirit – Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.’⁸⁷

Prayer was the means through which he continually sought to deepen his experience of the One who had rescued him at sea all those years ago. On 15 October, 1775, he even decided to change the manner in which he recorded his diary entries from description to prayer. His final days are full of stories recounted by visitors who sat with their frail pastor and prayed with him. John Campbell called upon him regularly and noted on one such occasion: ‘May 28th. Calling in the evening, I found him very weak. I sat by his side about ten minutes, repeating in his ear passages of Scripture; but he spoke not a word, or took any notice of me. At last he recollected me. After prayer with him, he thanked me, and shaking my hand, he wished every blessing might attend me.’⁸⁸

Newton’s spiritual exercises remained the motor throughout his days of ministry by which he was able to keep his heart warm towards God and towards his parishioners. Whether it was through marking certain anniversary days, consistently rising early to pray or faithfully recording his thoughts and prayers in his diary, Newton remained remarkably diligent in monitoring his spiritual temperature at any given time. This should come as no surprise, for Newton understood the human heart and its propensity to wander. Sustaining a warm affection for the things of God throughout a ministry lifetime is no easy accomplishment at any point in history. Any spiritual success he experienced during his ministry, however, was seen by him as a divine gift – a gift of mercy and grace from the One who had, all those years ago, rescued him.

‘Who is John Newton?’ Such was the question raised at the beginning of this study. In response, one could

argue that Newton was many things to many people. He was a sailor, a tide surveyor, an ‘enthusiast’, a hymn-writer, a letter-writer, a mentor and even a celebrity of sorts. However, more than anything else, he was – a pastor. What’s more, he was, for the most part, an effective and innovative one. For 43 years, he faithfully lived out the mandate of the calling God had given him in different pastorates - among ‘the country low and dirty’ and among those for whom ‘one has to wipe one’s shoes, send up one’s name and speak as if afraid to be understood.’

From the time when he was rescued from his life at sea, to the point where he was called into ministry, Newton sought to deepen communion with Jesus Christ. One of his enduring legacies was his parishioners’ knowledge that he cared for them. Spiritual exercises, therefore, were not some esoteric practice, but were performed for the practical purpose of warming his cold heart towards God and towards his parishioners. Essentially, he desired to keep his eyes and heart focused on ‘things unseen’.

In 1785, he expresses this desire in a letter:

When I was writing here yesterday I had a beautiful prospect of the Isle of Wight and the sea from the hermitage window. I am looking through the same window now, and can see nothing of them. But I do not suppose the Isle of Wight is sunk because I cannot see it. I consider that this is a thick, rainy morning, and I expect when the weather clears up the island will be visible again. Thus it is with respect to many great truths, which you and I have seen with the eye of our minds. There may be returns of dark, misty hours when we can hardly perceive them, but these should not put us on questioning whether we ever saw them at all. Faith and obedience are like the road we travel, the frames and feelings of our spirits are like the weather. Though the weather may often change, the road is always safe, and they who travel upon it will renew their strength as they go on, and at length surely arrive at the end of their journey, and possess the promised land.⁸⁹

Faith and obedience are hard to sustain using our own strength. Newton understood too well the fickleness of his heart, and therefore worked towards clearing away obstacles which would get in the way of his affective devotion to the One who, though difficult to perceive at times, he knew would ‘lead him safely home’.

*Coquitlam
British Columbia*

Bibliography

- Aitken, Jonathan, *John Newton: From Disgrace to Amazing Grace* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007).
- Anderson, Howard et al (eds.), *The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth Century* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1966).
- Bull, Josiah, ‘*But now I see*’. *The Life of John Newton* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1998).
- Cecil, Richard, *The Life of John Newton* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2000).
- Hindmarsh, Bruce, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
- Hindmarsh, Bruce, *Evangelical Conversion Narrative* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).
- Jay, William, *The Autobiography of the Rev. William Jay* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1855).
- Newton, John, *The Works of John Newton*, 6 vols (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988).
- Newton, John, *The Christian Correspondent; or a series of Religious Letters written by the Rev. John Newton to Captain Alexander Clunie* (Hull: George Prince, 1790).
- Newton, John, *The Life and Spirituality of John Newton* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1998).
- Newton, John, *Diaries* (unpublished notes taken by Dr Bruce Hindmarsh).
- Noll, Mark, *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007).
- Pratt, John H. (ed.), *The Thought of the Evangelical Leaders: Notes of the Discussions of the Eclectic Society London during the years 1798-1814* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1978).

Notes and References

- 1 Josiah Bull, ‘*But now I see*’. *The Life of John Newton* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1998), 357.
- 2 ‘*But now I see*’, 358.
- 3 Jonathan Aitken, in his recent biography of John Newton, offers an excellent example of how John Newton’s name and life have dropped out of modern memory. When describing how he was working on John Newton’s biography, Aitken’s ‘well-informed’ friend was astonished and asked, ‘But are you sure you’ll be able to handle his physics and mathematics?’ mistaking John Newton for Isaac Newton. Jonathan Aitken, *John Newton: From Disgrace to Amazing Grace* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007) 18.
- 4 ‘*But now I see*’ 68.
- 5 Newton’s diary entry for 11 September read, ‘Rose about half past 4. Mr Whitefield preaching at 5 from Isaiah 25:4... Visited Whitefield in the morning and had two hours close conversation with great comfort and satisfaction. Supped with Whitefield.

- Heard him preach at 6 from Hebrews 2:3.’ The two spent so much time together that Newton was called ‘Young Whitefield’ in jest. Cited from *John Newton*, 134.
- 6 ‘In his later *Memoirs*, Newton described how Grimshaw had changed him from being preoccupied with the fear of the Lord toward an understanding that it was the duty of a minister “to invite the weary and heavy-laden to apply to Jesus that they might find rest to their souls.”’ *John Newton*, 147.
- 7 Aitken makes this observation about *Miscellaneous Thoughts*, ‘[The journal] also reveals a deep humility in Newton, whose self-examination concluded in a decisive commitment to surrender himself to God’s service. Any candidate for an ordained ministry in the twenty-first century could well profit from studying the process John Newton put himself through almost two hundred and fifty years ago....’ *John Newton* 147.
- 8 Cited in *John Newton* 148.
- 9 They suspected Newton of being a Methodist.
- 10 ‘*But now I see*’ 102.
- 11 ‘*But now I see*’ 106.
- 12 *The Christian Correspondent; or a series of Religious Letters written by the Rev. John Newton to Captain Alexander Clunie* (Hull: George Prince, 1790) 13.
- 13 ‘*But now I see*’ 159.
- 14 ‘*But now I see*’, 360.
- 15 On 2 September, 1773, Newton wrote in his diary, ‘I am still favoured with Liberty in the pulpit, tho in private I am woefully contracted and a prey to vain and vile imaginations.’ *Diaries*.
- 16 John H. Pratt, ed. *The Thought of the Evangelical Leaders: Notes of the Discussions of the Eclectic Society London during the years 1798-1814* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1978) 116. A great story is recorded in the footnotes of this section of the minutes. It reads, ‘On Mr. Newton descending the pulpit stairs on a particular occasion, at St. Mary Woolnoth’s Church, after preaching an impressive sermon, a person who had felt its force leaned over and said, “A most excellent discourse, sir.” “The devil told me that, sir, before you!”’ was Mr. Newton’s reply, conscious of the temptation to self-approval.’
- 17 ‘Hyper-Calvinism’ was a body of theological thought which was highly rationalistic and emphasized unconditional election, limited, particular atonement, eternal justification imputed to the elect only, final perseverance and a repudiation of a free offer of the gospel. It was partially in response to the highly rationalistic character of hyper-Calvinism that the Evangelical Revival emphasized the role of the intense personal conversion experience to the degree that it did. See Bruce Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 124-125.
- 18 ‘*But now I see*’ 86.
- 19 ‘*But now I see*’ 212.
- 20 *Eclectic Society* 281.
- 21 Bruce Hindmarsh notes, ‘It was as though the parish had been specially groomed for him.’ *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* 186.
- 22 ‘*But now I see*’ 130.
- 23 ‘*But now I see*’ 182-183.
- 24 ‘*But now I see*’ 285.
- 25 *Eclectic Society* 20, 25-26.
- 26 Newton understood only too clearly the need not to be too anxious when preaching. In addition to the disaster in Yorkshire, Newton’s first preaching experience did not go too well. He describes the sermon in a letter to William Barlass, ‘I attempted it wholly *extempore*...I set off tolerably well though with no small fear and trembling...Before I had spoken ten minutes I was stopped like Hannibal upon the Alps. My ideas forsook me; darkness and confusion filled up their place. I stood on a precipice and could not advance a step forward. I stared at the people and they at me. Not a word more could I speak but was forced to come down and leave the people, some smiling, some weeping. My pride and self-sufficiency were sorely mortified.’ Cited in *John Newton* 145-146.
- 27 *Eclectic Society* 142.
- 28 *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* 190.
- 29 *John Newton* 187.
- 30 *John Newton* 187.
- 31 *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* 190.
- 32 *Diaries* 35
- 33 *Clunie* 26.
- 34 *Clunie* 62.
- 35 ‘*But now I see*’ 133.
- 36 *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* 204.
- 37 *John Newton* 187.
- 38 *Clunie* 67.
- 39 *Eclectic Society* 6-7.
- 40 *Clunie* 130.
- 41 As a pastor once noted, ‘I love my calling as a pastor; it’s the congregation I don’t care for.’
- 42 *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* 212.
- 43 *Olney Hymns*, 1779. Newton wrote the bulk of the collection, Cowper contributing 67 to the total of 348 hymns.
- 44 *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* 230-233.
- 45 Newton once wrote to Clunie, ‘The people here are mostly poor – the country low and dirty.’ *Clunie* 43.
- 46 *Diaries*
- 47 *Diaries*
- 48 Things have not changed much for pastors. Post-Christmas thoughts of changing parishes still arise today.

- 49 In this respect, the portrayal of John Newton mopping floors wearing John the Baptist attire in the 2007 movie, *Amazing Grace*, was erroneous to say the least!
- 50 *Eclectic Society* 221.
- 51 'But now I see' 261.
- 52 'But now I see' 275-276.
- 53 Newton's predecessor at St Mary Woolnoth did not set the bar very high – there was only a handful of people who attended the church prior to his arrival in 1780.
- 54 *Eclectic Society* 254.
- 55 'But now I see' 246.
- 56 'But now I see' 246.
- 57 'But now I see' 246.
- 58 *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* 313.
- 59 Howeis had to act swiftly for Newton was on the verge of accepting an appointment to a Presbyterian church.
- 60 Richard Cecil, *The Life of John Newton*, (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2000) 285.
- 61 'But now I see' 149.
- 62 'But now I see' 144.
- 63 'But now I see' 144.
- 64 For an understanding of the history and development of the 'familiar letter' in eighteenth-century England, see Howard Anderson and Irvin Ehrenpreis, 'The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth-Century' in Howard Anderson et al (eds.) *The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth Century* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1966) 269-282.
- 65 *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* 244.
- 66 'But now I see', 136.
- 67 *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* 246.
- 68 *John Newton* 241. Newton's pseudonym did not fool the evangelical community for long. John Berridge wrote, 'Omicron is John Newton. He wears a mask, but he cannot hide his face. Pithiness and candor will betray the Curate of Olney.' *John Newton* 241.
- 69 'But now I see' 323.
- 70 *Works of John Newton* I, 146.
- 71 *Works of John Newton* I, 146.
- 72 *Diaries*
- 73 'But now I see' 200.
- 74 'But now I see' 225.
- 75 William Jay, *The Autobiography of the Rev. William Jay* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1855) 303.
- 76 'But now I see' 295.
- 77 *John Newton* 299.
- 78 *John Newton* 303.
- 79 *John Newton* 304.
- 80 *Works of John Newton*. I, 144.
- 81 John Newton, *The Life and Spirituality of John Newton* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1998), 95-111
- 82 Sadly, Newton ceased to keep a daily diary upon his arrival in London in 1780. Instead there were occasional entries usually connected to 'memorable days'.
- 83 'But now I see' 145.
- 84 This struggle to maintain a lively heart in ministry seems to accelerate as Newton's time in Olney drew to a close. For example, in April, 1773, he complains that he has a 'wandering mind'. Later that month, he struggles with a 'dull and burdened spirit' as well as feeling spiritually 'sleepy'. This culminates with the following reflection, 'Surely my Soul does thirst for something more than a power of speaking for an hour upon a subject of Scripture.' One week later, he again records that he was languishing with 'cold devotions, trifles filling mind'. *Diaries*.
- 85 It is interesting to note that Newton often experienced his worst temptations (towards pride and grandiosity?) during the Sabbath.
- 86 'But now I see' 92.
- 87 *Eclectic Society* 213.
- 88 'But now I see' 358.
- 89 'But now I see' 277.