

The Rev. John Newton to the Rev. Richard Johnson, 29 March 1794, in *Historical Records of New South Wales*, Vol. II, 195-6¹

THE REV. J. NEWTON TO THE REV. R. JOHNSON.

29th March, 1794.

I have received your letter dated May 7th, and I have read your journal with the feelings of a friend. Your trials have been great, and of course your supports have been great likewise, or you could not have stood your ground. But I trust the difficulties and hardships, which at times have made you think of returning to England, will soon be much mitigated, if not wholly removed. From the general character of Captain Hunter, the newly-appointed Governor, I expect you will soon find countenance and encouragement where you have hitherto met with little but neglect and ill-treatment, so that I hope you will yet live to see happy fruits of your labours.

As a friend, I will offer you two or three thoughts which occurred to me while I was reading your journal.

I do not wonder, nor can I blame you, that you often felt cares and anxieties respecting your temporal concerns. If we are in the path of duty, and in the use of proper means, such cares are indeed needless, because the Lord careth for us. But when you speak of time spent in your necessary employment as so much lost time, because it kept you from your books and studies, I think you distressed yourself without just cause. I wish you to consider your mission, as a whole, composed of various parts, each of which, in its proper place, has its importance. Preaching, reading, and study,

¹ Cited in *Anglicanism in Australia. A History* (B.N. Kaye ed.; Melbourne: Melbourne University Press,

&c., are of the first consideration; but if necessity required you to work with your own hands, to procure necessary sustenance [196] for your family, this was a part of your calling likewise. I believe the Apostle was employed no less lawfully and properly when gathering sticks for the fire — Acts xxviii-3 — than when preaching the Gospel. You understand the Gospel too well to confine religion to devotional exercises. The secret of the Lord teaches us, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to His glory. I judge that when you dig in your garden, or plant potatoes or cabbages, you serve the Lord as truly as when you are upon your knees, or in the pulpit, provided you do these things in a right spirit, in dependence upon Him and in submission to His will. Such employments are cross to our inclinations, but if we take them up as a Cross, and can cheerfully deny our own will, they become (when necessary) a part of the obedience we owe Him.

Nor do I blame you for being greatly concerned for the sins and enormities which you are daily witness to, and especially for the gross profanation of the Sabbath. I think you should be content with praying for them, and with bearing your faithful testimony against their evil, and not greatly distress yourself because you cannot effect impossibilities.

You often speak of preaching awfully. Undoubtedly, a declaration of the law and the penalty due to transgressors is a part of our message. To persons in this state, denunciations of wrath too frequently repeated, instead of working savingly upon them, rather tends to increase the enmity of their minds against God.

You have been certainly not treated with the respect and decency due to your character as a minister of the Church of England, and the chaplain of the colony; but you seem sometimes to have felt more on this account than I would wish you. I wish you to account such disgrace as (when undeserved) your glory.

JOHN NEWTON.