

*True
Patriotism*



“..If our lot is so cast that we can exercise our ministry free from stripes, fines, imprisonments, and death--it is more than the gospel has promised to us!”

John Newton (1725-1807)

...*Allow me to say* that it excites both my wonder and concern, that a minister possessed of the great and important views expressed in your two sermons should think it worth his while to appear in the line of a political writer or expect to amend our constitution or situation by proposals of a political reform. When I look around upon the present state of the nation such an attempt appears to me no less vain and unseasonable than it would be to paint a cabin while the ship is sinking, or a parlour when the house is already on fire...

The position, that, if the body of a people are aggrieved they have a right to redress themselves, must be much limited and modified before I can reconcile it to Scripture. I am not fond of despots; but I think if ever there was one upon earth Nebuchadnezzar was a despot. *Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down; Dan. v. 18, 19.* Yet Jeremiah declares, that the Lord had given him this despotic power, and had commanded all the nations to serve him. Surely, if you and I had been there (knowing what we know now), we should not have disputed this command, nor have excited the people, however oppressed, to shake off the yoke which God himself had put upon them....

When our Lord was upon earth, he refused to be a judge or a divider. And he said afterwards, *"My kingdom is not of this world; if it were, then would my servants fight."* I should think, as Peter thought, that if any thing could have justified resistance in a disciple, that was the time when Jesus was apprehended by wicked men, to be condemned and crucified; but his master rebuked his zeal. I think that, as Christians, we have nothing to expect from *this* world but tribulation, no peace but in him.

My dear sir, my prayer to God for you is, that he may induce you to employ the talents he has given you, in pointing out *sin* as the great cause and source of every existing evil, and to engage those who love and fear him, instead of losing them in political speculations, for which very few of them are

tolerably competent, to sigh and cry for our abounding abominations, and to stand in the breach, by prayer, if it may be, wrath may yet be averted, and our national mercies prolonged! This, I think, is true patriotism, the best, if not the only way, in which persons in private life may serve their country.

[Of the ungodly]...consider them as saws and hammers in the hand of the Lord. So far as they are his instruments, they will succeed, but not an inch farther. Their wrath shall praise him to the full extent of its acting, and be subservient to his designs; the remainder of it he will restrain.

If our lot be so cast that we can exercise our ministry free from stripes, fines, imprisonment, and death, it is more than the Gospel has promised us. If Christians were quiet when under the government of Nero and Caligula, and when persecuted and hunted like wild beasts, they ought to be not only quiet but very thankful now. It was then accounted an honour to suffer for Christ. Of late, the rights of man are pleaded as a protection from the offence of the cross.

...you and I ...know how much they are to be pitied who are frantic for what they call liberty, and consider not that they are in the most deplorable bondage, the slaves of sin and Satan, and subject to the curse of the law, and the wrath of God. Oh! for a voice to reach their hearts, that they may know themselves, and seek deliverance from their dreadful thralldom. Satan has many contrivances to amuse them, and to turn their thoughts from their real danger; and none seem more ensnaring, in the present day, than to engage them in the cry, "Great is the Diana Liberty!" May you and I labour with success to direct them to the one thing which is absolutely needful, and abundantly sufficient.

The instruments whom the Lord employs in political matters are usually such as are incapable of better employment. All things and persons serve him; but there are services under the direction of his providence which are not good

enough for his own children. *They* belong to a kingdom which is not of this world; they are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and a part of their scriptural character is, that they are the “quiet in the land.”

If I had wisdom or influence to soothe the angry passions of mankind, whether whigs or tories, I would gladly employ them; but as to myself, I am neither whig nor tory, but a friend to both. I am a stranger and a pilgrim. My πολιτευμα (*citizenship – ed.*), my charter, my rights, my treasures are, I hope, in heaven, and there my heart ought to be. In less than a few weeks I may be removed (and perhaps suddenly) into the unseen world, where all that causes so much bustle upon earth at present, will be no more to me than the events which took place among the antediluvians.

How much then does it import me,

to be found watching, with my loins girded up, and my lamp burning, diligently engaged in my poor calling. For the Lord has not called me to set nations to right, but to preach the Gospel, to proclaim the glory of his name, and to endeavour to win souls. Happy is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find you so doing!

John Newton is best known for his wonderful hymn, *Amazing Grace*. Excerpts are taken from a letter written in 1793 and included in [The Posthumous Works of the Late Rev. John Newton](#), beginning on page 287. Read this volume free online at www.tinyurl.com/john-newton.

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encouraging families to “Seek first the kingdom of God...”

Matthew 6:33

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