



Out of the Depths

John Newton , Dennis R. Hillman (Revised by)

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For John Newton, one of Christendom's greatest hymn writers and writer of "Amazing Grace," God's matchless grace was intensely personal. Saved from a life of slave trading, John Newton was fully aware of the "depths from which he was pulled." In this autobiography, revised and updated for today's readers by Dennis Hillman, Newton relates the events that led him from unimaginable sin and spiritual bondage to a life of ministry and renewal--transformed by God's amazing and inexhaustible grace.

Discover the timeless story of John Newton's conversion and the true meaning of the familiar words, "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."

Out of the Depths Details

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Author : John Newton , Dennis R. Hillman (Revised by)

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Cynda says

I read another version of this book that I found on Hoopla. The version I read seems to include some extra materials. Toward the end of the letters, a couple bits of commentary from a friend of Newton's, switched back and forth between the letters and the unnamed friend's commentary. Maybe a problem with how the audiobook was formatted?

Also this version includes some quotes from Newton. None were particularly memorable.

What struck me as being odd: In this set of letters, Newton wrote of events into the 1780s, yet he does not mention the song "Amazing Grace," much less the direct impetus to the writing of this perennial favorite. "Amazing Grace" was written in 1779.

Maybe not so odd? I refer to Wikipedia for some background info where I find put that Newton had kept his abolitionist beliefs quiet in public until the publication of his pamphlet "Thoughts upon the Slave Trade" (1788) This pamphlet seems have been written about the time the last dates cited within the letters. So Newton may have comeout as an abolitionist after the letters were written. In that case, he may not have wanted to talk about "Amazing Grace" in his published letters.

I read this autobiography in the hope of knowing more about William Wilberforce and his friends--Newton included. Yet in the autobiography Newton seems to have been hiding his abolitionist self. I will have to read a more biography to get the information or glimpse I want.

So why 3 stars? Total and complete ambivalence about this book. Nothing truly wrong. Just not what I wanted. I try again.

Edy Gies says

I found this book a good read full of challenges and praise to God. Newton refrains from any glorification of his previously evil life. It is amazing that he didn't even see what he was doing (trading slaves) as a sin. After growing and learning though he does realize this and devotes time to abolition. He mentors William Wilberforce who fights against slavery and eventually succeeds in banning it from Britain.

Olivia says

In eight letters John Newton wrote the story of his life which was put into book form as Out of the Depths. As a child he was taught from the Bible and his mother prayed he would go into the ministry. As he grew up he put away the teachings of his early years and lived foolishly. Through many miraculous situations as a sailor (God saved his life many times), John Newton finally saw his need for God. The only thing I wish would be different about this book is that it would have been more detailed, but I realize that John Newton was giving his account of becoming a Christian and not focusing as heavily on other areas of his life.

Roar says

I quite enjoyed this little book by the author of the famous hymn Amazing Grace. Not really an auto biography, but rather John Newton's account of his own spiritual development and conversion. In one review I saw some complains about the heavy emphasis on sin and sinfulness. What struck me most, though, was the focus on God's providence and guidance. The style is old, of course, but the language reasonably modernised.

FAVOURITE QUOTE: "I trust that His will and my true interest are inseparable."

I need to add something some years after I wrote the above part of this review. I couldn't help wondering about the lack of remorse over his participation in the slave trade. That must have developed later. Maybe it is a good example of how we only gradually grow in understanding of the will of God and of our own sin, also after repentance and conversion.

Jessica says

Amazing Grace is probably the best known hymn. It was written by John Newton. Out of the Depths is his autobiography, though the focus is on his spiritual journey. Once a man who railed against faith, Newton became a devout Christian and lover of Jesus Christ. His story is one of adventure on the high seas, and a life spared to be an example of God's grace and mercy.

This edition of Newton's autobiography has been updated to a more modern language, but in such a way that it has not lost Newton's style. The changes are explained in the preface by Dennis Hillman, who did the revisions.

Newton's story is one that every Christian should read. It's a story of extreme circumstances that most of us will never encounter, but it's because of their extreme nature that God's provision shines all the more. Newton is an inspiration for all believers, and a hope for unbelievers.

Mom says

I loved the story in this book, but not necessarily how it was written. I didn't like how the story jumped around, but I love reading about brave people and what they have endured. It's humbling.

Katie Tillwick says

A book by a man of profound faith, it can be a little slow, since sermonizing on faith in God is primarily what he wants to talk about. His life deserves further exploring.

Aaron W. Matthews says

Newton's is a story of extremes. Extreme living, mockery of God and the Gospel, and extreme disbelief. But

God's extreme mercy and grace proved to be too much for the man. God's great longsuffering and provision broke this man's heart over time (a man who had given God nothing but contempt). Out of this a misspent, lost soul came to Christ. Sins were forgiven as humbling faith trusted the Lord for all things. From a slave trader to a born-again believer and well-renowned, timelessly loved hymn writer. Newton is an inspiration for all believers, and a hope for unbelievers. His is a life of true Amazing Grace. Very good autobiography.

Richard Minor says

I loved this book. John Newton's life and his telling was very edifying for me. God's providence and his glorious salvation drop from seemingly every page.

Sandra Munro says

(See also: 'John Newton: From Disgrace to Amazing Grace', by Jonathan Aitken - I read these two books one after the other.)

Although this is a small book (only 156 pages), I believe I profited by it much more than I had by reading the 400 page biography of Newton by Aitken. I enjoyed it more too. I liked the voice of John Newton, and what he had to say.

The following few examples may serve to illustrate a little of the simplicity and profundity of Newton's writing - and sometimes the simple elegance:

'We must not, therefore, make the experience of others, in all respects, a rule to ourselves nor our own a rule to others.'

'I rested in the gift and forgot the Giver. My poor small heart was satisfied.'

(After relinquishing time-consuming secular studies) 'I was weary of cold contemplative truths that can neither warm nor amend the heart, but rather tend to amplify self... He inclined me to stop in time.. (from) "spending my labour for that which is not bread."

'..if it were possible for me to alter any part of His plan, I could only spoil it.'

'The word "temperance" in the New Testament signifies self-possession. It is a disposition suitable to one who has a race to run and therefore will not load his pockets with lead.'

'I feel like a man who has no money in his pocket, but is allowed to draw for all he wants upon one infinitely rich. I am, therefore, at once both a beggar and a rich man.'

pchan says

"Out of the Depths" is essentially a modernization of John Newton's own autobiography, "An Authentic Narrative," by which I mean it updates the language to 20th century American English, organizes it into

book chapters (Newton originally penned his autobiography in a series of letters), and so on.

However, if you want Newton's "An Authentic Narrative" as he originally wrote it, it'd be best to purchase "The Life and Spirituality of John Newton" by Bruce Hindmarsh (ed.). "The Life and Spirituality of John Newton" contains "An Authentic Narrative."

To better see what I mean, here's the first paragraph of the first letter in "An Authentic Narrative" followed by the first paragraph of the first chapter in "Out of the Depths":

* * *

Reverend and Dear Sir,

I make no doubt but you have at times had pleasing reflections upon that promise made to the Israelites, Deut. viii. 2. They were then in the wilderness, surrounded with difficulties, which were greatly aggravated by their own distrust and perverseness: they had experienced a variety of dispensations, the design of which they could not as yet understand; they frequently lost sight of God's gracious purposes in their favour, and were much discouraged by reason of the way. To compose and animate their minds, Moses here suggests to them, that there was a future happy time drawing near, when their journey and warfare should be finished; that they should soon be put in possession of the promised land, and have rest from all their fears and troubles; and then it would give them pleasure to look back upon what they now found so uneasy to bear: "Thou shalt remember all the way, by which the Lord thy God led thee through this wilderness."

* * *

God's promise to the Israelites is worthy of our reflection. They were then in the wilderness, surrounded with difficulties that were made worse by their distrust and disobedience. They had experienced a variety of God's providential actions, but they did not yet understand God's ultimate goals. They frequently lost sight of God's gracious actions on their behalf and were very discouraged. Moses announces to them that there is a future time of happiness drawing near when their journey and warfare will be finished. They will soon take possession of the Promised Land and rest from all their fears and troubles. Then they will look back with satisfaction upon what was before so difficult to bear: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee through the wilderness" (Deut. 8:2).

Donna says

I had read this book many years ago and loved it. Recently pulled it off the shelf and glad I did. Always good to revisit great testimonies of faith. I love Newton's letters and hymns.

Lindy says

John Newton was a fascinating man. This book is his testimony, with some life experiences throughout to give context for God's love. It's a good read. I'd love to read more about the slave trade and why he quit it.

Eli says

A wonderful account of the life and conversion of John Newton in his own words. The hymn 'Amazing Grace' is one of the most famous songs in the world, and it would do everyone good to learn about the man and the lyrics behind it. I feel like I appreciate every word of it far more, realizing how every word was deeply rooted in experience.

One of the main emphasis's of the book is how God works in our lives providentially to accomplish his sovereign purposes. Newton was forever struck by this, and his amazement of it pours through the lines on every page. He knew that God had preserved him "through many dangers, toils and snares", and were it not for the grace of God in these providences, he would certainly have perished in his sins. I think that there are few individuals better to hear from about God's providence than Newton.

What surprised me the most about Newton was that before he was the blasphemous and debauched sailor that we've all heard about, he was a legalist, and strove very hard in religion. Indeed, it was his legalism that led to his hatred of God; another testimony of proof to John Bunyan's saying that legalism produces atheism.

Newton's autobiography is warmly and entertainingly written, with plenty of wise insight into human nature. I also was glad that Rev. Cecil's chapter on the latter part of Newton's life was included. A great read! This new edition by Kregel has interesting illustration and photographs.

Kiel says

Slave trader turned pastor and abolitionist, John Newton writes a compelling, short, and inspiring autobiography appended by friends who capture his final moments of life as well as his last will and testament. I knew bits of Newton's story before, mostly because of his connection to the hymn Amazing Grace and his affiliation with William Wilberforce. What struck me the most was that he was nominally Christian when he entered the slave trade and maintained a spiritual battle throughout his life, as well as training himself in classical languages and literature in the process. He writes with a sincere honesty about all the bleakest and brightest moments of his life, including a very raw yet warm account of his wife's ailments and final moments. He was clearly a broken man affected deeply by his sin and the Gospel that he believed brought him the truth of salvation through Christ. I think any reader will enjoy his story and come through a bit changed by the process. 159 pages or 4 hours of testimony to the reality of death and the promise of life.
