

SAMUEL WALKER, B. A.

BY

ERASMUS MIDDLETON

EDITED AND PUT INTO SIMPLER ENGLISH

BY

GEOFFREY STONIER

The public is indebted to the pious and reverend Mr. James Stillingfleet for a very excellent account of the life and ministry of Mr. Walker, added to two volumes of his posthumous sermons on the baptismal covenant, etc. We make no apology for transcribing from this memoir, as we mean the same thing as its valuable author — the edification of men; for which purpose few pieces, through the divine blessing, are more ably or more happily calculated.

‘Those of the clergy (says the Reverend Editor) into whose hands these sheets may fall, will excuse my importunity, if I speak their more careful attention in reviewing the life and writings of Mr. Walker. Though neither eminence of station in the world, nor rare and uncommon attainments in human literature, will excite their admiration, for he lived and died a curate; and though he was no way deficient in any branch of learning pertaining to his profession, yet he was engaged in too active and busy a scene of life to have leisure to acquire that extent and depth of learning, which many men of less employment without superior abilities have attained to. But they will find in him excellence of another kind, not less worthy of their regard; they will here contemplate the life and doctrine of one possessed to an eminent degree of the knowledge, spirit, and zeal of a primitive Christian teacher; of one who, though poor in this world, was rich in faith and good works; of one who had learned to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

I humbly call on you, reverend brethren, who have taken upon you the solemn and important office of the ministry, to observe with what diligence and earnest concern for the salvation of the souls of men he laboured faithfully, to fulfil the duties of his function. I beseech you to consider with calm and unprejudiced minds, as a matter of the utmost importance to yourselves, whether his sentiments were not exactly agreeable to the revealed word of God, and his conduct in all things conformed to the examples of faith and patience recorded for our instruction and imitation. If, on a cool and dispassionate examination, you see reason to conclude that they were, let

me earnestly entreat you to be followers of him as he also was of Christ. If such a conduct should expose you, as it did him, to reproaches and sufferings, contempt and ridicule, not only from the more openly careless and profligate, but even from some who, thought they maintain a decent form of godliness, are nevertheless unhappy strangers to the life and power of it; you will with him remember, that he, who spoke as never man spoke, was despised and rejected of men; and take consolation from these encouraging words of your blessed Master, who declared to his disciples that they would have great cause to rejoice and be exceeding glad, when men should revile them and persecute them, and say all manner of evil of them falsely, for his and his gospel sake. If, with him, you endure hardness like good soldiers of Jesus Christ, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing; if you are nothing moved by whatever trials may assault you, from the steady and uninterrupted pursuit of your own salvation, and that of those who hear you, you will also doubtless with him be made abundant partakers of the rich consolations that are in Christ, to sweeten your passage through this vale of sin and sorrow. You will triumph as he did in the immediate prospect of approaching dissolution, and at last enter into the possession of that glorious inheritance, where he is now praising the Lord for his grace and mercy, and exulting in the fruition of eternal bliss. I will now enter upon the task assigned to me of drawing up from authentic memorials a short but accurate account of the life and ministry of the author of the following discourses.

Our Author, Samuel Walker, was the youngest of seven children; he was born at Exeter, on the 16th day of December in the year of our Lord 1714. His parents were Robert Walker Esq. of the city of Exeter, and Margaret his wife, who was the only daughter of the Reverend Mr. Richard Hall, minister of St. Edmund's and All-hallows in that city. Robert Walker, the father of Mr. Thomas Walker, was the only son of Sir Thomas Walker, knight, who, as his ancestors had done, represented the city of Exeter in many successive parliaments, during the reigns of King Charles I. and King Charles II. Sir Thomas' lady was Mary, the only daughter of the Reverend Samuel Hall, M. A., the youngest son of Dr. Joseph Hall, formerly Bishop of Exeter.

Thus was our Author lineally descended from that pious, learned, evangelical, and truly Christian prelate, to whom he seemed to have been allied not only by proximity of blood, but likewise by affinity and similarity of sentiment; as well as by a yet nobler relationship in grace, by being united, as a living member of the same mystical body, to the same glorious and exalted head Christ Jesus. Mr. Samuel Walker having lived under the care of his parents till he was eight years of age, was then sent to the grammar-school in Exeter, where he continued till he was eighteen, when he was sent to Exeter College, in the University of Oxford, and, put under the care of the rector of that society, Dr. Francis Webber. Having taken the degree of bachelor of arts in the year 1737, he was ordained the latter end of that year, and appointed to the curacy of Dodescomb-Leigh, in the neighbourhood of Exeter, where he continued till August 1738.

He was prevailed upon by the late Lord Rolle to undertake the charge of his youngest brother's education, and to take the tour of France with him, where Mr. Walker acquired many of those polite accomplishments which adorn gentleman.

About two years after, he returned to England and accepted the curacy of Lanlivery, in the county of Cornwall, under the Reverend Nicholas Kendall, M. A., one of the canons of Exeter, and archdeacon of Totness. On the death of Mr. Kendall, March 3, 1740, he was presented by Walter Kendall, Esq. to the said vicarage, to hold the same during the minority of a nephew of Mr. Kendal, to whom, on his coming of age, Mr. Walter resigned it, and, at midsummer of 1746, entered upon the curacy of Truro in Cornwall. Mr. Walker, during the six years he served Lanlivery, was always much esteemed for the decency and regularity of his conduct, having been by a gracious providence preserved from all gross vices. His conscience, even at that time, dictated to him the necessity of constant diligence in the public duties of preaching and catechising, though he was then unacquainted with those evangelical principles which he afterwards embraced and taught with so much success in the latter years of his ministry. Nor did he, destitute as he was, of the light and motives which influenced his after-conduct, neglect at any time to visit his parishioners, and give them the best counsel and advice he was able. A remarkable instance of his concern for them stands on record in one of his papers. In the year 1744, being seized with a violent fever, he sent to a neighbouring gentleman and dictated to him a letter, which in case of his death he desired might be transcribed and given to such of his parishioners as he found neither his preaching nor his private admonitions produced any good effect on, whose names he then desired the gentleman to take down: which is an evidence of his concern for the souls of those under his care.

But before we proceed farther, it may not be amiss to say something concerning Mr. Walker's endowments both in body and mind. As to his person, he was tall in stature, his features were strong and comely, and his deportment such as commanded respect. An air of authority, which was natural to him, usually struck an impression of awe at the first interview, on those that conversed with him. But yet he conducted himself in such a manner that while with a becoming dignity he extorted even from the obstinate and petulant a respect due to the ministerial character, by his affability and readiness either in communicating his own thoughts, or attending to what was said by others, he rendered himself an agreeable companion to those who were willing either to impart or to receive instruction. In his conversation he discovered an uncommon depth of thought, and delivered his feelings with readiness of expression on any subject. His understanding was remarkably clear, and continued so to the very last. He was possessed of a quick understanding, a solid judgement, and a retentive memory. The faculty which appeared in a more distinguishing manner was his methodical exactness and propriety in the arrangement of his thoughts, and the distribution of the several parts of the subject he undertook to speak about. This is to be discerned throughout his writings. And when his friends observed to him that he usually discovered great accuracy and propriety in dividing the matter of his discourses, he used at such times to say that logic had been a favourite study with him from his youth. And indeed he generally took an opportunity to recommend an improvement in the art of logic to younger divines, who consulted him on the prosecution of their studies. He cautioned them to beware of quoting scraps of Scripture as they stand by themselves, and building opinions on them, which the context would not authorise. In opposition to this lazy custom, he advised them to consider each passage, with reference to what went before and what followed after, and likewise to mark with attention what analogy it bore to the general plan of

salvation by grace. This circumstance might perhaps, with more propriety, have been reserved to be mentioned later; but as I was speaking of his intellectual endowments, it naturally occurred to me to refer to it in this place.

But to return. Our Author, as I mentioned, quitted Lanlivery, and settled at Truro in the year 1746, at which time he was universally esteemed not only in his private character, but likewise for the regular discharge of the duties of his pastoral function. Some of my readers may perhaps ask, "If Mr. Walker bore so respectable a character at his first coming to Truro, what occasion had he either to make any alteration in his principles, or to newly model his conduct?" I will therefore endeavour to give an answer to this question, which concerns a most important crisis in his life, in as clear and satisfactory way as I am able. It is hardly to be supposed, that a man of his strong sense and solidity of judgement should be induced to differ so entirely from his former self, if he had not seen sufficient ground to believe that he had been totally mistaken. There never was a man less likely to be deceived by any enthusiastic impressions, of which he was always so jealous, that it was his constant rule to watch over the reasonings of his own mind, to compare all its conclusions with the plain sense of Scripture, and to lay no stress on anything that was not warranted by an agreement with that unerring rule. Thus was he guarded against the delusive sallies of a lively imagination; neither was he more likely to be misled by a deference to the authority of others, whatever his opinion or esteem of them might be. But what he saw for himself required in the word of God as matter of faith or practice, that, and that only, he thought himself bound to believe and do. And he was so much afraid of leading others into that blind submission to his judgement, which he would not pay himself to any human authority, that he made it always a part of his advice to those whom he instructed, not to give their assent to anything he should tell them, because he said it, but to go to their Bible, and search the Scriptures, that their faith might not be built on man's authority, but only on divine testimony.

It was not therefore without reason that he submitted to a change, which arose from a most deliberate and well-grounded conviction. Did religion require nothing more than external decency of manners, it must certainly be allowed that he was under no necessity of reformation. But to make the necessity of such a change a little more intelligible to those of my readers who may have up till now neglected to consult the interests, and attend to the concerns of, their own immortal souls, I must take leave to remind them that there is an essential and very important difference between the external professor of Christianity and the real internal Christian. That to depend on regularity in observing the outward modes of worship, in acts of benevolence and kindness, in abstaining from gross injustice and scandalous vices; that, in short, to appear outwardly blameless before men, to make a fair show in the flesh, and thus to stifle and appease the admonitions and accusations of conscience, which was just our Author's former case, is the utmost height of the religion of those who take up with the form of godliness void of its power; but that the real Christian, without being less careful to walk worthy of the vocation with which he is called, and to adorn his profession by the practice of everything that is amiable and praise-worthy, is farther taught to look

carefully to the state of his heart and affections, and to examine the principles which touch his conduct.

He is filled with an habitual and earnest desire to be conformed, in the inward temper and disposition of his soul, to the image of him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that all who believe in him might not perish, but have eternal life. He strives to mortify all the corrupt inclinations both of the flesh and of the mind; to renounce his own will in every instance where it rises in any degree of opposition to that of God; to be valiant in the cause of God and his truth, and resolute in bearing, with meekness and patience, the troubles he will unavoidably meet with for conscience-sake: Such, and so different from his former self was our Author after this important change had taken place in him.

If the reader is sensible of the difference, which I have faintly endeavoured to represent, between the real and nominal Christian, he will see the need for such a change, and his question will be answered to his satisfaction.

The occasion of his being brought to this knowledge of himself was as follows: About a year after he came to Truro, being in company with some friends, the subject of whose conversation turned upon the nature of justification and saving faith, he, as he freely owned afterwards, became conscious that he was totally unacquainted with that

faith which had been the topic of the discourse, and also convinced himself that he was destitute of something which was of the greatest importance to his own as well as to the salvation of the people committed to his charge. He said nothing at that time of the concern he was brought under to anyone of the company, but was ever afterwards, as opportunity offered, ready to enter upon the subject. He began to discover that he had been ignorant of the nature of gospel-salvation, inattentive to the spiritual state of his own soul and the souls of others, and was governed in all his conduct not by the only Christian motives of love for God and man, but purely by such things that were wholly sensual and selfish. He found he was a slave to the desire of man's esteem; and, in short, as he himself expressed it, that all had been wrong both within and without.

Upon this discovery, he applied himself with diligence and fervent prayer to the study of the Holy Scriptures: and having by these means gained a further insight into the nature of man's spiritual disorder, and of the remedy afforded in the gospel, this necessarily led him to make a considerable alteration in his preaching, both as to the choice of his subjects and the manner of his address. Convinced that the divine testimony was the only sure ground of a divine faith, he was careful to assert nothing that was not immediately drawn from the word of God, it being now his great aim and study, to use his own phrase, "to be a good Bible Divine." But of all these particulars will gain later a clearer knowledge from the following meditation, written by him at his return from a meeting of neighbouring clergymen, who met together for the purpose of religious conversation.

" Seeing the gospel revelation is a dispensation of grace — the remedy for a fallen nature, we must needs be sensible of those effects which the Fall has had on us, ere we can make a right use of the gospel. For my own part, I lived many years in entire ignorance of a corrupted nature, although I had learnt to

reason in a speculative and historical way upon man's degeneracy. Since it has pleased God in some measure to enlighten the eyes of my understanding, I look back upon those days of blindness, and plainly see that, while I kept to an external customary decency, and in some sense regularity, I was influenced by, and acted on, two hidden principles, as contrary to God as darkness is to light; the one, a prevailing desire of reputation and being esteemed, which went through all I did,

And followed me into all companies, dictated all I said, led me to comply often in direct opposition to conscience, made me above all things fearful of being thought little of, directed all my sermons both in writing and in speaking them, and, in short, swayed my whole life till, I hope, the few latter years of it. The other, a desire of pleasure, which rendered me lazy, indolent, and restless out of company, eager for amusements, etc., but this was so subordinate to the other, that I was always best delighted with such entertainments as gave me opportunity of setting off any excellence I might seem to have, such as music and dancing.

By these two, the strong man kept the palace of my heart, and all was peace; and that in so strange a manner, that I do not recollect the least suspicion of my being out of the way; for I had learnt to rest upon my freedom from the grossest vices, and keeping a sort of strictness in attending to the forms of my ministry, and especially in engaging others to attend them. Were I to say with how many heart-felt pangs of fear and concern I have been brought during these latter years, to any reasonable measure of indifference about the esteem of the world, I should describe the passages which have most impressed my mind. The love of pleasure declined first. But yet I could only part with it by degrees. And many things of that sort I continued in when I had no pleasure in them, because I was
ashamed to leave them.

In a letter from a clergyman concerning the first question in the office for the ordaining of deacons, published in 1758, Mr. Walker says of himself,

“As I was ignorant of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, and of my need of him in all his offices, so I had not taken the least notice of the spiritual state of others. It was to me as a thing I had no concern with, that sins of the grossest kind were committed on every side of me. And after I was ordained, I had no sight or thought of the condition my parishioners were in, though I had some desire that they should come to church and sacrament, and not drink, swear, and the like.”

But the whole of this matter is explained more at large in a letter written by him in Truro from the very beginning.

“In the year 1746, I undertook (as curate) the charge of this populous and large town, in many respects the principal town in the county. God knows on what unworthy views I did it, and how utterly disqualified my beard and head were for my ministerial trust. I had been then some years vicar of a neighbouring parish.

But, dear Sir, how must I have suffered the poor souls there to starve and perish, while I was only possessed of historical notions of all the vitals of Christianity: the corruption of man's nature, his misery and helplessness; the satisfaction and sufficiency of Christ; the necessity of a renewed mind; the need of the work of the Spirit. These I knew notionally, but neither felt nor taught them practically. You must own I ought to go sorrowing to the grave upon a review of six years so passed over. Nevertheless, I was thought well of, and indeed esteemed beyond most of my brethren, for my regularity, decency, endeavours to keep up external attendances, and somewhat or other in my public addresses. Would to God I were the only one entrusted with the gospel in these circumstances! It was at least a year after, the kind providence of God brought me to this point, ere I fell under considerable suspicions or uneasiness about myself and my way of preaching; when by the frequent conversation of a Christian friend (truly the first person I had met with truly possessed of the mind of Christ) I became conscious that all was wrong within and without. My uneasiness was rather abiding than violent, possibly because my life had been free of gross sins, having been used in a good measure to follow the direction of my conscience, and the change produced in me was slow, till under a variety of means, I was brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus."

At the beginning of the above account, our Author reflects with concern on the unworthy views which prevailed on him to undertake the curacy of Truro. In order to acquaint the curious reader what these unworthy views were, I shall here interrupt the narrative to inform him, that in many private conversations he often told me, that he was not actuated by the least measure of a ministerial spirit at the time of his first coming to Truro; but that his only motive in going to live in that populous town, in preference to any other place in the county, was the greater resort of company, and that he might take his pleasure at the assemblies, and particularly in dancing. Such was the bent of his inclinations, before he was a partaker of the grace of God in truth. He was naturally a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. The letter goes on:

"As this work was going forward in myself, the people were made partakers of the effects of it; by and by I began to deal with them as lost sinners, and beat down formality and self-righteousness, and to preach Christ. The fruit of this, by the mighty working of the Spirit, quickly appeared. It was a new way to them. They were surprised and grew angry, not without an evident fear resting on them), and an interesting curiosity to hear me again in this matter. I have reason to judge, that almost all of them have been one time or other awakened more or less, although I fear many of them have rejected the counsel of God against themselves. But, in the mean time, some more sensibly pricked in their hearts, came to me inquiring what they must do? The number of these continually increasing, I thought my utmost diligence was needful towards them. They were universally ignorant in the smallest degree. I was glad to give them as many evenings in the week as I could spare, appointing them to attend me, after their work was over, at my

house. As there was no knowledge of divine things among them, and in consequence they were incapable of instructing one another; and all in all, as they were marked out by reproach, and had every art tried on them to draw them away, they needed from me both instructions and cautions, which I was obliged for these reasons to give them, either singly, or by two or three together. This I have continued to do to the present time, with no variation but that of using the help of those who had made any progress, to watch over beginners. I had from the first engaged them frequently to converse together, and pray with one another, as I could put them together; and though the far greater part of them fell away from their awakening, yet when a number of them seemed to be somewhat confirmed, they, of their own accord, met together in larger bodies in their own houses, to read God's word, pray, sing psalms, etc. This became pretty much practised about two years ago, and here I left them to themselves, only giving them directions as needs required. By the grace of God, the number of those whose conduct seemed to express a lively faith, began now to be something considerable, for which reason about the latter end of last summer, it was thought advisable to form them into a religious society, which, after some delays, was effected in the beginning of February. The number of members is now upwards of seventy. [It was afterwards considerably increased.] While I was deliberating about this society, which was to consist of such only as gave hopes of an edifying example, it was thought proper to call together as many others as were willing, in my house once a-week, as a sort of nursery for the principal society. And by talking and praying with them, we seem to have found some establishment among those who are weaker. This has been the progress of the work among ourselves, where I have reason to believe we have been much forwarded by the blessing of the Spirit upon a free and practical exposition of the church catechism, which I have, after my poor measure, made by word of mouth the Sunday evenings of half the year, an hour after service. I have to add further, as that which I don't doubt will give you pleasure, that not long after the commencement of this work at Truro, several clergymen of us in the neighbourhood associated ourselves under the name of the Parsons Club, for mutual consultation and direction, in order to promote the great end of our ministry."

The pious Editor gives a full account of the nature and institution of these societies, and states at large many truly edifying particulars concerning Mr. Walker's indefatigable labours, both with the people committed to his charge, and with soldiers and others, whom Providence placed in his way. After which, he adds:

"Thus were the labours of this faithful minister of Christ employed in superintending the flock more immediately committed to his care, in giving his advice to those who came to consult him from neighbouring places, and in cultivating a spirit of religion among those who seemed to be more accidentally thrown in his way. To obviate one groundless calumny with which the careless and lukewarm have often been apt to charge a life of perilous godliness, as if it gave encouragement to the neglect of secular business, it may not be improper to remark that at the same time that he was earnest in pressing it upon those that

came to him for advice, to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, as the one thing needful, he never forgot to exhort people of all conditions and occupations in life, to apply themselves with diligence to the duties of their respective callings: Telling them, as the strongest argument that could be urged, that the prosperity and tranquillity of their souls would be more effectively promoted by a careful and industrious attention to the business of their station, than by devoting themselves wholly to the study of religion, to the neglect of those employments, which the place that God had assigned them in the world required at their hands. The truth of which observation I have heard confirmed by the experience of those who have listened to his counsel in this particular.”

The twenty-fifth sermon on the catechism, which was preached at Truro on the 27th of April in the year 1760, and was the last discourse delivered by our Author in public, deserves our particular notice. The subject is most awesome and interesting, and the manner of treating it awakening and affecting. Having in some of the preceding lectures considered in a practical view the resurrection of Christ as head of his body the church, his ascension into the highest heavens to prepare a place for his people, and his session at the right hand of God as the great Advocate and Intercessor, pleading continually before the Father the propitiatory sacrifice of his obedience unto death; in this he represents him at his second coming as universal Judge, summoning all mankind before his righteous tribunal. The solemn transactions of the day of judgement being, as should seem to us accidentally, the subject of Mr. Walker’s last address to his parishioners, it gave him an opportunity of speaking to them in such a way, that, if he had been actually apprised that it should be his last sermon, he could not have taken his leave of them more properly. After a very serious and earnest exhortation with the careless, idle, pleasure-loving sinner, he concludes with delivering as it were his dying words to a congregation, among whom he had ministered so long a time with so much zeal and assiduity, in this remarkable passage

“Well, we shall all appear before the judgement-seat of Christ together. There the controversy between me calling on you by the terrors of the Lord, and you determined to abide in your sins, will be decided. There it will appear, whether your blood will be upon your own heads for your obstinate impenitence, or on mine for not giving you warning. Christ will certainly either acquit or condemn me on this behalf; and if I should be as fitted here, what will become of you? I tremble to think, how so many words of mine will be brought up against you on that day. What will you say, what will you answer, how will you excuse yourselves? O Sirs, if you will not be prevailed upon, you will eternally curse the day that you knew me, or heard one word from my mouth. Why, why, why will you die, with so aggravated a destruction? Think of the judgement, think of it, and you will not be able to hold it out against your own souls. May the Lord incline you to do so; may he cause the word to sink deep into your hearts; may he show you all your danger; and with an outstretched arm bring you out of the hands of the devil, and translate you into the glorious kingdom of his dear Son, to his own glory and your

unspeakable happiness in the day of the appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Even so, most mighty God and most merciful Father, for the same Jesus Christ's sake!"

With these striking words, this faithful servant of Christ finished his public ministry. It has been made evident, from the account of his constant attention to the duties of the sacred office, that he spared no pains in using his most diligent endeavours for the promoting of God's glory and the edifying the people committed to his charge. It will now appear from a few selected extracts, taken from his own papers, that he dictated no rule to others which he did not conform to himself; but that an intimate knowledge of his own heart, and a deep experience of an inward work of divine grace, enabled him to direct others with such peculiar skill under their several trials in the way of salvation. Being himself converted, not to a notional assent remaining in the head, but to a lively operative faith working by love in the deep ground of the heart, he knew after what way to strengthen his brethren.

**A Specimen of Mr. Walker's Experiences,
and of his watchfulness over his own heart.**

"Sunday, September 17, 1752. Thursday night last I was visited with a sudden and violent disorder, which in a few minutes brought my life into danger. Such was God's good pleasure. It was his fatherly goodness here to give me a more practical and interesting sense of death and eternity. Here he has taught me the great importance of every hour I live; I can say now, I feel it with a more active impression. May I number my restored days wisely, nor may the things of this life ever more separate eternal things from before my eyes! May I live for his glory, what has thus lengthened my days! Remember, my soul, in the confusion of the hasty hour, how little you could do; just no more than present a broken resignation of yourself into the hands of your heavenly Father. Remember how you were oppressed with a spiritual insensibility; all the objects of faith how dead and flat; how without other fear, or hope, or trust in any degree of lively exercise. Ah, my soul! the dying hour is not for the work of religion, but for gaining an interest in Christ. This must be the business of my healthy days. In these I must seek to humble my soul, renounce myself, cast off all dependence on myself, and on everything, which by the grace of God, is done in me, and to work out my salvation drawn by the love of Jesus to yield myself to him the purchase of his blood. Now I must seek peace in believing on the Son of God, and prove that I have a title to justification through him by all the evidences of his Spirit working in me. Keep me in this faith, my Mediator, to whom I heartily trust my soul. Yes, increase this faith in me. And let me know that I belong to you by the sanctification of my corrupt nature more and more. Sunk as I am to the grave and death of sin, let me hear the powerful voice of your word, and feel your quickening influences upon my heart, and come forth, and live in holy obedience to your call. Yes, let me live no more to myself. You have given me warning, a sufficient summons to be ready, that by and by I must be away. Let me live for you, that you may acknowledge me at your judgement."

"Sunday, March 4, 1753. By the endurance and goodness of God, I am alive this day, and have been enabled without disturbance to renew the covenant of grace. Praise be to God, my mind was clear, my conscience quiet, and with due deliberation, and without distraction, I was before the Lord. I must bless him also that the ordinance was with comfort. Faith seemed in exercise more than usual to see, receive, and in some measure to appropriate Christ to me in communicating. Though always I have cause to complain of the hardness of my heart, yet now I could in some sort mourn and love. I found heartiness in my purposes of serving the glory and interest of God in Christ, and was forward to make a full surrender of myself, depending on divine grace. It has been a day with me signally marked with divine favour. Despite the insensibility and unbelief of my heart, I am returned rejoicing. What now shall I render unto the Lord? It may be, some greater trial than ordinary is at hand. Let me be mindful therefore of the vows I have made this day. Your peculiar suit, my soul, was that pride might no longer have dominion over us; that the loss of men's opinion and esteem might not fright on one side, nor the approval of friends puff us up on the other. We sued also for a more enlarged spirit of love, that those who speak evil against us, or use us badly for the work's sake, may be entertained with compassion and forgiveness, without resentment or hatred. We sued for this charitable mind and demeanour towards those mistaken people who, prejudiced by their own opinions, represent us as not preaching the word of God soundly. Lord, it is your pleasure to try me with the reproaches of the wanton and careless; and with the misapprehensions of those who, having conceived

unsafe evidences of faith, blame me that I do not speak as they do, and ignorantly oppose themselves. Lord, keep me in a charitable temper to endure with meekness the outrages of the one and the prejudiced mistakes of the other of these, between whom my lot is fallen to me! We entreated also your blessing on our society of ministers. Grant, God, that it may be a blessed instrument of reviving true practical religion. Keep us from pride, and debate, and jealousy! Grant us to watch over one another in love! and be ever with us enlarging all our hearts with zeal, constancy, and charity, and mortifying the world and our lusts continually; that as we are separated to the ministry, we may mind this one thing, to feed the sheep. And to me, O my God, give all needful direction, that I may speak boldly and prudently among them, humbly and affectionately, without pride or resentment. See now, my soul, the work before you; but do not shrink away. Remember how God has visited you this day. Be strong and of good courage, and yet be fearful lest you let anything of all this slip. You, the great Shepherd, do not leave me. Amen."

"Tuesday, April 27, 1756. I have found myself this day greatly exercised by fear of men. I would, I hope, be, and live wholly to God's glory, and act as his interests require; but I experience a lurking desire of man's esteem mixing with the natural timidity of my constitution, which makes me inwardly draw back from any approaching trial, in which I am to look in the face people of an angry and violent temper. It is to the free and mighty influence of the Spirit of God I owe it, that this fear has no dominion, and that, in despite of it, I am enabled to

persist in the ways of God and the discharge of my duty, in opposition to this secret enemy. Yet I have reason to suspect that, though it does not hinder me from doing, yet it cramps me in doing. I desire to wait with patience, to be humbled, to be thankful for the measure of liberty bestowed on me, and to believe always that his grace is sufficient for me. How hard is it to be angry and not sin! As much as self mixes, it is sinful. I think, no more than twice in my life have I been angry without plainly seeing sin. I suppose true gospel seal does not ruffle the temper, nor leave any disturbance behind it. It must be perfectly consistent with meekness, and is sinful if not accompanied with compassion. He looked about on them with indignation, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts. Surely our zeal and meekness bear proportion to our humility. I have most zeal and least wildfire when I am most humbled by the sense of my sins. Lord, make me humble! Lord, keep me humble!"

"Tuesday June 15, 1756. I don't know how many evil tempers I have found at work this day, particularly conceit, when conversing with ——. I have been kept from trials this day, so I can say nothing what degrees of prevalence I am under of fear of men. I have come very short of that actual communion with God by meditation and prayer for things that I wish for."

"Monday, June 18. Sloth and business have prevented me on the days past from continuing my journal, but I am sensible of the need of it. I cannot walk closely with God without daily watchfulness and examination. Yesterday's sermon related to a sense of the sinfulness of sin, as the great principle on which life stands contra-distinguished from servile fear. I cannot be so clear as I wish. On this point— In private exercises I find a desire to serve God, and wish to see him glorified. But my heart I find exceedingly selfish in the world. — This day on the road to —, I enjoyed useful meditation two hours in my heart much drawn up to God, and approving of his service and presence. But in the remainder of my journey, I was confused, and soon found myself carried away by worldly fears and proud reasonings. I resolved to be silent in the company I was to meet, if I might not be serviceable, and have found this evening the need and difficulty of being so. God grant me the spirit of meekness and charity!"

"Wednesday, June 30. I find it exceeding difficult to hold communion with God when not more immediately engaged in ministerial duties. Conversation this day has been rather about religion than religious. I want more of Christ's temper of meekness, having reason to suspect myself too solicitous when blamed unjustly. I see how vain it is to think of gaining Christ without forsaking all. Lord, make me more and more dead to the world."

"Monday, July 5. I was striving much in prayer last night and this morning for a sense of the sinfulness of sin. My heart seems to have been quickened by it through the day to keep close to God. Yet how often have I forgotten him! Oh, that I could love him more! I have been kept pretty much from fear respecting an approaching trial, being possessed with a desire to profess Christ, with some confidence in his protection, and with compassion toward gainsayers. I

have seen this day how needful it is to watch against a party spirit, and to love all that love Christ, leaving them to their own opinions, and to avoid love-destroying debates. I was rather affected than piously devout in the prayers at a funeral. — I ought to guard against despondent thoughts from external circumstances, and from worldly proud reasonings in my own heart.”

“Wednesday, July 7. Frame disordered at waking, though otherwise when I lay down. My comfort is, my salvation depends, not on me, but Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever, though I am so changeable. — Do I choose God for my portion? If so, why do I forget him so often, and think of him so coldly?”

“Monday, July 26. On reflection, I see my safest way is sitting down and abiding in the place I am called to. When absent from it, though by way of duty, I do not so well retain the possession of my own mind. — This Day, I observed at waking, as I have often done, that the application of my heart to think on God was rather by force; it was not easy to keep him in view, though I had so many causes for thankfulness. — I have been engaged all this day in some needful service, yet find myself apt to seek my own pleasure even in doing God’s work. I ought to be more sensible of the importance of my office, and to depend upon, and pray most earnestly for, the influences of God’s Spirit on myself and labours. To be humble in the sense of my vileness, and to believe the sufficiency of Christ, I find the two hardest things I have to attain.”

“Tuesday, August 10. This is club-day. I have not found such desire after it as formerly. This is a great fault. I am not thankful as I ought for such friends and opportunities. Nor do I meet them with suitable desires of receiving and communicating something good. I should regard the club as a distinguished blessing, and as laying me under peculiar obligations, and be continually influenced by the expectations which the world has from us. God has removed some outward trials I have been under, yet I would remember that Christ is our peace.”

“Wednesday, August 11. Apt to wander in family prayer. My state is of very low advancement; more especially this appears in the infrequent applications of my heart to God. A true spirituality of temper, I suspect, I need for this reason, and that suspicion demands my strictest inquiry. — Last week, when in trials, I seem to have been better than this when out of them. Let me inquire whether I am driven to Christ by necessity, or drawn by love.”

“Monday, August 23. The devotions of this morning were shortened by the expectation of business. Somewhat, like this often happens, and demands my greater attention. — Great experience this day of a corrupted heart; though not signally overcome, yet not watchful as I ought.”

“Tuesday, August 24. “Public duty encroached on the morning’s private exercise. — Had this day for some hours a peculiar fear of falling away. I observed the actions of faith were weak, yet could not get them lively. Seemed, however, determined for God in Christ. — I am certainly influenced by a

principle which makes me not unwatchful against sin, and not altogether unready for duty. But is it from the right motive, faith working by love?— Greatly lacking in thankfulness.”

“Jan. 6, 1757. I am well satisfied, the desire of esteem or fear of men has too much influence on my conduct. Lord, turn the fear of men’s faces into a love of their souls.”

We now come to finish this account of Mr. Walker’s life and ministry by showing his behaviour during his last illness, and what support he found from religion while in the near view of approaching death. This, it will be confessed on all hands, is a scene in which the truth and sincerity of a man’s religion is put to the test. To disarm the king of terrors of every appearance of horror, and to welcome his summons as a call from a vain and miserable world to a world of endless and unspeakable happiness, is the sole property of a firm faith in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Now, as our Author perceived his soul to be greatly strengthened and established in grace the nearer he advanced towards eternity, so will the attestation of this matter of fact, which was ground of comfort to himself, be to others a special confirmation of the truths he maintained, when they are assured that, under the influence of them, he finished his days in peace, and committed his soul and body into the hands of God? without the least doubt of being received into a happy immortality. After the 27th of April in the year 1760, as was before observed, Mr. Walker was disabled from performing any further service in the public congregation.

At this time, he was gripped with a fever, which confined him several weeks to his room at Truro. When he had to some degree recovered his strength after the abatement of the fever, a cough still plagued him, for which, as it foreboded a consumption, he was ordered to Bristol for the use of the waters in the month of August.

Hotwells in Clifton became a friendly rival
to Bath as a Georgian spa.



This lithograph by Samuel Jackson shows the Hotwell House before it was demolished in 1822. It held a pump room and lodgings for visitors.

Having stayed two months there with little or no benefit, he went in the autumn to Kington in Warwickshire, with the intention of spending some time with the Reverend Mr. Talbot, vicar of that parish, and afterwards of St. Giles's in Reading; but a bad season of the year coming on, he was ordered back to Bristol Wells. There he continued till the middle of December, when it was judged proper that he should be removed to some dry healthy spot in the neighbourhood of London, where he could enjoy the benefit of good air. Upon this, having before been invited by the Earl of Dartmouth (William Legge) to try the air at Blackheath, he went there for a few days before Christmas. Being situated in a place so near London, he had an opportunity of getting the best advice; but it was not in the power of medicine to stop the progress of his disease.



Dartmouth House, Dartmouth Row, Blackheath

It is worth our notice to observe how remarkably the providence of God raised up friends to supply his needs throughout his illness. After resigning the vicarage of Talland, the curacy of Truro was the whole of his income. The pay was small, and his expenses were necessarily increased to a great degree by a lone, continued sickness. But he had resigned himself into the hands of God, and found the promise verified, that he never will forsake those who commit themselves to the care of his fatherly protection. (Ps.37:25; Mat. 6:33) Being in the house of the Earl and Countess of Dartmouth, he had all the assistance that his critical situation could require. Presents also were conveyed to him from his friends at Truro, and at other places, whose love for him was such that they were ready to have furnished him with whatever supplies of money he might have stood in need of. And to the honour of those gentlemen of the faculty who were consulted, it must be recorded that, as soon as they were each apprised of the circumstances of their patient, they not only gave their attendance *gratis*, but seemed to take delight in offering him their service.

It appeared to be ordered, by a particular appointment of Divine Providence, that Mr. Walker, after he had finished his ministry at Truro, should abide a considerable time in the large and populous city of Bristol, and that he should afterwards spent the last seven months of his life in the neighbourhood of that great metropolis. Several serious persons, both of the clergy and laity, in and about London and Bristol, visited

him frequently in his illness, to whom his conversation was blessed in a very special way. By his knowledge and experience, he was eminently qualified to lead others to an acquaintance with their own hearts, and to the discovery of the comforts and privileges of the gospel, as well as to instruct ministers in the faithful discharge of their important office; so that, when bodily weakness prevented him from preaching any more in public, by his talent in conversation, in which he remarkably excelled, he was made instrumental in promoting the glory of God, and the good of many souls. He continued to the very last, whenever his strength would enable him to speak, to give suitable exhortations to those who were about him.

With regard to his own experiences in this last and languid season of his life, of which he frequently spoke to

those about him, he complained in general of great deadness of spiritual affections, and of the absence, of all sensible impressions of joy and delight in the contemplation of the exceeding love of God towards him, and of his approaching happy change. As he disavowed in principle any dependence on religious frames as a recommendation to God's favour, thinking it a scheme which savours too much of self-righteousness, and had learnt to cast his whole confidence upon the promises of God, freely offered in the gospel of Christ to sinners convinced of their guilt and helplessness; so he was quite content and easy in his mind under the lack of those sensations. But it is reasonable to suppose that the coldness and deadness of his affections were in a great measure, if not wholly, owing to the extreme weak state of his body. An inward burning fever, attended with profuse night sweats, had wasted his vital strength; a stubborn cough continually hung upon him; neither his food nor his medicines did him any service; a general languor oppressed his whole frame, and his spirits were reduced to a very low state. At those times when the powers of nature failed him most, he used to break out into such expressions as these:

"What a miserable creature should I be in my present situation, if I could not look upon God as my Covenant-God, my reconciled Father in Christ? The weakness of my body and of my spirits deprives me of all joyous sensations; but my faith in God's promises, I bless the Lord, is firm and unshaken. What though my loss of strength and spirit robs me of all comfortable communion with God, the promises are not therefore made void. Abraham believed, and it was counted to him for righteousness. I believe that God is faithful and true in all his declarations of mercy, which I have sought for, though I cannot now feel the impressions of his love."

On several occasions, he was heard to say, "I bless God, that upon the closest review of my life for these past ten years, I can see evident marks of my having lived with a single eye to the glory of God, in opposition to the selfishness of my nature." And likewise, "The nearer I advance towards eternity, the more I am confirmed in the truth of the doctrines which I have preached and published. I am sure they will stand the test of the last

day. Conviction of sin, original as well as actual, is the grand inlet to all saving knowledge; where this is lacking, the superstructure will not stand; but if this foundation is deeply laid, the heart will then welcome the glad tidings of salvation."

Upon the whole, we may observe, that under a continued absence of all conscious comfort, he possessed his soul in the most settled, abiding, solid peace, never admitting the least doubt of his acceptance with God. Nothing was more remarkable in him than the constant, even, and undisturbed tranquillity which he maintained under the frequent changes that attended his disorder. It sometimes happened that, upon an alteration of his medicines, there appeared hope of his recovery. At such times he was observed to take delight in the prospect of returning to the exercise of his ministry among his people at Truro, of whom he never spoke without evident tokens of singular pleasure and satisfaction in them; sometimes not without tears of affection, and tender concern for the welfare of their souls. When these short-lived hopes vanished, and the dangerous symptoms of his disorder returned, no alteration appeared in the frame of his mind. He only turned his views to the awful scene that called for his more immediate attention, and spoke with equal delight of the joys reserved beyond the grave for the faithful servants of the living God. It never could be discovered that he desired to live or wished to die. His soul was all submission to the will of his heavenly Father, and his whole concern seemed to be to preserve that frame of mind, where he might have said with Paul, None of us live to himself, and no one dies to himself. For whether then we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. His patience was not worn out, but strengthened and deepened by the continuation and increase of his sufferings.

If at any time, which seldom happened, an expression escaped his lips that seemed to savour of fretfulness or impatience, he was observed to check and reprove himself. At the last, indeed, patience appeared to have had her perfect work, for nothing of this kind was discovered in him for some time before his death. What he endured within the last six weeks from an inward parching heat, is almost inexpressible. His only apprehensions under these trying circumstances were, lest his patience should not hold out, and that he should wish for a release sooner than God should see fit to grant it. But the Lord was pleased to preserve in him a spirit of resignation to the last.

To this view of his behaviour in this his last scene, I shall add below two letters, written by him to his nearest and most intimate friend at Truro. The former is dated fifteen days, the latter but five, before his death.

“My dearest, most faithful Friend,

My disorder, though by no means affording myself the least prospect of recovery, yet seems to affect me at present more with weakness than with that violent heat, which rendered me incapable of all thought. I can now, blessed be God, think a little, and with what comfort I both receive your thoughts and communicate mine to you! Oh, my dear friend, what do we owe to the Lord for one another? More than I could have conceived, had not God sent me to die elsewhere. We shall have time to praise the Lord when we meet in the other world. I stand and look upon that blessed world with an established heart. I see the way prepared, opened, and assured to me in Jesus Christ. And for ever blessed be the name of God, that I can look upon death, that introduces that

glorious scene, without any kind of fear! I find my grand duty still is submission as to time and circumstances. Why should not I say to you that I find nothing come so near my heart as the fear lest my will should thwart God's in any circumstance. Here I think I am enabled to watch and pray in some poor measure. Well, my dear friend, I am but stepping a little before you. You will soon also get your release, and there we shall triumph forever in the name, and love, and power of the Lamb. Adieu.

Yours in the Lord Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

Blackheath, July 4, 1761.

S. W."

"My dearest Friend,

With great confusion of thought, I have no doubt great confidence, great submission, no complaining. The great thing, which I always feared, is, I believe, coming upon me, that I am coming into a diarrhoea, confined to my bed, and have no strength. As to actual views of the joys that are coming, I have none, but a steadfast belief of them in Christ. What I have found in myself for months, both as to the review of times past, and the present workings of the Spirit, has left me without all doubt of my union with Christ, etc.

Blackheath, July 14, 1761,

S. W."

On the Tuesday morning, he dictated the above letter, for at that time he was not able to hold a pen in his hand. A few hours after, the symptoms of his approaching dissolution began to show themselves, his throat rattled, a cold clammy sweat ran down his cheeks, and the muscles of his arms and face appeared to be convulsed with frequent spasms and contractions. His heart, to use his own expression, seemed to him to be tied round with thongs. He still spoke of these presages of his death with the utmost calmness and composure, and begged his friends around him that they would pray for him, that he might hold out with patience unto the end. It being observed by one of them sitting on his bedside, what a blessing he enjoyed in his present situation, that his soul was ripe for heaven and eternity, he interrupted him by saying, "That the body of sin was not yet done away, but that he should continue a sinner to the last gasp, and desired that he would pray for him as such." Thus lowly and humbly did he think of himself, even under all his attainments in grace. In this lingering manner, he continued the five or six last days without any other visible alteration in his body than gradually growing weaker. But despite all his former deadness and dryness of soul which he complained about, it pleased God to shed abroad in his heart a lively sense of his love and favour, and a strong foretaste of heavenly joy, before he took him to the enjoyment of himself. On the Thursday, starting up from an apparent fit of dozing, he took hold of his nurse by the hand, who was sitting near him, and uttered this rapturous expression: "I have been on the

wings of the cherubim; heaven has in a way been opened to me: I shall be soon there myself, and am only sorry that I cannot take you with me. The next day, while a young clergyman, who came from a distant part of the country to visit his departing friend, was standing next to his bedside, he lifted up his eyes in a way that spoke of a joy more than words could utter, and addressed him thus: "Oh! my friend, had I strength to speak, I could tell you such news, as would rejoice your very soul. I have had such views of heaven — But I am not able to say more."

On the Saturday, his voice faltered exceedingly, and his head seemed rather to ramble. We scarce imagined he could have lived out the day, and indeed had he not been a remarkably strong-made man, it is not conceivable that he could have supported it so long under so severe and fatiguing an illness. He passed the night, however, in extreme weakness; and about nine o'clock the next morning, it pleased God to release him from all his sufferings. The evident concern of some of his particular friends, upon the increase of his disorder, sometimes affected him; on which account, thinking it is probable that the sight of his last agonies might give them pain, he one day said to a servant that attended him, "I would I might slip away, when nobody but you should be present"; and so indeed it fell out, for just when all except that person had left the room, not realising he was so very near his end, he turned his head aside on the pillow, and nature appearing to be quite exhausted, without any other token than a sigh something longer, and deeper than usual, his soul was delivered from the prison of the body. He departed this life in a lodging-house at Blackheath, to which he had been removed a few weeks before, on Sunday, July 19, 1761, in the forty-eighth year of his age, and entered into his Sabbath of eternal rest. It was his particular direction that his body should be interred in the church-yard of the parish in which he died. In compliance with this, he was buried in the church-yard of Lewisham in the county of Kent.

The following table exhibits a view of his Works made public:

1. A Sermon on 1 Samuel 20:3, at the funeral of a young man who was drowned as he was bathing, on Sunday, June 3, 1753.
2. The Christian, a set of practical Sermons, 1755.
3. A Sermon on Amos 4:12, preached at Truro, 1756.
4. A Letter from a Clergyman concerning the first question in the office for the ordaining of Deacons, 1758.
5. Regulations and Helps proposed for promoting religious conversation among Christians.
6. A Discourse on the Necessity of being acquainted with our fallen State.
7. A Familiar Catechism, 1759.
8. A Short Instruction and Examination for the Lord's Supper.

9. A Treatise on Conviction of Sin.

10. A Familiar Introduction to the knowledge of ourselves, 1761.

Several other small Tracts were published monthly by himself and other Ministers.

To the above-mentioned writing, *The Christian*, a small volume consisting of eleven Sermons, passed through a second and third edition in the years 1756 and 1759, with a recommendatory Preface written by the late Reverend Mr. Thomas Adam, rector of Wintringham in Lincolnshire.