A REVIVAL IN BALTIMORE

ANNOTATED EDITION

W. C. Walton

Narrative of a Revival of Religion in the Third Presbyterian Church

The complete 1824 text

with a new Introduction and notes and questions for study and discussion

THE UPWARD CALL PRESS

A Revival in Baltimore

A Revival in Baltimore

W. C. Walton's *Narrative of a Revival of Religion* (1824)

With Remarks on Subjects Connected with Revivals in General

ANNOTATED EDITION

With an Introduction, Notes, and Questions for Study and Discussion

THE UPWARD CALL PRESS

A Revival in Baltimore: W. C. Walton's Narrative of a Revival of Religion (1824), Annotated Edition

The text of W. C. Walton's *Narrative of a Revival of Religion, in the Third Presbyterian Church, of Baltimore* follows the first edition (Baltimore: William Wooddy, 1824) and is in the public domain.

Introduction, notes, appendices, and study questions © 2026 The Upward Call Press. All rights reserved.

Scripture references in the notes and study questions are to the New King James Version. Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ISBN 979-8-9822421-2-9 (paperback)
ISBN 979-8-9822421-3-6 (e-book)

The Upward Call Press
TheUpwardCallPress.com
hello@TheUpwardCallPress.com

"I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14

"There must be a change, in this respect, to produce a revival in a particular church; and there must be a general change, of a similar nature, throughout all christendom."

W. C. Walton, 1824

CONTENTS

Editor's Note

Introduction: The Life of W. C. Walton

Remembered by Those Who Knew Him

The Title Page of 1824

NARRATIVE OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION

Questions for Study and Discussion

Appendix A: Walton's Scripture Allusions

Appendix B: A Brief Chronology

Appendix C: Note on the Text

For Further Reading

EDITOR'S NOTE

In the spring of 1824 a young Presbyterian pastor in Baltimore sat down to record what God had done in his congregation over the previous nine months: a work of grace he had long hoped for and had almost ceased to expect. What he wrote was a short but influential pamphlet of thirty-six pages. It was first printed in an edition of four thousand copies, then reprinted in Massachusetts and New York, and excerpts appeared in London. Ministers credited it with sparking revivals in places Walton never visited. Then, like most small books of its kind, it was eventually forgotten. This edition returns it to print.

The text. Walton's words are reproduced from the first edition (Baltimore: William Wooddy, 1824), complete and unabridged. His spelling has been kept as he printed it: *labour*, *Saviour*, *favour*, *christians*, *intreated*, *prophane*, *connexion*. So have his capitals, his italics, and his long dashes. Readers will quickly grow used to them, and they keep the voice of 1824 intact. A handful of obvious printer's errors have been corrected; they are listed in Appendix C.

Paragraphs. Walton wrote in very long paragraphs, some running across two printed pages. To make the text easier to read, the longest of these have been divided at natural turns in the thought. **Every paragraph break added by the editor is marked with a small ornament (❧).** A paragraph that begins without the ornament begins exactly as Walton began it.

Headings. Walton's pamphlet has no headings apart from the closing "Conclusion." The section headings in

square brackets have been supplied by the editor to help readers find their way. They are not part of the original.

Notes. Notes to the Introduction cite Joshua N. Danforth's *Memoir of William C. Walton* (1837), the fullest source for Walton's life. The footnotes to Walton's text explain terms that have changed their meaning since 1824 (such as *professors*, *anxious meeting*, and *promiscuous assembly*), identify people and events, and supply references for the many passages of Scripture that Walton quotes or echoes without naming. Where Walton gives a reference himself, it is left as he printed it.

Study questions. The questions at the back of the book follow the sections of the text and are suitable for pastors' reading groups, church leadership teams, seminary classes, and personal reflection. Scripture references accompany each question for further study.

The Upward Call Press
TheUpwardCallPress.com

INTRODUCTION: THE LIFE OF W. C. WALTON

A Virginia Boyhood

William Claiborne Walton was born on November 4, 1793, on a farm in Hanover County, Virginia, some thirty miles from Richmond. His father was a blacksmith who also kept a tavern, "a business," his biographer dryly observes, "by no means favorable" to the education or morals of a child. The household was not a religious one. The only religious instruction Walton could remember from his boyhood came from an elderly enslaved woman of the household, a professing Christian. He recalled hearing her, and her young daughter who had nursed him, talk of heaven and hell and the Day of Judgment. It was the first Christian teaching he ever received.

He was seventeen before he ever took part in family prayer, and then only because a visiting uncle, a professing Christian, gathered the household one evening to sing and pray. The novelty of it stayed with him.[1]

In 1805 the family moved west to Hardy County, near Moorefield, where his father died about a year later. After a short schooling the boy became a clerk to a merchant at Frankfort, in a village where "gambling, drinking, horse racing, fighting, profane swearing and lewdness were so common as to excite no surprise." He served so faithfully that his em-

[1] Joshua N. Danforth, *Memoir of William C. Walton* (Hartford, 1837), pp. 15–18. Later notes cite this work simply as *Memoir*.

ployer wept at his leaving. He then moved to Winchester, to work in the store of a Presbyterian elder. Looking back, he ascribed "the grand cause of my preservation from ruin" to "the secret, invisible hand of God."[2]

Conversion

On New Year's evening, 1811, at the Presbyterian church in Winchester, the pastor, Dr. Hill, read aloud Samuel Davies's famous sermon on the text "This year thou shalt die" (Jeremiah 28:16). Walton "almost resolved to begin immediately to seek salvation." But the service closed without any invitation to those who were moved, and by the next day the impression was gone. "If at the close of the service, serious persons had been invited to remain for conversation and prayer," he reflected years afterwards, "the probability is, that I should have been converted."[3] A generation later he would build his own ministry around exactly such conversations.

A few weeks later, after a ball and a guilty Sabbath afternoon spent playing cards, he wandered into a Methodist meeting where an aged local preacher named Wall spoke tenderly of the sufferings of Christ. The truth struck him "with an electric force." He hurried back to the counting room to pray: "Lord, have mercy upon me, and pardon all that is past, and enable me to do better for the future."[4]

Weeks of struggle followed. He prayed on his bed because he was afraid to sleep lest he wake in hell, yet for a week his pride would not let him kneel. He felt "a kind of peace," but knew that he "was not sufficiently penitent for his opposition to the government of God," and he tried by long and importunate prayers "to constrain the Lord to convert him." Relief

---

[2] *Memoir*, pp. 21–23.

[3] *Memoir*, p. 25.

[4] *Memoir*, pp. 26–27.

began when he turned from himself to the cross. Received into the church as the season of communion approached, he took his Bible and "read and meditated those passages, which dwell on the sufferings of Christ, until, as he thought, by a living faith he discerned Him, who died to save our souls from sin and hell." When he sat at the Lord's Table for the first time, "a new scene seemed to open before him, while the boundless merits and the resplendent glory of the crucified Saviour were unfolded to his view." For a week afterwards "a pleasant tranquillity pervaded his mind."[5]

Walton's peace was not untroubled, however, and in later years he more than once questioned whether his early experience had gone deep enough. But the pattern of his conversion became the message of his ministry. He had known what it was to pray and weep and wait for God while refusing to yield, and he had found peace only when he stopped trying to move God and rested on Christ crucified. That is exactly the surrender he urges on awakened sinners in the pages that follow.

Hampden-Sydney and the Call to Preach

Seeing his promise, Dr. Hill invited him to prepare for the ministry, and in the autumn of 1811 Walton entered Hampden-Sydney College. His roommate and closest friend there was Daniel Baker, later one of the best-known evangelists of the American South. Walton was painfully shy; when called on to pray in public he trembled so that he lost his train of thought. Yet in 1812 and 1813 he began to exhort at meetings in Virginia and North Carolina. One of his early addresses was given to a society formed to educate Black Virginians. His subject was the sufferings of Christ, "the subject that first

[5] *Memoir*, pp. 28–33.

roused my attention to religion." He went on preaching to Black congregations in later years.[6]

The Presbytery of Winchester licensed him to preach in 1814. In 1817 he married Lucinda Muse, who would survive him, and in 1818 he was ordained and installed as pastor of the Presbyterian church at Hopewell, near Winchester.[7]

A Struggling Young Pastor

The next four years were hard, marked by debt, illness, and frequent depression. His preaching, as he would later confess in the *Narrative*, was faithful but not "plain, and pointed, and discriminating," and he rarely spoke to anyone privately about their soul. "I am waiting to see what the Lord will do with me," he wrote in 1822.[8]

Baltimore, 1823–1824

What the Lord did was unexpected. In December 1822 an invitation "came unsought, unexpected" from the young Third Presbyterian Church of Baltimore, a congregation divided by recent quarrels and burdened with debt. Walton arrived with his family on February 22, 1823. Baltimore was then the third-largest city in the United States, a busy port of some sixty thousand people, among them a large population of free and enslaved African Americans.[9]

His health nearly ended the ministry before it began. He was spitting blood, physicians advised him to give up preaching, and he expected to die of consumption. It was at this low point, in the early summer of 1823, that a young theological

---

[6] *Memoir*, pp. 35–50, 205.

[7] *Memoir*, pp. 63, 77–80.

[8] *Memoir*, pp. 81–89.

[9] *Memoir*, pp. 90–92.

student who had seen several revivals and had talked with Asahel Nettleton came to stay with him for some days. Walton came away transformed. "I feel like one awaking out of sleep," he wrote in his diary. "I lament and am in some measure humbled for my past negligence and unfaithfulness." He prayed for pardon for the past, and for grace to "know and feel more of the power of God" than ever before. Yet the sorrow was mixed with joy: "It appears to me like a new and grand discovery. I would not exchange it for the world." He resolved, "with the help of God, to be wholly devoted to His work and glory." His biographer judged the change "surpassed in importance only by that of his original conversion."[10]

The *Narrative* tells what followed: the communicants meeting in twos and threes to pray, the young people gathered on Monday evenings, and above all the visiting from house to house. On a single October day he records eight families visited, and in one stretch nearly thirty visits in three or four days, all of them, his biographer stresses, "strictly religious visits." By his thirtieth birthday that November between fifty and sixty people were "entertaining a hope," and, to his own surprise, his health was "better than it has been for six years."[11]

Asahel Nettleton and the "Proper Means"

The methods Walton adopted were those of Asahel Nettleton (1783–1844), one of the most widely used evangelists in New England during the Second Great Awakening. Unmarried and never settled as a pastor, Nettleton travelled from town to town after 1811, and revival followed him so consistently that tens of thousands are thought to have been converted under his ministry. His methods were simple and searching: close

[10] *Memoir*, pp. 95–98, 286.

[11] *Memoir*, pp. 104–118.

personal conversation, separate meetings for those under conviction (his "inquiry meetings," Walton's "anxious meetings"), plain preaching of the sinner's guilt, and an insistence that the awakened must repent at once. "Never tell him to be patient, to wait God's time," Nettleton told one congregation, "unless you can tell when that time is."[12] He also distrusted noise and excitement and was slow to pronounce anyone converted. Every one of these features appears in the *Narrative*.

In March 1824, at the height of the work, Walton wrote to Lyman Beecher, one of the leading Congregational pastors of New England, asking whether Beecher or Nettleton could come to Baltimore to help. Neither could. But Beecher's reply contains a sentence Walton evidently took to heart: "I have admired that agriculture should be so plain, that feeble-minded men may raise a crop, and that the way to preach the gospel should also be as plain as the way to plough and sow."[13]

The Life of the Narrative

Walton first meant to send his account to a Richmond magazine. Revising it in March 1824, he decided instead to publish it as a pamphlet and sell it to help his young congregation, which had been carrying a heavy debt since before he arrived. "It is now in the press," he wrote, "four thousand copies. I have earnestly and repeatedly prayed for a blessing to attend it."[14] The prayer was answered beyond anything he expected. The pamphlet was reprinted in Massachusetts and New York, parts of it appeared in London, and ministers told Walton that

---

[12] Quoted in *Memoir*, p. 52.

[13] *Memoir*, pp. 123–124.

[14] *Memoir*, p. 123.

it had been the means of several revivals within their own knowledge.[15]

Walton did not stay to see the harvest in Baltimore. By the autumn of 1824 his health had failed again, and he left the city. Looking back eight years later, he judged that revival frankly. "I was then entirely inexperienced," he wrote, "and felt that I had every thing to learn." He had not known how to restrain excitement when it ran too high, and he regretted spending pulpit time defending his methods "which had been far better employed in preaching directly to the consciences and hearts of sinners."[16] Readers who find parts of the *Narrative* severe may take comfort that its author was his own sharpest critic.

Alexandria

In 1827 Walton was installed as pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of Alexandria, then part of the District of Columbia, a congregation "long in a declining state." The five years that followed were the most fruitful of his life. When a local sceptic boasted that no minister dared explain "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," Walton announced that he would, and the church filled with "all the infidels in town." Several of them were converted. By 1829 nearly a hundred and fifty members had been added, and that year Walton published *The Scripture Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, Viewed in Connection with Man's Responsibility*.[17]

Alexandria also shows Walton's thinking growing beyond the *Narrative*. In October 1828, with James Patterson of Philadelphia, Joshua Danforth, and others, he held a "four days'

---

[15] *Memoir*, pp. 108, 153, 191, 293–294.

[16] Walton to the Society of Inquiry, Princeton Theological Seminary, January 10, 1832, in *Memoir*, pp. 292–293, 302.

[17] *Memoir*, pp. 160–193, 229.

meeting," which Patterson believed was the first such protracted meeting held in a city east of the Allegheny Mountains. When the inquirers became too many to speak with one by one, Walton began asking them to come forward to particular seats so that he could talk and pray with them. "This was the beginning of the use of 'anxious seats,' as they are now called," he wrote, "but I did not then dream that it would grow into a system."[18] The pastor who had once relied almost entirely on quiet visiting and inquiry meetings was now willing to try new means. What makes him worth hearing on the subject is the spirit in which he did so (see "Firm Convictions, Open Hands," below).

Hartford and the End

In 1832 Walton accepted a call to the newly formed Free Church in Hartford, Connecticut, though he hesitated to leave "Virginia, my own, my native State." He was installed in January 1833 at the opening of a three-week protracted meeting that he believed brought between two and three hundred people to faith. That year he published *Preparation for Special Efforts to Promote the Work of God*, urging churches to prepare their hearts before any special effort.[19]

In October 1833, after preaching nine times in four days at Waterbury, he fell ill, and in December he suffered a hemorrhage from the lungs. His last weeks were marked by an extraordinary peace. "This has been on the whole the happiest day of my life," he told the Hartford pastor Joel Hawes. He died on February 18, 1834, aged forty, leaving his widow and seven children.[20]

---

[18] *Memoir*, pp. 178–179, 295, 305.

[19] *Memoir*, pp. 234–257.

[20] *Memoir*, pp. 265–277.

Walton's methods changed over the years; his convictions did not. From first to last he held that only the truth, applied by the Holy Spirit, converts anyone. Before that first four days' meeting he and his people spent weeks in prayer. He wanted them convinced that "the most gifted ministers in the land, if we could assemble them all on that occasion, would not be able to convert one soul without the Spirit of God."[21]

He held his methods loosely and examined them honestly. He warned that inviting people forward could easily be misused: "it certainly is wrong to speak of the act of coming forward as the main thing we are aiming at." He preferred to avoid catchwords such as "anxious seats" altogether. He agreed that special meetings should not be held so often that they stopped being special, and he insisted that a church "must not employ any means which could not in the nature of things be sustained." When feeling ran too high in a meeting, he would gently remind the people that "truth is the only instrument of conviction and conversion," and then call them to silent prayer.[22]

Nor would he make methods a test of fellowship. "Our principle," he wrote, "is to vary measures according to circumstances, 'if by any means we may save some.'" He thought that too much caution could do as much harm as too little. Yet "we ought not to condemn conscientious fears indulged by brethren in regard to the tendency of things to which they have not been accustomed." And to those who preferred other ways: "If they can practically show us a more excellent way than we have yet discovered, we shall thank them; but at all events, we will not contend with them about such matters."[23]

---

[21] *Memoir*, p. 296.

[22] *Memoir*, pp. 294, 299–300, 302.

[23] *Memoir*, pp. 254–255.

Joshua Danforth, who worked beside him, wrote that "he never, to my knowledge, denounced others for not thinking and acting with him." James Patterson remembered him as "humble, teachable and child-like."[24]

His last counsel on the subject came from his deathbed. Asked whether he had any message for his fellow laborers in revival, he said, "I want to have them less censorious." He added that he feared in some younger men "a disposition… to indulge in hard feelings towards those who do not look at things in the same light; to speak of existing evils in the spirit of evil."[25]

Reading Walton Today

Walton was not a great scholar, and by his biographer's account "he was not an orator." His power lay elsewhere: in personal conversation, in plain preaching aimed at the conscience, in prayer, and in an urgency about souls that colleagues of every party recognized. On the much-debated question of human ability, he stood with those who pressed upon sinners their full ability, and therefore their immediate duty, to repent. It was a view he shared with Lyman Beecher, and readers from other traditions will weigh it differently. But the heart of the *Narrative* is something nearly every tradition has prized: a pastor who stopped waiting for revival and began, on his knees and on foot, to seek it.

---

[24] *Memoir*, pp. 291, 305.

[25] *Memoir*, p. 272.

Remembered by Those Who Knew Him

Daniel Baker, Walton's classmate and roommate at Hampden-Sydney College, wrote to his widow in August 1835. He remembered a friend of "great sweetness and simplicity of character," a man "emphatically without guile," and he wrote: "I never knew one, I think, whose piety was more ardent, and whose zeal was more quenchless and untiring." He also recalled urging Walton, in his last letter, to write a prize tract on *ministerial responsibility*. Walton's death prevented it, though readers of the *Narrative* will recognize the subject he had been writing about all his life.[26]

James Patterson of Philadelphia, who labored beside him in revivals at Baltimore, Alexandria, Washington, and Hartford, called him "one of the most prudent, humble, sincere revival men I ever knew. He was far from any thing like fanaticism or wildness." He added: "I have never labored with a more lowly, humble, devoted man."[27]

Joel Parker of New York, who knew him only briefly, wrote to Mrs. Walton: "He was so sweet and heavenly, so tender and so meek, so like the Saviour whom he served, that I cannot think of him now… without weeping."[28]

His biographer and friend Joshua N. Danforth, who first met him as he left Baltimore in 1824, remembered "the pale countenance, the sedate air and the spiritual conversation" of

---

[26] *Memoir*, pp. 279–281.

[27] *Memoir*, pp. 304–305.

[28] *Memoir*, p. 279.

a man who seemed to count the whole world, beside the cause of Christ, "one grand impertinence."[29]

On his monument in Hartford the Free Church inscribed:

WALTON WAS A DEVOTED SERVANT OF GOD, AND PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL. THE HISTORY OF HIS MINISTRY WAS A HISTORY OF SOULS SAVED AND GOD GLORIFIED.

VIRGINIA GAVE HIM BIRTH, COLUMBIA A HOME, NEW ENGLAND A GRAVE, HEAVEN AN EVERLASTING REST.

Nearly half a century after his death, M'Clintock and Strong's *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* summed up his life in a single sentence: "He was a most zealous and devoted minister, full of love for souls and the glory of God."[30]

Walton's own last word on his ministry may be the closing paragraph of this book: "I censure none so severely as I censure myself. I mourn before God, to think of my past unfaithfulness; while I bless His name for the desire I now feel to live henceforth to his glory."

[29] *Memoir*, p. 127. The phrase is Robert Leighton's.

[30] John M'Clintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1867–1887), s.v. "Walton, William C."

THE TITLE PAGE OF 1824

NARRATIVE

OF

A REVIVAL OF RELIGION,

IN THE

THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

OF BALTIMORE.

WITH REMARKS

ON

SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH REVIVALS IN GENERAL.

BY W. C. WALTON,

PASTOR OF THE SAID CHURCH.

BALTIMORE:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM WOODDY,

Calvert street, second door south from Market street.

1824.

The title page of the first edition (Baltimore, 1824), from the copy in the Princeton Theological Seminary Library.

NARRATIVE OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION

[A Pastor's Desire]

THE subject of revivals has, for a number of years, engaged my attention, and excited the liveliest feelings of interest in my bosom. Until lately, however, I had no knowledge of it, except what I had gathered from written or verbal narratives. The reading, or hearing of these, has often kindled in my breast inexpressible desires to witness and to feel the blessed reality of a revival. I have sometimes thought, especially when I have been listening to such reports in Synod or in the General Assembly[31], that "now I will make some new and more vigorous effort than I have yet made, and peradventure the Lord will smile upon my labour, and crown it with success." But such feelings were of short duration. My mind soon settled down to its ordinary tone, when I returned to my old scene of labour; and I thought I saw so many difficulties in the way that I often sunk into a state of despondency and hopelessness. I was conscious of aiming, at least, to preach the whole truth of the Gospel, to the best of my knowledge and ability; and in doing this, I thought I must leave every thing else to the Divine sovereignty[32]. On this ground, my mind was much more at rest than it ought to have been. I was neglecting my duty.

---

[31] The regional (synod) and national (General Assembly) governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church, where ministers reported on the state of religion in their congregations.

[32] Walton describes his former view: since conversion is God's sovereign work, the minister need only preach faithfully and wait. The rest of

❧ Not that I failed to fulfil my stated appointments, when health and other circumstances would admit; but my preaching was not sufficiently plain, and pointed, and discriminating. Another great defect was, that I too seldom disturbed the conscience of saint or sinner in private. I often conversed on the subject of religion; but it was *in such a way*, that I fear it did but little good. It is as necessary that we should be close, pointed, solemn, and pressing, when preaching the Gospel to an individual, or to a few individuals, in private, as when we are addressing a multitude in public.

[The Means Employed]

At length I was removed, by the providence of God, to another sphere of labour. This gave me a fresh excitement; and from the time I came to my present situation, I felt an increasing desire to have a revival. I was inquisitive on the subject, and tried to obtain all the information I could, respecting the means which had been most remarkably blessed. Just at that time, I formed an acquaintance with a young man, a student of theology, who had been in several revivals, and who had conversed with the Rev. Mr. Nettleton[33] on the subject. He knew Mr. Nettleton's views and plans of operation. He stated them to me; and they appeared so reasonable and so scriptural, that I felt no hesitation in receiving them. Believing now, that if *we made use of the proper means we might have a revival*, I immediately prepared a sermon on the subject. After service, on

---

the *Narrative* argues that this view, though it contains truth, had led him to neglect his own duty. His later book, *The Scripture Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, Viewed in Connection with Man's Responsibility* (1829), takes up the question at length.

[33] Asahel Nettleton (1783–1844), one of the most widely used evangelists in New England during the Second Great Awakening. See the Introduction.

a Sabbath morning, I requested all the communicants[34] to remain a short time. We then addressed them more particularly and solemnly on the subject; and concluded by urging them to meet, two or three together, in different parts of the congregation, to converse and pray for this object. On the same evening, and at the same hour, we assembled a few young people at a private house, and talked to them tenderly and solemnly, about the concerns of their souls. These meetings on Monday evening were continued.

❧ Meanwhile, *we visited from house to house*, and conversed with all with whom we met, if circumstances appeared to be favourable. We came to the point without needless ceremony, and as soon as our message was delivered, we departed. We also endeavoured to impress it upon the minds of professing christians[35], that now they ought to be very solemn and much engaged, and so to order their conversation, that it might tend to deepen the impression which we wished to make on the minds of their children and others around them.

❧ About that time we commenced a meeting on Friday evening, *for the professors only*, with a view to engage them in such exercises as would lead them to self-examination, self-abasement, humble confession to God, and earnest prayer for the out pouring of his spirit[36].

[The Progress of the Work]

We had not laboured long in this manner, before we saw something like the beginning of a work of grace. The young

---

[34] Communicant members: those admitted to the Lord's Supper after a credible profession of faith.

[35] Walton uses "professors" and "professing christians" simply for church members, those who have professed faith. Whether every profession is genuine is a question he raises in later pages.

[36] Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17.

people who attended our Monday evening meeting, evinced more and more concern, and soon, it became literally and emphatically an *anxious meeting;*[37] and so it continues to this day. The beginning of this work was about the latter part of June, 1823. But no satisfactory cases of conversion took place until the last of July. Early in October, sixteen persons were admitted to our communion, as the first fruits of the revival. The day on which they were examined and received, was observed by them, and by the communicants, as a day of fasting, prayer and thanksgiving. The exercises of the communion Sabbath were greatly blessed. In three days afterwards there were nearly thirty hopeful conversions[38]. On the 22d November, we admitted twenty-nine more to our communion, and on the 6th of February, 1824, we admitted eighteen; amounting in all, to sixty-three. The whole number of hopeful conversions, is between eighty and ninety. I trust the good work is still going on in this congregation; and there are very encouraging indications of a similar work in several parts of the city.

❧ There is a union prayer meeting[39] every Saturday evening, which is crowded by the pious of different denominations, for the purpose of praying for a general revival of religion. In my own congregation, we have a meeting of some description or other, every evening in the week. The old men, the young men, the old ladies and the young ladies, all have

---

[37] A meeting for those under conviction of sin, held apart from public worship, at which the minister spoke with each inquirer individually. Nettleton called such gatherings "inquiry meetings."

[38] "Hopeful" was the careful term of the day: these were conversions that gave good hope of being genuine, though only a persevering life would prove them.

[39] A prayer meeting shared by several congregations and denominations, an early instance of the united prayer meetings that later marked the "Prayer Meeting Revival" of 1857–58.

their respective meetings for conference and prayer. A considerable proportion of young men are subjects of this work.

❧ A large majority, however, are young females. A number of these are actively employed in conducting a free adult female school[40]. They have, with much labour, sought out the scholars from among the poor, obtained money to defray the expenses of the school, and devote two nights in each week to the business of instruction. They have about fifty scholars already, and the school is yet in its infancy. Much attention is paid to their religious instruction; two have experienced a hopeful change, and many others are much concerned about the state of their souls. Nearly all the teachers in our Sabbath school[41], are now the professed disciples of Christ.

[The Converts and Their Experience]

Some of the young converts have met with much opposition, and they have displayed a degree of firmness, tempered with christian meekness and tenderness, which has surprised and delighted me.

Some of the most moral, kind, good-natured people, in the estimation of the world, who had long been resting upon their morality and the goodness of their natural dispositions, have been convinced that *they also* had "hearts deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."[42] They have appeared to suffer as much under conviction, as any persons I have seen; and they now regard themselves as miracles of grace. They think their condition was, above all others, most dangerous; and wonder that they were ever awakened from their awful delusion. One of these—an old lady—never had had an idea

---

[40] A free evening school teaching reading and writing, with religious instruction, to poor adult women.

[41] Sunday school.

[42] Jeremiah 17:9.

of the wickedness of her heart, until in a conversation with her, I referred her to those passages of scripture which relate to that subject, and turned down the leaves of her Bible to them, requesting her to read them at her leisure, and reflect upon them.

❧ The opposition of the heart to God, has been felt by all; but some have felt it in a much higher degree than others. They have been surprised and affrighted, to find that their hearts were so *very* wicked, beyond every thing they had ever conceived of themselves before. They have been constrained to confess, that they did not like the character of God; that they were unwilling to put themselves into His hand, and could not bear the idea of His doing with them as He pleased. One, under conviction, was put into a rage, when she heard that her companions had obtained hope. Another, when rising from her knees without comfort, has often "gritted her teeth against the Saviour"—her own expression—because she thought He was showing more favour to others than to her.

❧ These facts are stated, because they illustrate the scripture doctrine, of the enmity of the sinner's heart against God; a doctrine which has been often dwelt upon in this revival, both in public and in private: and we think every effort ought to be made, to convince the impenitent, that this doctrine is true; that they are, indeed, what the Apostle affirms they are, "haters of God."[43] Nothing has a more direct tendency to produce the conviction, that they are justly condemned and lost.

❧ Convictions have continued from one to three weeks. Relief has been, generally, almost instantaneous, and often accompanied with much sensible joy. This joy has sometimes been felt, without their reflecting, that the change they had experienced, had placed them in a state of *safety*, as true be-

[43] Romans 1:30.

lievers. Their joy arose from the actual change in their dispositions and views. Before, their hearts were hard, rebellious, unwilling to submit to God, and often rose against Him. But now, they melt and yield sweetly to His government, confessing they *deserve* to be condemned, and feeling, it is *right* that God should do with them as He please. They have such a view of His character, that they are cordially reconciled to Him: yea, more than reconciled; they love Him, rejoice in Him, and make an unreserved surrender of themselves to Him. And this they do, not because they feel assured He will save them; but because they see it is *right* they should do so, *whether He save them or not*.

❧ Christ is precious to them, and they appear willing to part with any thing for Him, and to take up the cross for His sake[44]. Some have submitted to sacrifices and self-denials for conscience sake and from love to the Saviour, which come nearer to the example of primitive christians, than any thing I had before witnessed. Others, when the change has taken place, have experienced a calm, sweet peace of mind, accompanied by a strong desire for the salvation of sinners. All unite in saying, the *very moment* they were heartily willing to give up all for Christ, and to surrender themselves unreservedly to Him, they found relief. They wonder that they should not have been willing before; or that they should have thought it so difficult to comply with terms which now appear so easy and so reasonable. They see that all the change that has taken place, has been in *themselves;* that God is the same now, that He was when they were thinking so very hardly of Him; that their cries of distress did not move Him to change his terms; but that they are now *willing* to comply with them, which they had never been before, although they *then* thought they were willing.

---

[44] Matthew 16:24.

❧ All appear to have been brought to nearly the same state of mind, before they found relief: namely, to feel that they were *lost*. Matth. xviii. 11. Some, after having done all they could, as they thought, have been tempted to give up the pursuit of religion as hopeless. One remained in this state for a day or two, without doing any thing; but in a miserable state of mind. At length, she found, that after all her doings, she had not done the *very thing* she was commanded to do, and which alone could save her. She had not *repented and given up herself to Christ as a lost sinner*. She therefore made another vigorous effort, feeling that it was a case of life or death, and late at night she found rest to her soul.

❧ Another, in a similar state of mind, was tempted to think there was *no reality* in religion, or she would have obtained it. She thought she had done as much as others, and that they were deceived in supposing they had experienced such a change. She was soon convinced, however, that she had mistaken the matter, and that while she had done many things, she had neglected to do the very thing the Gospel requires; namely, to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this state of mind she returned home from a prayer meeting, and continued all night in prayer, reading, &c. and just about the break of day, she found rest to her soul.

I could state many other interesting facts; but it would extend the narrative to an improper length.

[What the Revival Taught]

What I have witnessed in this revival, has convinced me of the following things:—

[Personal Conversation: The Neglected Means]

1st. That many are deceived in fancying they desire to have a revival, and that they are doing every thing in their power to

promote that object, and yet, God will not grant the blessing. I was long under this mistake, and I fear it is a very common one.

❧ We are too apt to take our standard of duty from custom, rather than from the word of God. We are influenced more than we ought to be, by the defective examples of those whom we regard as our superiors in age or abilities; and we often take it for granted, that because we are doing as much as ministers and christians generally do, that therefore nothing more is required of us. Many are so well satisfied with the old, beaten track that has, long, been pursued, that they seem to say—although they would not adopt the very words—"If God will not meet us in this way, we will not go out of it to meet Him."

❧ Some preach the Gospel with much apparent zeal and animation; but they seem to forget that they have a *great work* to do *out* of the pulpit, as well as *in* the pulpit. Ministers may preach regularly, and the people may attend punctually; but where other means are not employed, much success has rarely been witnessed. The impression made by the labours of the Sabbath, ought, as far as practicable, to be followed up and deepened by *close personal conversation*. Such continual efforts to do good, would have a salutary reaction upon ourselves, and would often furnish most interesting and useful materials for the composition of sermons. Besides—the habit of conversing with persons of every description about the concerns of their souls, has a better tendency than any thing we hear from our most faithful theological instructors, to correct that stiffness and formality of style and manner, which detract so much from the usefulness of many young ministers; and to bring us to that *natural, familiar, simple* method of illustrating and enforcing divine truth, which has ever characterized the preaching of those who have been most extensively useful.

❧ Plain, pointed conversation, exhibiting that earnestness which ought to be felt when we are engaged in such an employment, is the means on which I most rely, under the blessing of God, for commencing and carrying on a revival. It alarms sinners to be attacked in this unusual way. It often makes them tremble, and sometimes produces considerable irritation. But it is probably the best method that ever was tried, of producing convictions of sin. This fills up the *anxious meetings;* and we shall often be surprised to find at these meetings, persons, on whom we had supposed our conversation had made no salutary impression.

❧ I regard this method of "preaching the Gospel to every creature"[45] as being so pre-eminently important, that I would be glad to have an opportunity of *beseeching* every minister who has neglected it, to make a fair experiment of it, as far as his health and circumstances will admit. I know there are many, who are much more faithful and useful in this and every other department of ministerial labour, than I have ever been. But I also know, there are many who have never made any thing like a full experiment of the power of this engine for destroying the kingdom of Satan. To such I would say—Dear brethren, be *intreated*[46] to make trial of this method of arousing the attention of your people, both saints and sinners. Examine the former closely, on experimental and practical religion; show them their duties and responsibilities in all their extent, and your hearts will often burn within you[47], while thus conversing together;—and a book of remembrance will be written in Heaven[48].—And as to the latter, let them see that you feel concerned for them, and can be faithful to them in private as

---

[45] Mark 16:15.

[46] An older spelling of "entreated": earnestly begged.

[47] Luke 24:32.

[48] Malachi 3:16.

well as in public; and in discharging this duty, let meekness, and prudence, and love, be associated with zeal,—and verily the Lord will bless your labour.

Persons who begin to exhibit more than usual seriousness and attention to religion, ought, if possible, to be visited *frequently*. They strive against their impressions, and they will often be successful, unless we *belabour* them[49], time after time, and almost compel them to think, and consider what they are doing. They will sometimes try to keep out of our way, and perhaps, fly from us as from an enemy; but we must not be discouraged. Many, in this revival, have been awakened, and now give good evidence of a change of heart, who felt and acted in this manner; and now they believe, that but for these persevering efforts on our part, they would have been lost forever.

❧ There are many in such a state of mind, that the ordinary means of public instruction, do not appear to reach their case. Some are so stupid, that they cannot, with the little interest they feel on the subject, understand a common sermon; and others are so thoughtless, or so worldly, that they will not be made to reflect, or brought to close self-examination, by any discourse addressed to a promiscuous assembly[50]. In this state they may attend the house of God for many years, and at last, without something like a miracle of sovereign mercy, they will die in ignorance and in sin. And will not their blood be required at the watchman's hand[51], who, from indolence, or the love of reputation, neglected to warn the wicked man of his way, in private as well as in public?

---

[49] Labour over them repeatedly and earnestly. Walton uses the word in its older sense.

[50] A mixed assembly: a congregation containing every kind of hearer. The word carried no moral sense in Walton's day.

[51] Ezekiel 33:7–9.

❧ I would here remark, that while thus labouring with individuals, it is a good maxim, to "*light no more fires than we can well attend.*"[52]

❧ In this work of faith and labour of love[53], the minister ought to be aided by his elders and other private christians. They should all lay the subject to heart; converse and pray together, as the disciples did before the day of Pentecost[54]. *They* were engaged "with one accord;" they had *one* object in view; they had *one* desire respecting it; that desire dictated *one* prayer, and *every heart felt it.* All who have read the Acts of the Apostles, know what was the result.

[Plain, Pungent, Discriminating Preaching]

2d. I have also been more than ever convinced of the necessity of *plain, pungent, discriminating preaching.* I do not mean, merely, that we should use plain words; for that we may do in the most abstruse argumentation. But I mean, that we should aim as much as possible to *simplify* divine truth, by employing such illustrations as are familiar and easy of comprehension. We should endeavour to make things so plain, that our hearers may *see them with their own eyes*, and that too without much labour of mind.

❧ I mean, also, that we should not be afraid to call things by their *proper names*, or to make *direct applications* as we proceed;—no matter who may be affected by them. In order to do this, a minister must obtain much of that independent spirit, of that simple desire to please God, and to save the souls of men, which characterized the Saviour when He condescended to perform the work of the ministry.

---

[52] A proverb of the period: begin no more spiritual conversations than one can faithfully follow up.

[53] 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

[54] Acts 1:14; 2:1.

❧ When we are addressing a very ignorant audience, or a congregation of Africans[55], we feel no concern as to what they will think of our performance. Our aim is to give them simple, plain instruction; to convey to their minds clear, distinct views of divine truth. In this way, with the blessing of God, we hope to make a saving impression. Such should be our feelings and such our aim, whensoever, wheresoever, and to whomsoever, we may be called to preach the Gospel.

There is, in my humble apprehension, too much speculating, philosophizing, and systematizing, in most of the sermons we hear. This mode of preaching, however interesting it may be to students of theology, and to men of cultivated minds, is so much above the thoughts and reasonings of common people, that they receive no distinct impression from it. Such labour is worse than lost on the great majority of hearers. It leads many to regard religion as an intellectual affair, consisting chiefly in rational and orthodox OPINIONS; and others to invest the subject with mysteries and difficulties, which do not properly belong to it.

❧ Sermons of this description seldom, if ever, disquiet the conscience; and one might presume, from their structure and the materials of which they are composed, and the indifferent manner in which they are often delivered, that they are not designed to have that effect.—The Gospel is not likely to prove the power and the wisdom of God[56] to the salvation of sinners, unless they who preach it, recollect that they have to

---

[55] Baltimore in 1824 had a large population of free and enslaved African Americans. Walton's phrasing reflects the condescending assumptions common among white ministers of his day, and modern readers will rightly find it jarring. His actual point, however, runs the other way: that every congregation, educated or not, deserves the same plain, earnest, unpretentious preaching. Walton himself had preached to Black hearers since his student days (see the Introduction).

[56] 1 Corinthians 1:24.

do with the hearts and consciences, as well as the intellects of men.

Nothing is so well calculated to rectify the error of which I am now speaking, where it exists in the mind of one who really desires to be useful, as the habit of conversing freely and closely with individuals. This will soon convince any man of common discernment, of the necessity of adopting a style of preaching, similar, in some respects, to that of Christ and his Apostles. But they who would do this at the present day, when a different style has become so common and so popular, ought to count the cost. They must be willing to sacrifice their reputation for scholastic learning, and to take that place in the public estimation, which will be assigned them by "the wisdom of this world," which we know is "foolishness with God."[57] They must learn to despise the prophane criticisms of the ungodly, while they commend themselves to God, and to every man's conscience in the sight of God.[58]

[The Duty of Immediate Repentance]

3d. I have also been convinced, that the obligation of the sinner to repent and submit to God IMMEDIATELY, is too little insisted on. Repentance is indeed a common topic of discourse; but I would submit it to the consideration of every judicious Christian, whether this subject is not often spoken of in such a manner, as leaves the impression on the minds of sinners, that in refusing to repent immediately, they are not committing a wilful aggravated sin, which deserves the damnation of hell; but only running a RISK in waiting until they shall be enabled to repent? They have the notion, indeed, that repentance is something which must, indeed, be done in order to their salvation. But instead of laying it to heart as an IMME-

[57] 1 Corinthians 3:19.

[58] 2 Corinthians 4:2.

DIATE DUTY, which they are under the strongest obligations to perform; they think they must wait until God does it for them. The EXTENT to which their conviction of DUTY in the case, commonly goes, is to ask of God, grace to enable them to do, what they think they could not do, however much they might be disposed to do it.

❧ Is this anti-scriptural and destructive error combated as much as it ought to be? Are sinners given to understand, that nothing prevents them from repenting, but their opposition to God and unwillingness to submit to the terms of the Gospel, which state of feeling it is infinitely sinful for them to indulge for a moment? Is it clearly explained to them, that repentance consists in ceasing from this state of hostility to God, and in exercising right feelings towards Him? That God will accept of nothing from them, as a substitute for this change of mind? That He requires this of them in the first place; and that until they do this, they escape no danger, and perform no duty to Him; but that their condition, instead of becoming more safe, by their external, heartless services, is waxing worse and worse; inasmuch as they are hardening their hearts against God, refusing, like Pharaoh, to humble themselves[59] before Him, and seeking to reconcile Him to them, without complying with those conditions, on which alone, He has promised to exercise mercy to sinners?

❧ I confess, I have seldom heard these truths as clearly stated, and as forcibly urged, as they ought to be. Sinners are, indeed, often told, they must repent or perish; but the guilt of neglecting to do this duty immediately, is not sufficiently insisted upon. And when they are awakened, instead of having this duty urged upon them with all the force of divine authority, it is often taken for granted, that they are already penitent; and they are pitied and prayed for as mourners, who are will-

[59] Exodus 8:15, 32; 10:3.

ing to be saved if God will only convert them; when their distress arises from nothing but the fear of hell, and the struggling of a wicked and rebellious heart against the duty of immediate submission to God, on the terms of the Gospel.

❧ In this state of mind, the direction commonly given to them is, to persevere in praying and using the means of grace. Those who give this direction, will doubtless tell them they must repent also; but whether they are disposed to repent immediately or not, they must, nevertheless, continue praying, since prayer is a means of grace.—This goes upon the assumption, that God has, somewhere, promised to meet the sinner upon this ground, and to bless him while he is unwilling to submit, and to renounce his sins; and that merely because he is externally observing a divine institution. Such a promise, it would be difficult to find.

❧ To persons in the state of mind here supposed, the word of God contains no promise of good, but many denunciations of evil. Evil is represented as "pursuing" them. "Evil pursueth sinners."[60] "God is angry with the wicked every day."[61] They are "condemned already,"[62] and can never know at one moment that they will not be in hell the next.—If then, God has given them no promise of good, while they remain impenitent rebels—and such they may be, even when greatly distressed from the fear of punishment—it is clear, that in order to have any scriptural ground to hope their prayers will be heard and accepted, they must, in the first place, cease from their impenitence and rebellion, by a cordial and unreserved submission to the terms of the Gospel. What authority have I then, to encourage them to hope that they will receive any favour from God, in answer to their impenitent prayers?

---

[60] Proverbs 13:21.

[61] Psalm 7:11.

[62] John 3:18.

Or to give them any direction, the tendency of which would be to make them believe they are in the way to obtain religion, when they do not desire it, and are unwilling to have it, on the only terms on which God will bestow it.

[Praying and Repenting]

Let no one suppose I am here maintaining the antinomian doctrine[63], that it is not the duty of sinners to pray. I am only opposing the preposterous method of telling them to PRAY, when they ought to REPENT, which completely reverses the direction of scripture. It is their unquestionable duty to pray. But how must they pray? With an impenitent heart? Certainly not. See Isaiah, chap. i. 11—15.

If they still say they cannot pray with a penitent heart, until they have first prayed with an impenitent heart, for grace to enable them to repent, then they have the controversy to settle with God, who commands the duty, and who has forbidden them to indulge the hope, that He will accept any offering at their hands, if they approach Him in any other state of mind.

The above direction also assumes, that what is a means of grace to the penitent believer, answers the same purpose to persons of the opposite character; that an external service, which God has promised to accept and bless, when rightly performed, He will accept and bless whether it be performed right or wrong!

Those with whom I am now contending will admit, that prayer is the offering up of the desires of the heart to God. The question then may be settled by ascertaining, what are the real desires of an impenitent sinner's heart. While he remains

---

[63] Antinomianism (from the Greek for "against the law") here means the teaching that, because the unconverted cannot please God, they are under no obligation to pray or obey. Walton rejects it.

entirely careless, it will be readily admitted, that his desires, if expressed even on his knees, would not be pleasing to God. But he becomes alarmed by a conviction of danger, and is in great distress on that account. What does he desire now? Has his distress changed the disposition of his soul so much, that now he really desires to be holy? If so, he is no longer the character of which I am now speaking: that is to say—he is not an impenitent sinner; for it involves a contradiction to say, an impenitent sinner desires to be holy. How can he desire to be holy, when he is not sorry that he has sinned against God, on any other account, than because his sins expose him to punishment? The Apostle says, he is at enmity against God. To say, then, that he desires to be holy, is equivalent to saying, he desires to love God when he hates Him!

❧ When sinners, therefore, say they are in distress and desire to have religion, and yet cannot obtain it, we understand what they mean by religion; it is the pardon of their sins, and some assurance that they will be happy when they die. This is the sum total of the religion they desire, and this is what they are seeking. It is no wonder, then, that they do not find it, when we consider that God has promised no such religion in the Bible. It would be separating what He has joined together. He has promised to pardon none but those who repent, believe and obey. To others, who may pretend to seek His favours, He says—"When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear."[64]

What then, it may be asked, is the distressed, impenitent sinner to do, when he cannot desire the holy, humbling religion of the Gospel? or feel willing to submit to God, and to render to Him that homage of the heart, which He requires? Must he cease from praying? The answer is obvious. The want

[64] Isaiah 1:15.

of a right disposition towards God, cannot release him from the obligation of prayer, or of any other duty. It is as much his duty to pray, as if he were the holiest saint on earth. All that is required of the christian, is required of him; and yet he does nothing acceptably. His heart is altogether wrong in the sight of God, and that pollutes all, and brings the sentence of condemnation upon all he does. His sins are increasing continually; nothing but the mere mercy of God keeps him out of hell for a moment; and soon he must be there, unless he submit and consent to be saved on the terms of the Gospel. If, with this truth impressed upon his mind, he cannot be willing to comply with these terms, there is no hope for him. Without this willingness, he cannot be saved, although he should spend his days and his nights too in weeping and in supplication.

❧ If he still ask—how am I to feel this willingness? We answer, the question involves an absurdity. How is a man, whose body is perishing and dying for the want of nourishment, to feel a desire for that nourishment, and a willingness to receive it when it is offered to him? If he says he does not desire it, and will not receive it—that being the only means of preserving his life;—why—he must die. And so we say to the sinner. Here are the bread and the water of life.[65] If you are hungry, eat; if you are thirsty drink. If you will not—you must die.

[No Middle Ground]

The error I am now combatting, seems to arise from the erroneous supposition, that when the sinner is awakened, and begins to reform his external conduct, and to use the means of grace, his heart is growing better in the sight of God; that he is becoming less and less unworthy; and that by this gradual diminution of his unworthiness, he is making a gradual ap-

[65] John 6:35; Revelation 22:17.

proximation towards a right state of feeling. Hence the direction—"Continue praying—persevere—you are in a hopeful way—after a while you will obtain religion," &c.

We ought to consider what the Bible says, respecting the state of those, to whom we give this direction. It describes them as being enemies and rebels against God. "We will not have this man to reign over us;"[66] is the language of their hearts. Now, there is no medium between hating and loving God. Will he then accept of any services from those, whose hearts He knows are at enmity with Him, even while they are most assiduously performing their religious duties? How can they be said to be in a hopeful way, or in the way to obtain religion, while they remain in this state of mind? Is sinning directly against God in their hearts, the way to obtain religion? Is the indulgence of enmity, the way to come to the exercise of love? Is the indulgence of pride, stubbornness, and rebellion, the way to come to humble submission? There is no medium between these two states of the heart; no more than there is between enmity and love. Then, the sinner is a rebel until he submits. But, will God accept the service of the knees or of the lips, while the heart remains rebellious?

❧ Is not submission—implying a cordial acquiescence in the terms of the Gospel—the first point where hope begins, and where God manifests the tokens of his favour? Why not come to this point, then, immediately, if we must come to it at last, in order to be saved? Ought we not to urge this duty upon the awakened sinner, with all the power of argument, of warning, and of intreaty? endeavouring to take from under him every prop on which he is resting, that he might fall immediately, as a lost sinner, at the foot-stool of sovereign mercy—crying—"Lord save or I perish!"[67] Should we not en-

---

[66] Luke 19:14.

[67] Compare Matthew 8:25; 14:30.

deavour to impress it upon his mind, that he is growing worse and worse, and his condition becoming more and more hopeless, notwithstanding all his distress and all his prayers, until he comes to this point? and not suffer him, if we can help it, to go on toiling and labouring in fruitless attempts to save himself, or to bring God down to any other terms than those He has prescribed in His word.

❧ He professes to be going to Christ; and we ought to tell him—Christ is at your right hand, and ready to receive you in a moment, if you are ready to receive Him, with a penitent, willing and obedient heart. But the rout you are taking[68] is, at best, a very circuitous one, and there are a thousand probabilities that, in your wanderings, you will lose your impressions, or settle down on a formal profession, and so never come to Christ. Therefore, accept of His invitation, and "come, for all things are now ready."[69]

In giving directions to awakened sinners, we are sometimes led into error, by a species of false charity, thinking, that as they are now under so much religious concern, their hearts are not so wicked as the Bible represents the hearts of all unconverted persons to be. The direction to which I am now objecting, goes upon the assumption, that they are not so wicked. "You must repent—but whether you repent immediately or not, you must use the means of grace." This is giving the sinner quarters[70], where God does not design he should have any. From enemies and rebels, He accepts of nothing but unconditional submission. He will make no compromise. Repent or perish, is the only condition.[71]—But he is now under

---

[68] "Route."

[69] Luke 14:17.

[70] A military image: granting a defeated enemy terms of mercy short of surrender. God, Walton says, offers the rebel no such terms.

[71] Luke 13:3, 5.

conviction, and he has many tender feelings, and sheds a great many tears. Does not this lessen his enmity, and will it not, by using the means of grace, be gradually softened down and changed into love?—If this be admitted, we must conclude, that when the Apostle characterizes the impenitent as "haters of God," he only meant, that they hate an erroneous idea of God, and not his true character. Is this a sin? Is it not our duty to hate every false representation of Jehovah's character?

Doubtless the Apostle meant, what his words plainly express, that sinners hate the true character of God. The reason why this hatred is not universally felt, is, that they have a wrong view of God. They regard Him as a kind Father, Benefactor, &c.—leaving out of view his holiness, his justice, his sovereignty. It is against these attributes, that the enmity of the sinner's heart is directed. The light of conviction then, which brings them into view, so far from lessening his enmity, increases it; and it continues to increase, to the very last moment, before the rebel is subdued.

❧ It is true, therefore, to say, that the convicted, as well as the careless sinner, is waxing worse and worse, and that his sins are increasing continually, in a most tremendous ratio, if there be any sin in hating God, and in that pride and stubbornness of the heart, which refuses to submit to the terms of the Gospel. This truth ought to be thundered in his ears, until he is made to feel it. Of course, we ought not to give him any encouragement to continue in this state for a moment, or to hope he is improving his condition, or lessening the difficulties in the way of his salvation, by his prayers, or any thing else he does. Nay, verily, these difficulties are augmenting, and he is receding farther and farther from that state of mind to which he is required to come. There is, therefore, but one way of safety for him; and that is immediate repentance. He must change his mind—cease from being a rebel—submit unreservedly and unconditionally; and while he confesses he de-

serves condemnation, give himself up to Christ, to be saved on the terms of the Gospel.

❧ When the awakened sinner is pressed with these requirements, and no hope is held out to him on any other conditions; it will soon discover to him the desperate wickedness of his heart; for he will feel that he is opposed to these requirements, and think it hard that God will accept of nothing he does, without a compliance with them. When his distress is very great, he would be willing to give any thing he possesses, to obtain peace and safety; he would perform any external service—travel on a pilgrimage, or, say his prayers as often as you please. But this duty of unconditional and immediate submission to a sovereign God, freely acknowledging that God is right, and that himself is wrong; that there is not a particle of merit in any thing he ever did; that he can lay God under no obligations to save him; that he must rely entirely upon Christ for salvation—be "willing and obedient"[72]—against all this, his heart rises and rebels, even when his understanding is convinced that there is no hope for him on any other ground.—Here he is at his wits' end; in the very dilemma in which it is the design, of both the law and the gospel, to make him feel that he is placed, in order to impress fully upon his mind, the awful conviction that he is lost. This, and nothing but this, will bring him to Christ, and make him willing to be saved on any terms.

[The Danger of Soothing Directions]

The directions which are often given to awakened sinners, have a very different tendency. In the first place, they tend to lessen the conviction of guilt, while a great deal is said about danger. Here is a person in distress; we dislike to increase it, by telling him, his heart is rebellious against God, and unwill-

[72] Isaiah 1:19.

ing to comply with the terms of the Gospel; and that *that* is the cause of his distress. He tries to believe that he is mourning for sin and repenting, when, if the terms of reconciliation were clearly stated to him, his heart would revolt at them. Well; we do not call in question the sincerity of his mourning; we say nothing to him about his unwillingness, and thereby leave him under the impression that he is willing. He thinks that God's time has not yet come, and we do not rectify this dangerous mistake. We tell him, persevere in using the means of grace;—although you have not yet obtained relief, you will obtain it; implying, that God will hear his prayers and accept him, without any change on his, that is, the sinner's part; for if we mean that, before he can calculate on finding relief and acceptance, the change must take place in him, why do we not tell him so distinctly? and then he will know what he has to do, and where the blame must lie, until it is accomplished.

❧ Having received the above direction, the sinner's mind is soothed, and he thinks he is now in a hopeful way. He feels none of the guilt of unwillingness resting upon his conscience, for he thinks he is willing, that he has done all he can do, and now he must wait for God, to do what remains to be done; not considering that God commands him to do this very thing, and lays upon him all the guilt of not having done it. "Repent," that is, change your mind. "Make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die."[73]

It is easy to see that such defective directions tend to lessen the convictions of an awakened sinner, and ultimately lead him to entertain many hard thoughts of God, upon whom he is disposed to lay the blame of his not having religion, instead of laying the blame on his own soul. This counteracts the work of the Holy Spirit, the object of which is in the first

[73] Ezekiel 18:31.

place to convince of sin, and to make the sinner feel that he is lost.

The efforts of many seem to be employed to prevent the sinner from coming to this conviction. As soon as he is a little distressed, they strive to relieve and soothe his mind, instead of co-operating with the Holy Spirit in convincing him that his heart is just as wicked, and his condition just as bad, as the Bible describes it to be; and then urging him to immediate submission, which would be likely soon to convince him that he is in the dilemma above described.

In the second place, these directions tend to prolong the period of conviction and distress, even in those cases where it ultimately issues in saving conversion.—This is so obvious, from remarks already made, that I need not here dwell upon it. But the worst of all is, that many after having waited sufficiently long, as they think, for the work of the Spirit, make a profession of religion before they have experienced it; concluding, that as they have been very diligent in the use of means, and, at times, had some tenderness of feeling, that perhaps the Spirit has performed this mysterious operation gradually and imperceptibly; that probably they have experienced the change, and ought now to take the comfort of it. They feel willing to go on in the same way they have begun, and are glad to obtain peace of mind on terms which involve, comparatively, so little sacrifice of the feelings of a proud rebellious heart.

I am awfully afraid that thousands are resting upon this sort of religious experience, or upon something equally dangerous. The conduct of many furnishes too much evidence of the fact. If they had been thoroughly convinced of sin; if they had, under this conviction, realized that they were justly condemned and lost sinners, and from that awful condition been snatched by the hand of mercy;—all this would have made an impression upon their hearts which they could never forget;

they would have felt themselves under infinite obligations; their daily inquiry would have been, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and, they[74] would have thought, that they could never do enough for the glory of Him who had done so much for them. They would have been ready for every good work. To please and glorify God, and to do good to their fellow men, would have been their ruling passion.

❧ If all professors of religion were of this description, the cause of Christ would not languish as it does; churches would be built where they are wanted; and those that have been built would be paid for; ministers and missionaries would be supported; the funds of Bible, Education, and other societies[75], would be replenished; revivals would be common, and perhaps continue without intermission; the Millennium would soon commence[76]; and the kingdoms of this world would soon become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.[77]

[Professors Without Conversion]

But when persons are brought into the church without having seen and felt their true character and condition as lost sinners; and without a corresponding sense of infinite obligation for redeeming mercy; and without any other kind of love to Christ than that which arises from the hope that he will save them;—why, their object is in a great degree accomplished when they get into the church. They now have much more

---

[74] Acts 9:6.

[75] Voluntary societies such as the American Bible Society (1816), which distributed Scripture, and the American Education Society (1815), which helped poor young men train for the ministry.

[76] The thousand-year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1–6). Like many evangelicals of his day, Walton expected revivals and missions to bring in a coming age of gospel triumph.

[77] Revelation 11:15.

peace of mind than they formerly had; they hope they are christians, and, of course, that they are safe. As to the cause of Christ, they feel little or no concern about it. They have other objects of attention and solicitude, vastly more important in their estimation. They may indeed contribute something to support the show of religion; they may decorate their churches, and discover much zeal for their party, and for the mere externals of religion;—all this cherishes their false hopes; they think themselves and wish others to think them very pious. Some contribute a little, grudgingly, to support the gospel, because, if they were to do absolutely nothing, they could neither believe themselves nor make others believe them to be christians. A regard to consistency, and to their own reputation, is their leading motive; and even that has very little influence with some.

❧ But to do good, simply with a view to please God, or to benefit their fellow men; to make a really disinterested sacrifice for the cause of Christ; and to stand in readiness to make such sacrifices whenever the Providence of God shall demand them;—they will not do it. So far from making such efforts and contributions with the cheerfulness and zeal of one who loves Christ, and who takes a lively interest in his cause, they will often get out of temper when solicited to aid benevolent and pious objects. One is tempted to think, that it would be a great relief to them if something would occur to put a final stop to all the efforts that are making to christianize the world, that there might be no further demands upon their purses for assistance in carrying on this great work. They could then enjoy their selfish pleasures and pursuits as well, and sleep as quietly, while the world around them would be going to destruction, as if all were certainly on their way to heaven.

❧ MEN and BRETHREN! Does not this state of things call for a reformation? Do we not need ministers like John the

Baptist, and Martin Luther, to go from "Dan to Beersheba,"[78] and "preach repentance for the remission of sins,"[79] to professors of religion?

❧ If we were able to draw accurately the line of demarkation between those who love Christ, and whose hearts are really devoted to his cause; and those who are resting upon a false religious experience, or upon no religious experience at all, the prospect would astonish and overwhelm us. The multitude whom Satan is leading to destruction under the cloak of a christian profession would startle every beholder. "We are not ignorant of his devices;"[80]—and we know he would as soon take sinners to hell in the character of professors of religion, as in any other character. Since, therefore, he cannot put down the truth entirely, it is his interest and his policy to mingle with it as much error as he can: and he knows that errors on such subjects as those discussed in the foregoing pages, are peculiarly favourable to his designs. Wrong directions to awakened sinners are as likely to issue in their eternal overthrow, as any means he could employ. They lead—it is to be feared—in thousands of instances, to the indulgence of false hopes, and the assumption of a mere "form of godliness."[81]

❧ It is on this account that I have been so particular in stating and maintaining, what appear to me to be the only safe and scriptural directions. I am well aware, however, that there are many who do not stand in need of any information which I could give them on this subject. But there are many others, who, perhaps, may be aided in forming correct views, by the statements contained in the preceding Narrative and Remarks. Even one additional ray of light on subjects so vitally im-

---

[78] From one end of the land to the other (Judges 20:1).

[79] Mark 1:4; Luke 24:47.

[80] 2 Corinthians 2:11.

[81] 2 Timothy 3:5.

portant, will doubtless be welcomed by those who love and rejoice in the truth.

[The Day of Grace]

4. The following passages of Scripture have appeared to me in a more important light than ever before. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."[82] "Wo unto them when I depart from them."[83] "For this cause God shall give them up to strong delusion that they may believe a lie, &c."[84] "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever."[85]

It is difficult to reconcile these passages with the following lines of a hymn, which is often sung, and which like some sermons we hear, and some books we read, contains much truth mingled with some error. The error is received along with the truth, and so counteracts its influence; or it is received to the exclusion of the truth; and thus mischief has been often done by those whose general aim was to do good:—

> *"And while the lamp holds out to burn,"The vilest sinner may return."*[86]

Different constructions may indeed be put upon these words; but the most obvious idea, and that which the impenitent will most readily receive from them, is in direct opposition to those passages of scripture above cited; and while they are dwelling upon the awakened sinner's mind, he will not be like-

---

[82] Genesis 6:3.

[83] Hosea 9:12.

[84] 2 Thessalonians 2:11.

[85] Matthew 21:19.

[86] Isaac Watts, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, Book I, Hymn 88 ("Life is the time to serve the Lord"). Walton objects not to Watts's hymn as a whole but to the false security these two lines can give an impenitent hearer.

ly to believe us when we tell him that, by his obstinate impenitence, he is in danger of provoking God to depart from him, to take his Holy Spirit from him, and to give him up to strong delusion, that he might believe a lie, and, as the dreadful consequence, "be damned, with all who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness."[87]

These texts, certainly authorise us in saying that no impenitent sinner, can be assured that his day of grace will last as long as his life. I know some, and it makes my soul shudder to think of them, whose day of grace, there is much reason to fear, is forever past. There are some who have been much awakened during this revival, but who have lost every serious impression, and now appear to be in a similar state to those of whom the Saviour speaks in these most pathetic words;—"If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! But now are they hid from thine eyes!"[88] This doctrine ought to be most solemnly impressed upon the minds of awakened sinners.

[The Means God Has Always Blessed]

If these, and other associated truths of the gospel, were urged as they ought to be, with clearness and pungency, upon the consciences of sinners both in public and in private: and other means employed similar to those above stated, with a single eye to the glory of God and the salvation of souls, the Divine blessing, might, I believe, in all cases be confidently expected. When and where have such efforts been made in vain? The history of the church cannot furnish an instance. God will bless his truth; and he will hear the prayers, and succeed the faithful labours of his people. This truth is confirmed by all

---

[87] 2 Thessalonians 2:12.

[88] Luke 19:42.

the revivals that have taken place since the day of Pentecost to the present time.

❧ I lay it down then, as a principle, that *there are means which when perseveringly employed, have always been blest to the revival of religion.* If this be admitted, we must also admit, that where religion is in a cold and languid state, and few or none, are inquiring the way to Zion[89], there is something wrong in the church of God; there is an Achan in the camp[90]; or there is a partial dereliction of duty on the part of the Minister, or of the members of the church, or of both. This is certainly more ingenuous and more scriptural, than to ascribe such a wretched state of things to the want of a sovereign dispensation of Divine grace. There is a connexion between the faithful discharge of duty, and the blessing of God. When, therefore, we do not enjoy a revival, we should freely acknowledge that the church is to blame; and take it for granted that something more ought to be done, than we are doing.

❧ The absence of a revival, then, ought not to be regarded as our affliction, so much as our sin; and each one is answerable to God for this sin, so far as he neglects to employ his efforts for this object. The magnitude of this sin swells beyond the bounds of calculation, when we consider how much good is done by a revival; and how much evil exists in its absence. We have reason to tremble when we take this view of the subject; for, verily, the blood of souls is in our skirts[91], and will be required at our hands!

I have been, for a number of years, in the habit of reading accounts of revivals, and I do not recollect one that was produced without some extraordinary effort, either on the part of

---

[89] Jeremiah 50:5.

[90] Achan's hidden sin brought defeat on all Israel until it was uncovered and judged (Joshua 7).

[91] Jeremiah 2:34.

the Minister, or of some of his people. When I call such efforts extraordinary, I do not mean to intimate that they are works of supererogation[92], or in any degree out of the line of our duty. On the contrary, I am persuaded that neither the claims of duty, nor the dictates of an enlightened and tender conscience, are satisfied without them.

❧ I wish to be understood.—I mean to assert, that the ordinary course pursued by many ministers and christians, is greatly defective. They have made the service of God more systematic and formal than it was intended to be. And, in doing this, they have set bounds and limits to their exertions in the cause of Christ, which neither his word, nor his example, nor the example of his apostles, will justify. If the precise order and extent of religious duties they observe, had been prescribed in the Bible, they might then have expected every blessing while pursuing this order. But no such order has been prescribed; men have adopted it of their own accord, because they think it authorized by the word of God. Well; admit that it is thus divinely authorized, as far as it goes, does it embrace all that is required of us? If it does I have totally mistaken the meaning of the Sacred Records on this subject.

❧ When, therefore, I say we must make extraordinary efforts to have a revival, I only mean that we must perform more ministerial and christian duty, than many do perform. There must be a change, in this respect, to produce a revival in a particular church; and there must be a general change, of a similar nature, throughout all christendom, before the Millennium will be likely to take place.

---

[92] Works beyond what duty requires, a term from Roman Catholic theology. Walton insists that the extra effort revival calls for is not optional credit but plain duty.

There is a certain amount of labour with which many ministers satisfy themselves. They preach once or twice on the Sabbath, and perhaps as often during the week, and perform a few other professional duties. Custom has established this as a standard. When a young minister enters upon his profession, he finds this standard already fixed, and he hardly questions whether any thing more be required of him. If any one go beyond it, such remarks as these are likely to be made respecting him:—"He is weak," or "he is eccentric," or "he has zeal without knowledge, and that leads him to substitute means of his own invention, in the place of those which God has ordained."

❧ This seems to imply their belief, that the routine according to which they are proceeding, comprises the sum total of all the means which we are required to employ for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world. This is an assumption, which they cannot prove; and, therefore, they ought, at least, to withhold their censures from those who, for conscience sake, and for Christ's sake, and for the sake of perishing souls, deviate occasionally from the usual mode of ministerial operation, and try every lawful means in their power, to awaken a slumbering church, and to pull sinners out of the fire of hell[93], into which they are continually descending.

Custom has also established a standard of duty for private christians. This is, perhaps, still farther below the scriptural standard, and is so evident as to require no proof. Until, therefore, ministers, and professors generally, are awakened from this state of comparative indifference, and "girding up the loins of their minds,"[94] address themselves to the performance of their respective duties, under the full impression that they

[93] Jude 23.

[94] 1 Peter 1:13.

are "not their own;"[95] that they are servants of Jesus Christ, and bound to seek his glory in all things; laying it down as a principle, that they must do as much good as they can; setting no bounds to their desires of usefulness; keeping their hearts fixed upon the things which pertain to the kingdom of God, with a degree of interest which will nerve and inspirit the soul to every holy enterprize;—the world will not be converted to God. The empire of Satan is too firmly rooted, to be shaken by such tame and feeble efforts as thousands are making at the present day.

❧ There must be a more general and powerful movement in the camp of Israel, before we shall see the accomplishment of those prophecies which relate to the future prosperity and glory of the church. But such a movement is not to be expected while "the spirit of this world" has[96] so extensive an influence over the minds of those who profess to be the children of light[97]. As far as it prevails, it *desecrates* the christian character, and divests it of the power of making that impression upon the world which otherwise it could not fail to make.

❧ This spirit has paralized the energies of many, who, perhaps, are on the whole, real christians; and it reigns predominant in the hearts of others, who, have nothing more than a "form of godliness." Many there are, who have all the sanctity that baptism and the Lord's supper can give them, who resemble those of whom the Apostle Paul speaks "weeping;—whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things;—who seek their own things and not the things which are Jesus Christ's."[98] The existence of so many of this description in the church, should excite all who

---

[95] 1 Corinthians 6:19–20.

[96] 1 Corinthians 2:12.

[97] Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5.

[98] Philippians 3:18–19; 2:21.

love her purity and prosperity, to pray and labour for a general revival. If a revival do not shake their false hopes, they are irreclaimable; and nothing can be expected to arouse them to a sense of their true character and condition, before they are enveloped in the flames of the bottomless pit.

❧ Since our revival commenced, there have been a number of old professors awakened, and hopefully converted. Such things are common in revivals; but they seldom occur at any other time.

[Discipline, Fasting, and Prayer]

Here I would suggest, that some revivals have commenced by the faithful exercise of church discipline[99], and, perhaps, nothing is more necessary to the revival of true religion in the churches, generally, than a proper attention to this important duty.

The observance of days of fasting and prayer, in reference to this object, have also been found to be very useful. On such days, if the church would renew their covenant with God, confessing their sins, and resolving to be more faithful, it would be likely to have the happiest effect. If ministers have neglected their duty, let them acknowledge it, and give glory to God, while they take shame to themselves. Such acknowledgements have, in some instances, made a powerful impression.

In cases of this nature, we ought not to wait for a simultaneous movement of the whole church to accomplish the important object; no, not even for the countenance and support

[99] The oversight of members' conduct by the pastor and elders (admonition, suspension from the Lord's Supper, and in grave cases excommunication), always aiming at repentance and restoration (Matthew 18:15–17).

of "those who are of reputation,"[100] or of those who are in authority. Each one should resolve—"Now I will, with the help of God, discharge my duty faithfully, though all the other members of the church should neglect theirs."

[Questions for Self-Examination]

I have often asked my own soul such questions as the following; and I propose them to the serious consideration of all professors of religion, who may read these pages. If you are christians, they will not hurt you; if you are not christians, they may, through God's blessing, convince you of your mistake, while yet there is hope.—"Have I the very religion taught by Christ and his Apostles? Or have I been resting upon something essentially different from that? Have I ever been sensible of the enmity of my heart to God? And am I now reconciled to all the parts of his character, not excepting his justice, his holiness, his sovereignty? Do I love and rejoice in Him supremely, not merely because I think he is my friend, and will save me; but because He is infinitely worthy of my love? Do I see that I deserve condemnation, and regard it as an infinite mercy, that I have not been condemned long ago? Do I feel that I am not my own, but entirely the Lord's? Am I living to Him, and not to myself? Subjecting my will to His will, and subordinating my interests to those of His kingdom? What have I done, and what am I now doing, to promote true religion within the sphere of my influence? Is it as much as the Lord requires of me, considering the talents and means He has given me? Continuing in the course I am now pursuing, am I likely to have a good account to render to my Judge, who even now standeth at the door?"[101]

---

[100] Galatians 2:2.

[101] James 5:9.

❧ Close self-examination, leading to deep self-abasement before God, is an important step towards a revival.

Conclusion

My object in writing this piece, has not been chiefly to give a narrative of a revival; but to promote the spirit of revival; to excite my fellow christians to a more faithful discharge of their duties; and to offer such suggestions as may assist those who are conscious of having neglected their duty, in determining what they ought now to do.

Another object I have had in view, is to furnish a tract, which may with advantage be distributed in a congregation during the progress of a revival, especially where incorrect views are entertained respecting some points here discussed. At such times, it is very important that all should "speak the same thing."[102]—Even pious persons may, unintentionally, do injury, by giving to inquirers, injudicious directions. It is presumed, that such persons will thankfully receive any instructions that may assist them in performing this momentous duty.—Besides—it may often happen in revivals, that so many will be in an anxious state of mind, that the minister cannot pay the necessary attention to all. It might, therefore, be a relief to his mind, and an advantage to his people, to put into their hands such a pamphlet as this, containing the same general views of doctrine, and the same directions which he would give them, if he could converse with each separately. They who hold opinions different from those here maintained, will, of course, pursue a different plan.

❧ If any of my young brethren in the ministry, think my censures fall too heavily upon them, I can only say, my aim is to do them good, and to promote the cause of my Saviour. I censure none so severely as I censure myself. I mourn before

[102] 1 Corinthians 1:10.

God, to think of my past unfaithfulness; while I bless His name for the desire I now feel to live henceforth to his glory; and I shall rejoice, if what I have said should, under the Divine blessing, which I earnestly implore, be the means of guarding any against that negligent, indifferent, heartless manner of performing the momentous duties of the ministry, which has caused me so many painful feelings of regret and self-dissatisfaction.

BALTIMORE, March, 1824.

Questions for Study and Discussion

How to use these questions. They are written for pastors' reading groups, church leadership teams, seminary classes, and individual reflection. The *Narrative* divides naturally into six readings, each taking fifteen to twenty minutes; the section headings named below are the bracketed headings in the text. Read the section first, then choose the questions that suit your group; there is no need to cover them all. Scripture references follow each question for further study. Quoted phrases are Walton's.

Session 1: A Pastor's Desire

Read pages 24–26: "A Pastor's Desire" and "The Means Employed."

1. Walton says that reports of revival kindled "inexpressible desires" in him, but that "such feelings were of short duration" once he returned home. What tends to cool your own desire for spiritual awakening after a conference, a book, or a moving report?
   Psalm 85:6; Habakkuk 3:2; Revelation 2:4–5
2. Walton rested in God's sovereignty in a way that, he later saw, excused him from duty. How can a true doctrine be held in a way that makes us passive? How do God's sovereignty and our responsibility belong together?
   Philippians 2:12–13; 1 Corinthians 3:6–9; Acts 18:9–11
3. "It is as necessary that we should be close, pointed, solemn, and pressing, when preaching the Gospel to

an individual… as when we are addressing a multitude in public." Why do many believers find it easier to speak of Christ to a crowd, or not at all, than to one person?
Acts 20:20–21; Colossians 1:28; John 4:7–26

4. The first practical step was to ask church members to meet "two or three together" to pray for revival. Why do you think Walton began with prayer among the members rather than with outreach to the unconverted?
Matthew 18:19–20; Acts 1:14; 2 Chronicles 7:14

5. Walton urged church members to "order their conversation" so as to deepen the impressions made on their children and neighbours. How does the ordinary conduct of believers help or hinder the gospel in a home or a church?
1 Peter 2:12; 1 Peter 3:1–2; Deuteronomy 6:6–7

Session 2: The Work and the Converts

Read pages 26–31: "The Progress of the Work" and "The Converts and Their Experience."

1. The revival soon reached beyond Walton's congregation into a union prayer meeting of several denominations. What does it suggest that a work of God in one church soon drew Christians of different churches together to pray?
John 17:20–23; Ephesians 4:1–6; Psalm 133

2. The young women converts started a free school for poor adult women. Why do genuine revivals so often produce new works of mercy? What would that look like in your community?
James 2:14–17; Galatians 6:9–10; Titus 2:14

3. Some of the converts were "moral, kind, good-natured people" who had rested on their good nature. Why can moral respectability be a greater obstacle to the gospel than open sin?
   Luke 18:9–14; Philippians 3:4–9; Romans 3:10–12
4. Walton reports that the converts found relief "the *very moment* they were heartily willing to give up all for Christ." What was the real obstacle in their case: God's unwillingness, or their own?
   Matthew 23:37; John 5:40; Isaiah 55:6–7
5. The converts' joy, Walton notes, arose not first from a sense of safety but from a change in their dispositions toward God: they came to see that it was *right* for God to do with them as he pleased. How does this differ from a faith centred chiefly on personal benefit?
   Romans 9:20; Psalm 115:1–3; Revelation 4:11

Session 3: Personal Conversation

Read pages 31–35: "What the Revival Taught" and "Personal Conversation: The Neglected Means."

1. "We are too apt to take our standard of duty from custom, rather than from the word of God." What customs in your church's life, or your own, might set a lower standard than Scripture does?
   Mark 7:8–9; Romans 12:2; 2 Timothy 4:2
2. Walton calls plain, personal conversation "the means on which I most rely." Why might it be so effective? Why is it so often neglected?
   Acts 8:26–35; Proverbs 11:30; Jude 22–23
3. He admits that such conversation "sometimes produces considerable irritation." How should we weigh

the risk of offending someone against the risk of never speaking at all?
Ezekiel 3:17–19; Galatians 4:16; Proverbs 27:6

4. Walton says awakened people should be "visited *frequently*," and even that they will often "try to keep out of our way." What does faithful, persevering follow-up look like today, and where does it cross into pressure?
2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:7–12; Luke 15:4–7
5. He insists the minister should be "aided by his elders and other private christians," united "with one accord." Who shares this work in your church? Who could?
Acts 2:1; Ephesians 4:11–12; Philippians 1:27

Session 4: Plain Preaching

Read pages 35–37: "Plain, Pungent, Discriminating Preaching."

1. Walton wants preaching so plain that hearers "may *see them with their own eyes*." What makes a sermon truly plain, as opposed to merely simple or shallow?
1 Corinthians 2:1–5; 2 Corinthians 3:12; Nehemiah 8:8
2. He warns against "speculating, philosophizing, and systematizing" that leaves ordinary hearers untouched. How can a preacher be doctrinally rich and still reach the conscience?
2 Corinthians 4:2; Acts 2:36–37; Hebrews 4:12
3. Walton says the preacher must be willing to "sacrifice [his] reputation for scholastic learning." What reputations, or wishes to impress, are most tempting for preachers and teachers today?
Galatians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 1:17–25; John 12:42–43

4. "Nothing is so well calculated to rectify [this] error… as the habit of conversing freely and closely with individuals." How does personal conversation improve public preaching?
   Acts 20:18–21; 1 Thessalonians 2:8; Matthew 9:35–36

Session 5: Immediate Repentance

Read pages 37–52, from "The Duty of Immediate Repentance" through "Professors Without Conversion."

1. Walton objects to telling an awakened sinner to "continue praying" without urging immediate repentance. Where might our counsel to seekers today soften God's terms?
   Acts 2:37–38; Acts 17:30; Isaiah 55:6–7
2. He argues that there is "no medium between hating and loving God." Do you agree? How might this shape the way we speak with someone who is troubled about their soul?
   Matthew 12:30; Romans 8:7; James 4:4
3. Walton explains that to "repent" is to "change your mind." What is the difference between feeling sorry, changing outward behavior, and true repentance?
   2 Corinthians 7:9–11; Joel 2:12–13; Luke 3:8
4. Walton fears that many join the church "without having seen and felt their true character and condition as lost sinners." What signs does he give of such a profession? How should churches receive new members with both welcome and care?
   Matthew 7:21–23; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 John 2:3–6
5. "If all professors of religion were of this description, the cause of Christ would not languish as it does." Walton links true conversion with generosity, mission, and joyful sacrifice. Why?

2 Corinthians 8:1–9; Luke 7:47; 2 Corinthians 5:14–15

Session 6: The Day of Grace and the Call to Effort

Read pages 52–61, from "The Day of Grace" through the "Conclusion."

1. Walton warns that "no impenitent sinner, can be assured that his day of grace will last as long as his life." How can this truth be pressed with urgency and still with tenderness?
   2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:7–15; Luke 19:41–44
2. "The absence of a revival, then, ought not to be regarded as our affliction, so much as our sin." Do you agree? What would change if your church believed this?
   Joshua 7:10–13; Revelation 3:15–20; Haggai 1:2–9
3. Walton says he does not recall any revival "produced without some extraordinary effort," and yet he insists such effort is not extra credit but plain duty. What would "extraordinary" effort look like in your setting, without becoming mere activity?
   Nehemiah 4:6; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Zechariah 4:6
4. He commends church discipline, days of fasting and prayer, renewing covenant with God, and the public confession of failure by ministers. Which of these is most neglected today? Why?
   Matthew 18:15–17; Joel 2:15–17; Nehemiah 9:1–3; James 5:16
5. Work slowly through Walton's "Questions for Self-Examination." Which question searches you most? What response does it call for this week?
   Psalm 139:23–24; Lamentations 3:40–41; 2 Corinthians 13:5

6. Walton closes: "I censure none so severely as I censure myself." How does his humility affect the way you receive his sharp words to ministers and church members?
   1 Timothy 1:15–16; Galatians 6:1; Matthew 7:3–5
7. Read "Firm Convictions, Open Hands" in the Introduction. Walton changed his methods more than once, yet never made them a test of fellowship, and on his deathbed he asked his fellow laborers to be "less censorious." Which of your church's practices are convictions, and which are methods? How can we hold the first firmly and the second humbly, without speaking of those who differ "in the spirit of evil"?
   Ephesians 4:1–3; Romans 14:1–4; Philippians 1:15–18

APPENDIX A: WALTON'S SCRIPTURE ALLUSIONS

Walton quotes and echoes Scripture constantly, usually without a reference, since his first readers would have recognized the words at once. The list below gives, in the order they occur, the passages identified in the footnotes, together with Walton's own two references.

the out pouring of his spirit *Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17*

hearts deceitful above all things and desperately wicked *Jeremiah 17:9*

haters of God *Romans 1:30*

take up the cross for His sake *Matthew 16:24*

to feel that they were *lost* (Walton's reference) *Matthew 18:11*

preaching the Gospel to every creature *Mark 16:15*

your hearts will often burn within you *Luke 24:32*

a book of remembrance *Malachi 3:16*

their blood… required at the watchman's hand *Ezekiel 33:7–9*

this work of faith and labour of love *1 Thessalonians 1:3*

with one accord… before the day of Pentecost *Acts 1:14; 2:1*

the power and the wisdom of God *1 Corinthians 1:24*

the wisdom of this world… foolishness with God *1 Corinthians 3:19*

commend themselves… to every man's conscience *2 Corinthians 4:2*

refusing, like Pharaoh, to humble themselves *Exodus 8:15, 32; 10:3*

Evil pursueth sinners *Proverbs 13:21*

God is angry with the wicked every day *Psalm 7:11*

condemned already *John 3:18*

How must they pray? (Walton's reference) *Isaiah 1:11–15*

When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes *Isaiah 1:15*

the bread and the water of life *John 6:35; Revelation 22:17*

We will not have this man to reign over us *Luke 19:14*

Lord save or I perish! *cf. Matthew 8:25; 14:30*

come, for all things are now ready *Luke 14:17*

Repent or perish *Luke 13:3, 5*

willing and obedient *Isaiah 1:19*

Make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die *Ezekiel 18:31*

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? *Acts 9:6*

the Millennium *Revelation 20:1–6*

the kingdoms of this world… of our God and of his Christ *Revelation 11:15*

from Dan to Beersheba *Judges 20:1*

preach repentance for the remission of sins *Mark 1:4; Luke 24:47*

We are not ignorant of his devices *2 Corinthians 2:11*

form of godliness *2 Timothy 3:5*

My Spirit shall not always strive with man *Genesis 6:3*

Wo unto them when I depart from them *Hosea 9:12*

strong delusion that they may believe a lie *2 Thessalonians 2:11*

Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever *Matthew 21:19*

be damned… who have pleasure in unrighteousness *2 Thessalonians 2:12*

If thou hadst known… in this thy day *Luke 19:42*

inquiring the way to Zion *Jeremiah 50:5*

an Achan in the camp *Joshua 7*

the blood of souls is in our skirts *Jeremiah 2:34*

girding up the loins of their minds *1 Peter 1:13*

not their own *1 Corinthians 6:19–20*

the spirit of this world *1 Corinthians 2:12*

the children of light *Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5*

whose god is their belly… who seek their own things *Philippians 3:18–19; 2:21*

to pull sinners out of the fire *Jude 23*

church discipline *Matthew 18:15–17*

those who are of reputation *Galatians 2:2*

my Judge, who even now standeth at the door *James 5:9*

speak the same thing *1 Corinthians 1:10*

Appendix B: A Brief Chronology

1783 Asahel Nettleton born, North Killingworth, Connecticut.

1793 November 4: William Claiborne Walton born, Hanover County, Virginia.

1805 Family moves to Hardy County, near Moorefield; his father dies about a year later.

1811 January 1: deeply moved by Samuel Davies's sermon "This year thou shalt die," read at Winchester; soon afterwards converted and received into the Presbyterian church. Autumn: enters Hampden-Sydney College, where Daniel Baker is his roommate. Nettleton begins his itinerant ministry in Connecticut.

1813 January: exhorts at a society for the education of Black Virginians.

1814 October 22: licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Winchester.

1817 April 8: marries Lucinda Muse.

1818 April 25: ordained; May 6: installed as pastor at Hopewell.

1822 December: invited to the Third Presbyterian Church, Baltimore.

1823 February 22: arrives in Baltimore. Summer: the revival begins. October: sixteen received into membership. November 22: twenty-nine more.

1824 February 6: eighteen more, sixty-three in all. March: Walton writes the *Narrative*; four thousand copies printed in Baltimore by William Wooddy. April: letter from Lyman Bee-

cher. Autumn: leaves Baltimore for Bethany, near Charlestown, Virginia.

1825 Founds the Bethany Education Society. October: death of his daughter Margaret Ann. Becomes pastor at Charlestown.

1826 The *Narrative* reprinted at Northampton, Massachusetts, and at Utica, New York. Publishes *Juvenile Piety and Intelligence, Illustrated in the Life and Death of Margaret Ann Walton*.

1827 July 3: installed at the Second Presbyterian Church, Alexandria.

1828 October: a "four days' meeting" at Alexandria, among the first protracted meetings held in an Eastern city; the first use of "anxious seats" in Walton's ministry.

1829 Publishes *The Scripture Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, Viewed in Connection with Man's Responsibility*.

1831 Chosen missionary agent and evangelist of the East and West Hanover Presbyteries; declines for reasons of health.

1832 October 31: arrives in Hartford, Connecticut, as pastor of the Free Church.

1833 January: installed at Hartford during a three-week protracted meeting. Publishes *Preparation for Special Efforts to Promote the Work of God*. December 20: hemorrhage from the lungs.

1834 February 18: dies at Hartford, aged forty.

1835 August: Daniel Baker writes his tribute to Walton's widow.

1837 Joshua N. Danforth publishes the *Memoir of William C. Walton*.

1844 Death of Nettleton; Bennet Tyler's *Memoir* of Nettleton published.

1857–58 The "Prayer Meeting Revival" spreads through American cities.

1884, 1895 Walter P. Doe includes two chapters by Walton in *Revivals: How to Promote Them*.

APPENDIX C: NOTE ON THE TEXT

Copy-text. This edition follows the first edition: *Narrative of a Revival of Religion, in the Third Presbyterian Church, of Baltimore. With Remarks on Subjects Connected with Revivals in General. By W. C. Walton, Pastor of the Said Church.* Baltimore: Printed by William Wooddy, 1824. 36 pp. The copy used is in the Princeton Theological Seminary Library and has been digitized by the Internet Archive.

The 1826 reprint. A second printing appeared as *Narrative of a Revival of Religion, in the Third Presbyterian Church in Baltimore* (Northampton, Mass.: Printed and Sold by H. Ferry, 1826; 24 pp.). It reproduces the 1824 text with no additions or omissions. Walton recorded that the pamphlet was also serialized in the *Utica Repository* and reprinted at Utica, New York, and that extracts appeared in the London *Evangelical Magazine*; by 1832 it had gone through about four editions. Its printer Americanized the spelling (*labor*, *Savior*, *favor*), lowercased the pronouns referring to God, made a few small changes of wording (for example, "as he pleases" for "as He please," and "Sabbath schools" for "Sabbath school"), corrected several misprints, and omitted the closing date line. The present edition keeps the spelling and wording of 1824 but adopts the 1826 corrections of the plain misprints listed below.

Corrections. The following changes have been made to the 1824 text:

- "has ever charaterised the preaching" corrected to "characterized" (as in 1826; Walton elsewhere spells the word "characterized").

- "such remark as these" corrected to "such remarks as these" (as in 1826).
- "Millenium" (twice) corrected to "Millennium" (as in 1826).
- "She thought She had done" corrected to "she."
- "that they are not designed to have that effect—The Gospel": a period has been supplied before the dash.

Editorial additions. The bracketed section headings, the ornaments marking added paragraph breaks (❧), and all footnotes are the editor's. Nothing has been omitted from Walton's text.

For Further Reading

Danforth, Joshua N. *Memoir of William C. Walton, Late Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Alexandria, D.C., and of the Free Church in Hartford, Conn.* Hartford: D. Burgess and Co.; New York: J. S. Taylor, 1837. The principal source for Walton's life, drawing on his diary and letters, by a friend who shared in his revivals. Freely available online through the Princeton Theological Seminary Library's Theological Commons.

Doe, Walter P., ed. *Revivals: How to Promote Them.* New York: E. B. Treat, 1884; new and enlarged edition, 1895. Includes Walton's "Success in the Gospel Ministry" and "Causes of Unsuccessfulness in the Ministry."

Thornbury, John F. *God Sent Revival: The Story of Asahel Nettleton and the Second Great Awakening.* Evangelical Press, 1977.

Tyler, Bennet, and Andrew A. Bonar. *Nettleton and His Labours.* Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust (first published as Tyler's *Memoir of the Life and Character of Rev. Asahel Nettleton*, 1844).

Walton, W. C. *The Scripture Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, Viewed in Connection with Man's Responsibility.* New York: J. P. Haven, 1829.

Walton, W. C. *Juvenile Piety and Intelligence, Illustrated in the Life and Death of Margaret Ann Walton.* 1826.

Walton, W. C. *Preparation for Special Efforts to Promote the Work of God: A Discourse, Founded on Judges v. 23.* Hartford: Andrus & Judd, 1833.

"The absence of a revival, then, ought not to be regarded as our affliction, so much as our sin."

— W. C. Walton

In the summer of 1823, a young pastor in Baltimore, sick and discouraged, stopped waiting for revival and began, on his knees and on foot, to seek it. By the following February sixty-three people had joined the Third Presbyterian Church, and Christians across the city were meeting to pray.

The next spring William C. Walton wrote this short account of what God had done and of the means he had learned to rely on: plain personal conversation, pointed preaching, and the duty of immediate repentance. Printed in four thousand copies, reprinted in Massachusetts and New York, and excerpted in London, it was credited with sparking revivals in places Walton never visited.

Walton was his own sharpest critic. He writes for pastors and church members who long for awakening but have grown used to its absence, and he "censures none so severely" as himself.

This annotated edition presents the complete text of 1824, unabridged and newly typeset. It adds an Introduction drawn from Joshua Danforth's *Memoir* of Walton, notes on people, events, and period language, appendices, and questions for study and discussion.

"He was a most zealous and devoted minister, full of love for souls and the glory of God."

— M'Clintock and Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

THE UPWARD CALL PRESS

TheUpwardCallPress.com