

**THE CHRISTIAN: A
COURSE OF
PRACTICAL SERMONS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649371280

The Christian: a course of practical sermons by Samuel Walker

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

SAMUEL WALKER

**THE CHRISTIAN: A
COURSE OF
PRACTICAL SERMONS**

THE
CHRISTIAN:
A COURSE
OF
PRACTICAL SERMONS.

BY THE
REV. SAMUEL WALKER, A.B.
CURATE OF TRURO IN CORNWALL.

WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY THE
REV. CHARLES SIMEON,
CAMBRIDGE.

GLASGOW:
PRINTED FOR CHALMERS AND COLLINS;
WILLIAM WHYTE & CO. AND WILLIAM OLIPHANT, EDINBURGH;
R. M. TIMS, AND WM. CURRY, JUN. & CO. DUBLIN;
AND G. B. WHITAKER, LONDON.

1825.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

WE can have derived but little improvement from our intercourse with the world, if we have not observed how rare an attainment self-knowledge is, and how superficial is men's acquaintance with their own hearts. This is an observation which every one makes in relation to others, whilst no one suspects its applicability to himself. In many cases we are perfectly astonished at the degree in which men are blinded, in reference to their own characters, which are as manifest to those around them as the sun at noon-day.

Now whence arises this? Every one knows what he does, and, to a certain degree, why he does it: and he has within himself such a knowledge of good and evil, as would suffice for forming, in some degree, a correct judgment, if only he brought his conduct fairly to the test. But there is in every one a principle of *self-love*, which indisposes him for exercising any great strictness, (we had almost said, any great degree of candour,) in scrutinizing his own habits.

We all like to entertain a good opinion of ourselves; and we give ourselves credit for meaning to do right, even though our conduct should not exactly approve itself to all who behold it. However severely we may judge others, we are sure to put a favourable construction on our own actions: and if others view them in an unfavourable light, we have reasons in plenty to urge in justification of them. If we cannot prove them altogether right in an abstract point of view, yet we maintain, that they were such as the occasion called for; or that, if there have been any thing wrong in them, the fault was, not in ourselves, but in those who, by their conduct or example, betrayed us into the error. In some cases, this is carried so far as to cast the blame even on God himself, rather than admit the criminality of our conduct in its full extent; as when men plead the strength of their passions as their excuse for their unlawful gratification of them. If constrained to acknowledge our faults in some respects, we assume a degree of merit to ourselves for not going to the extent to which others proceed in the very same ways; and we bring forward our virtues in other respects, to counterbalance our failure in the particulars referred to. Besides, we take care to put a good name upon those dispositions or habits which may have exposed us to blame. A man of a hasty, violent, and vindictive temper, thinks that he has a manly spirit, which is necessary to keep him from being trampled under foot. A covetous man, who thinks of nothing but amassing wealth, is actuated only (as he would have us suppose) by a prudent regard for the

welfare of his family. In this way, every excess is palliated at least, if not altogether justified. To such an extent do many deceive themselves in this matter, that they even value and congratulate themselves upon those very habits, which, in the eyes of more dispassionate persons, constitute their chief defects. What more common than to hear men boast of a line of conduct, which all but themselves see to have been altogether extravagant and unbecoming? We may have some idea of this by looking to the conduct of St. Paul, previous to his conversion. When persecuting the Church of God, he had no conception but that he was rendering to God a most acceptable service; just as bigots have done in every age; as our Lord has said, "Whoso killeth you will think that he doeth God service." The truth is, that self-love altogether blinds the eyes of men, and prevents them from discerning their true character.

Another source of the ignorance of which we are speaking is, that men are very *backward to self-inquiry*. In reference to worldly concerns men will exercise some degree of caution, to guard against any fatal mistakes. A general, in the vicinity of a hostile army, will have his picquets sent forth to watch his adversary, and to prevent surprise. A mariner, aware how much he may be driven out of his course by winds and currents, will make his observations, in order to ascertain his true position, and to pursue his destined course. A tradesman will examine his books, and balance his accounts, in order that he may know how to estimate the measure of his success.

But Christians, in the midst of enemies, and exposed to violent temptations, and having their eternal interests at stake, never think of setting aside a day for self-examination, and, perhaps, even in their whole lives, never spent one hour in prayer to God, to "search and try them, to see whether there were any wicked way in them, and to lead them in the way everlasting." We read of a Heathen, who every evening of his life, made a conscience of asking himself these questions :

Πῶς παρεζήτη; τί ὄφραζα; τί μοι δεῖν οὐκ ἐπέτεσσα;*

But how few amongst those who bear the Christian name, examine thus carefully their *deviations* from duty, both in a way of *commission* and of *omission*! No, in truth; we have no jealousy over ourselves, no self-suspicion, no fear of self-deception. We take for granted that all is right. If our external conduct be tolerably correct, we never think of inquiring into the motives and principles by which we have been actuated; or of examining what mixture of alloy may have been blended with our best desires. If *appearances* are favourable, we care not much about the *reality*; and if any doubt arise in our minds, we rather turn our eyes from it, than make use of it, for investigating the inmost recesses of our hearts. It is no wonder, therefore, that persons should possess so little of self-knowledge, when they use not the proper and necessary means for the attainment of it.

* Wherein have I lived amiss? What have I done? What duty incumbent on me have I not performed?

Another cause of men's ignorance of themselves is, that they *never refer their conduct to a proper standard*. They take the opinions of men, and the habits of those around them; especially if they be of the same rank, and age, and under similar circumstances with themselves, as a fair criterion whereby to estimate their own character. What is done by those who are most respected in society, they imagine may well be done by themselves; and if a thing have been done by one who is looked up to as a religious character, they think that an ample vindication of themselves. They will not take the trouble to inquire into the circumstances under which the thing was done, or the motives and principles by which the person was actuated in doing it, or the difference of the motives or principles by which he himself is actuated. No: the "religious professor has done so; and therefore I may do so: he has done so on some particular occasion; and therefore I may do it every day of my life." A remarkable instance we have of this, in two of our Lord's apostles, who would have called down fire from heaven, to consume a Samaritan village, because the inhabitants had refused their Master admission into it: and, in favour of their design, they pleaded the example of Elijah, who had called down fire from heaven to consume two bands of soldiers that had been sent to apprehend him. They never considered, that Elijah was actuated, not by personal resentment, but by a concern for God's honour, and a desire that God would, by a fresh manifestation of his power, give still more convincing evidence to the persecut-