Sarah B. Walker
Savings Bank of
Tasmania
from Jas Backhouse
of York, England
Mrs. of G. 10 16
To James Backhouse.

Sunderland 21/6 Mo. 1831.

My dear friend,

The perusal of thy deeply important letter brought me under close exercise of mind, and earnestly have I craved that I may be enabled to move in this affair with a single eye to the glory of God and the salvation of my own soul.

When I wrote thee last it was under the prevalence of feelings, resulting from what I believe was a Divine visitation to my soul, and thou wast felt to be inexpensively near to me in the everlasting Covenant of Life and peace. At the same time I had no prospect of any service being about to be required of me, but I remember feeling, as I have had frequent occasion to do for a long time past, that nothing was too dear to part with in order that I might be enabled to maintain an interest in a Saviour's love; and the possibility of falling from that state of Grace in which we had felt such precious, cementing union in each other's company, appeared to me so awful, that I felt bowed as in the dust before the Divine Majesty.

The remains of a corrupt nature at work in the secret of my
own heart have long been the greatest burden and affliction that has awaited me. Some may be ready to think that I have had some close trials outwardly, but in the sincerity of my heart I can say, they are comparatively light when put in competition with those originating in a depraved and unregenerate nature. The waves and billows of temptation have gone over me! But thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift, even the transcendent gift of a Saviour: as I write it seems to be precious beyond the power of language to set forth. I have found to my unspeakable consolation, that they "who come unto him, he will in no wise cast out." Being brought however into this strait, it has induced a disposition of mind in which the work of sanctification has been so ardently longed for, that frequently have I supplicated that that gracious Being who knows the state and condition of his poor fallen creatures, would in some way effect the desired work, so as to be conducive to his own glory, and the salvation of my soul. Death has many times appeared to me infinitely preferable, rather than to be continued in a course of estrangement from the Fountain of life and peace through the prevalence of sin. Thus it has been with me, often bruised and broken as temptations prevailed, and the precious Seed of Life was overcome, but still through Almighty power and condescending mercy, cleaving with a little faith to a long-suffering
ing and compassionate Saviour; hoping that he was felt at times to be infinitely precious, he would eventually appear for my deliverance, in eradicating those dispositions from my heart which were at variance with, and opposed to his righteous government there, even though they might not break out upon the surface of character before men, so as to produce offence.

On the first day before the receipt of thy communication, the morning Meeting was a correcting season to my soul. The question seemed formally put to me, the words even framing themselves in my mind:—

'Is Jesus Christ precious above all other things?' I was then led to make a little review and self-examination. The advantages of wealth, settlement in life, good name, length of days, and in short all that is supposed to constitute human happiness, seemed to pass in review before me; and under the conviction that in comparison with the love of my Saviour they were all lighter than vanity, my heart was sweetly contrited, and I was led to implore his aid; whilst I felt that I could freely give up all claim to those good things of life, provided that chiefest of blessings was secured to me. The perusal of thy letter then, my dear friend, [on the following day] affected me: and whilst I felt a degree of surprise that so poor a creature as myself should have such a momentous question formally proposed to him by one of the Lord's servants, as if it were possible that I could be the
individual on whom the lot might fall; at the same time I felt that the state of my mind was such that the sacrifice would not appear too great in my estimation; were I sure that the Lord called to such service; and I could not help conceiving it possible, that this dispensation might contain an answer to my prayers, though in a way unlooked for, and that if eventually assured this service was called for of the Lord, the exercise of faith which it must induce might be an appointed means for redeeming me more effectively from the spirit of the world and of bondage, than any course of conduct I could have marked out for myself. I think I can say, and not, I trust, under the influence of self-deception, that all personal feelings of regard for thee, my dear friend, were then laid aside, and, under a deep sense of the awful nature of the service in question (which, though no doubt greatly subordinate to thy own, will require great circumspection and consistent walking in one who offers himself as a Companion, to endeavour to hold up the hands of one of the Lord's anointed servants,) I applied myself fervently and sincerely to God in prayer, with an earnest and intense solicitude that I might interpret his will aright: And I cannot but believe that through his gracious aid a state of perfect resignation was attained in looking at either side of this momentous subject. For some days and nights the thing continued thus suspended as
in the balance of the sanctuary. Indeed I hardly dared to look to a decision either way, the awful risk which would be incurred should I err in interpreting the will of God, was so overpowering. Still I continued to feel a great willingness, as the service presented to my mind, believing it would be a precious harbinger of spiritual blessings, and my heart was often greatly contrited, and great sweetness covered my spirit; especially I was affected that so mean a creature as myself, who had done nothing for my Saviour hitherto, but had so often grieved him by my sins, and slighted practically many of his gracious manifestations, should be called to co-operate in so honourable, may I not say, so glorious a service: for such was the power and unconditioned the prospect that I could hardly help believing it was indeed a divine call. During the intervals, however, between these precious seasons of access to the Source of all spiritual enjoyment, under the feeling of poverty and weakness, I would call in question my former persuasion of the call being divine, and I would make fresh resolutions that, with God's assistance, I would in no wise commit myself, so as in any way to bring condemnation on my soul, but would wait until [the matter was] made so indubitably clear as to be indubitable.

Thus has the exercise continued to go forward and prevail, and to press with such weight on my mind as to swallow up all
other concerns; and I have been enabled through the power of Divine Grace to maintain a frame of watchfulness, and tenderness, frequently overcome with a sense of the great and unutterable mercy and goodness of God, in Christ Jesus; and how far short we are in our conceptions of his unutterable condescension to his poor fallen creature man; and how prone we are to estimate his glorious attributes by the standard of our own conceptions, vague, and carnal, and foolish, as they too often are. These and similar meditations have taken great hold of my mind, and though they have often deprived me of rest, and even taken away my ordinary appetite for food, such has been their constraining force and sweetness; I would not forgo their sanctifying influence for the most refined enjoyments either of sense or intellect, which this poor transitory life, through the medium of visible things, can afford. And though far short of what I believe to be attainable, never have I been enabled to live in the same degree, so much a life of faith as since the prevalence of this exercise: and each time that it is renewed the prospect seems to brighten, and during the more immediate manifestations of the Divine presence every shadow of doubt seems now to be removed.

A variety of Providences in which I perceive a Divine hand have placed me under circumstances very favourable, with perhaps
one exception, and that may not be of great force, which is yet to be proved—very favourable, I say, for a speedy release and departure from my connections and native land. None of the nearer relations of life are a prevention; I have very little property to look after, nothing but what is placed in the hands of others, and needs little care; so that had I the concurrence of my Monthly Meeting, I dare say a week would set me free of all bonds, excepting the one above alluded to, which for the present is not removed.

Then art aware that Joseph Kelton Bragg was a very useful and active assistant to Charles Bragg in the shop where I now am, so as to be almost essential to its prosperity. His departure was a great disappointment to his Cousin, and had I not been at liberty, very contrary to his expectations, and still more to my own, when Joseph was about to leave, Charles would have been very much inconvenienced; indeed, for them will be aware, that persons to fill a confidential situation of the kind alluded to are not very good to meet with. Since my stay with Charles Bragg I have had reason to believe he considers my services valuable to him, and he has treated me kindly and generously; I feel therefore that kind of obligation and constraint of duty, before God and men, which would operate as a fetter and hinderance to the free exercise of faith in the projected service, unless some one promising to be equally efficient with myself at least, were to present as a substitute.
Now there is little probability of any such individual presenting, unless J... Bragg would return. When Joseph left, it was a matter of considerable surprise to all those who knew him in these parts, I think almost without exception: for, he left such a situation as very few young men enjoy, where he was treated as a brother by his employer, and acted in almost all respects as a principal, to go to London, in search, we suppose, of something better — at least it does not appear that he had anything definite in prospect. He has now been, I think, about three, or between three and four months, in the metropolis, and unless it is within a week or so, has met with nothing eligible as an engagement. Now if he feels sensible of having taken a wrong step, and is willing to retrace his movements; or, if there has been a Divine hand in the matter, and Joseph has not succeeded, because Infinite Wisdom designed things otherwise, and that he should be the one to fill my place, for which he is in every respect, so far as I can judge, much better adapted, this would be a full confirmation to my faith, and, according to present views, I should feel clear. But should he not be willing to return, and no one else eligible for the engagement present, I do not feel that I could conscientiously desert my post; nor do I think the Providence and good order of God (who willeth that all things should be done decently and in order) will require it. These are my present feelings on the subject, and under
This persuasion I have written to Joseph, laying before him the circumstances of the case, and the possibility of my having to appear before my Monthly Meeting the prospect that presents, and should I gain its concurrence, and that of the "morning meeting," the need there will be of his services. The issue of this affair will set to the seal of its being a Divine appointment, in the view of my own mind, and I trust will make my way clear, should at their continue to need the services, or company, of so feeble a creature as myself.

I have entered much more into ministris than I at all intended, as the Lord hath enabled me, and brought things to my remembrance. Let one entreat thee to weigh these things well in the Divine Light, which alone can make clearly manifest whether our works are wrought in God; and give me thy judgment, whether I may safely conclude that the thing is indeed of the Lord; in which case, the response of my soul is, "Let him do what seemeth him good."

And now, my truly beloved friend, and brother in Christ Jesus, our common Saviour, I feel liberty to add, that the prospect of being united with thee, who hast been so instrumental in the Divine hand in turning my poor benighted soul from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God — the prospect of being united with thee in the service of the Lord is very delightful: for the exercises of thy mind, when I was favoured to be a participator, have been peculiarly
blessed to me, from the very first of our acquaintance; and I trust it is not an improper nor a mistaken notion, when I think I perceive a sweet propriety in being instrumental, in the Divine Will, in acting towards thee in the capacity of a burden-bearer, yet to bear up thy hands in the day of battle with the enemies of the Cross of Christ. May we be enabled to trust in the Lord, should such prove our allotment, then shall we be as Mount Zion that cannot be moved; and in all things required of us we shall come off more than conquerors through the power of Him who hath loved us with an everlasting love.

Let me hear from thee soon. It is possible some one more eligible may have presented; in which case I have too sincere a desire for the prosperity of Zion, and for thy welfare in this momentous undertaking, not to urge thee to accept the services of such, if it be according to the will of God. But should it be otherwise, and thou art still of the mind that my company would be desirable, tell me what are the proper steps to be taken with regard, both to my own Monthly Meeting and the Morning Meeting; and should I receive what I may apprehend to be Divine direction to do any thing different, I shall freely do so notwithstanding. With love,

I remain thy friend,

George W. Walker
P.S. A few days of quiet at this place have been congenial to my mind, and perhaps a benefit to my health. I forgot to observe that having mentioned (I suppose) myself, to Margaret Bragg, that the subject has been thrown before me, she has, I find, prepared the way with Joseph. Perhaps there would be no impropriety in thy conversing with him, and acquainting me with the result. He is living with his brother Henry Bragg, Brickhill Lane, Upper Thames Street, London.