

in it about six inches in diameter, surrounded with the words in Latin, "Hæc Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary." I was a little startled at the suddenness with which I had come upon the spot. I was not prepared to take in its deep significance. We were in a crowd. The next day I went back again. I stood quite alone at the sacred shrine. A woman crept up, and bowing her face to the stones, lavished upon them her kisses. What could I do otherwise than kneel and drop a tear as I reached over and put my hand through the hole, and upon the very spot where first the Lord of glory touched the earth! Let those stand idly by who may, my faith shall pierce the dim shadows of superstition, and bow down at the point where the Divine Saviour first met humanity in his coming to meet me.

The Basilica, or Church of the Nativity proper, stands in front of the four main chapels; indeed, they occupy what in other great churches is the choir. It is said to have been first built by the Empress Helena, A. D. 327, and is claimed to be the oldest Christian architecture in the world. From the top of a house south of the church I looked over the eastern and southern valley. All its sides are well terraced and planted with olives and vines. I had also previously walked around on the north side, and had a thorough view of the valley in a north and north-east direction. Here the sides of the hills were alike terraced and planted. The two valleys meeting below the convents, and running into one down toward the Wilderness of Judea, were unquestionably the scene of the exquisite pastoral of Boaz and Ruth. There, too, the shepherds watched their flocks by night when the holy song of the angels, heralding the Saviour's birth, burst upon them. Up and down these hill-sides the ruddy, athletic David often ran while, yet a youth, he tended his father's flocks. The whole topography is so natural, that with the utmost vividness the imagination can rehabilitate the ground with these and other scriptural occurrences.

In the morning, as we rode out of the town, we deflected slightly to the north-east, along the continuous ridge on which the city stands, to see "David's Well." The well is about fifteen to twenty feet deep, and the water is cold, clear, and pleasant to the taste. This is called David's Well, because of the incident in his life mentioned 1 Chron. xi. 17, etc. We turned from the well without entering the house of Jesse, and after a few minutes' ride on the main road were in front of Rachel's tomb. This is a little mosque of the roadside, and is regarded with great sanctity by the Moslems. The spot it occupies, whether the exact one or not, cannot be far removed from that where Jacob buried his beloved Rachel. Genesis xxxv. 16, 19, 20. While we stood at Rachel's Tomb we were pointed directly westward to Beit Jala (Zelah), the scriptural Zelah, where Saul, after his anointing by Samuel at Mizpah, met the men who, according to the prophet's word, assured him of the safety of his father's asses, of which he had been in search. 1 Sam. x. 2. Mounting our horses we rode up the hill, which was now the last obstacle which kept us from seeing Jerusalem. The brow of the hill reached, the convent gate passed, a few steps farther, and lo, the capital of the religious world was full in view! For a moment conversation was checked, and onward our horses walked with quickened step. The plain of Rephaim stretched out its broad sweep of green and gray on right and left, while, distinctly visible, the walls, domes, and minarets of the city, glittering in the sunlight, with Mount Olivet on the East, stood out boldly in the landscape. From the city to the mount the eye alternated, divided between the two, not only from the force of a thousand associations, but from the rivalry of claims to physical beauty presented by each. Most familiar of all objects in the Holy Land, and yet most welcome! Here is Jerusalem, God's holy city; here Jehovah dwelt among his people; here Christ died; here the Holy Ghost was given; and here that religion was first planted in the faith of which millions have lived and died, and which is destined to fill the whole earth! It stands alone in the history of cities, and at this very hour is the centre of more thought and affection than any other city in the world.

Thus I was musing when, in the distance, we descried on the horizon a horseman riding towards us. As he came nearer we saw that he was dressed in Frank costume—high-crowned beaver hat, English coat, and mounted on a superb Arabian steed. Immediately I recognised the Rev. Dr. De Hass, the American Consul at Jerusalem. Anticipating our coming, he had ridden out to meet and welcome us. A warm grasp of the hand was extended to all our party, some of whom he

already knew personally, and under his kindly escort we rode on till we found our camp pitched near the Jaffa gate.

## WALKING WITH GOD.

BY BISHOP SIMPSON.

"And Enoch walked with God."—Genesis v. 24.

LET us see whether there may be this walking with God on our part.

We may not have that same firmness of purpose which Enoch had; and I fear many of us fail just here. How often you have been turned aside! How frequently have we erred! What sad mistakes have we made, and how often have we lost our firmness of purpose! It seems to me there is a ladder, like that which Jacob saw set up from earth to heaven, and while Enoch would have been away up yonder on those higher rounds, almost ready to pass into the invisible, we linger yet on the lower rounds of the ladder, not having ascended, having travelled a little step up and then a step down; and there are some of us, I am afraid, to-day, no higher in our ascent toward glory than we were twenty years ago.

My dear brother, to-day, in the sight of God, are you more like Jesus than you were twenty years ago? Have you more of the enjoyments of religion? What have you been living for? God has graciously spared you, and given you His Word and Spirit and all needful helps, and yet no better all the twenty years? Oh, how sad it is for us! If we keep on in this way, oh, what is the prospect before us?

But there are others, who, I trust, have been gaining. You look back to your early experience, and it is sweeter now to pray than then; heaven is more attractive now than then; Jesus is nearer now than then; it is easier to lean on His arm; it is more delightful to think of death, and triumph, and glory. The angels seem to be lovelier; the friends who have left us seem nearer. Sometimes the veil seems to grow so thin that the whole family in heaven and earth seem to surround us. If such is the case you are ripening for glory—walking, to some extent, with God.

But then, in this walking now, how are we succeeding? We may never know, in the sense of visible knowledge, that we walk with God; and yet there does come the Divine assurance to the heart, the conviction that God is with us. And how unlike earthly company is this walking with God. Usually we love to go to the house of friends when everything is cheerful; and if we meet a friend on the street, we love to walk with him if he is in good spirits; but when he is sad, and clouds gather around him, and he is in distress, and all forsake him, how prone are we to keep away from him. But the peculiarity of this privilege of walking with God is that just in such ways we seem to have the greatest opportunities of walking with God. Is a man in trouble? It seems to afford our blessed Saviour, if I may use the phrase, a kind of delight just to draw near when the shadows gather, to touch our arm, and say, "I am with you." Do deep waters of adversity rise around us, and are we likely to be submerged? How sweetly the voice sounds from heaven: "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the waves they shall not overwhelm thee, I will be with thee, and the flames shall not have power over thee." Oh, how sweet in hours of danger, and sadness, and gloom, that Jesus can come near! When friends forsake, when old age approaches, and affliction comes, then the voice sounds from heaven, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." How sweet the promise! Jesus walks with us in time of calamity, in time of danger, in time of sorrow, in time of sickness. Oh! He is with us on a dying bed, there to put in our hands His rod and His staff; there when the eye grows dim to touch it by His heavenly omnipotence, and open it to look to the land that is afar off, and that we may see the King in His beauty.

We may walk with God. Have you tried it? Oh! have you ever, when walking on the street all alone, or in deep affliction, felt in your heart there was One with you? Christ never forsakes His followers. It was necessary, for the purpose of showing the sufferings of Christ for us, that there should be the moment of gloom to Him on the cross; but when the follower of Jesus comes to die, he looks up and sees Jesus at the right hand of God. He is with us, and we may walk with Him.