

# THE CHRISTIAN HERALD

## AND SIGNS OF OUR TIMES.

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This Journal contains every week a Portrait and Biography of some eminent person; a new Sermon by the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON, of London, and the Rev. Dr. TALMAGE'S latest Sunday morning Sermon; also occasionally a Sermon by the late Rev. W. MORLEY PUNSHON, LL.D., the celebrated Methodist Minister, Rev. W. M. HAY AITKEN, Dr. DEEMS or some other Eminent Preacher; also always a Prophetic Article, and a Summary of Current Events, as well as Stories, Anecdotes, etc.

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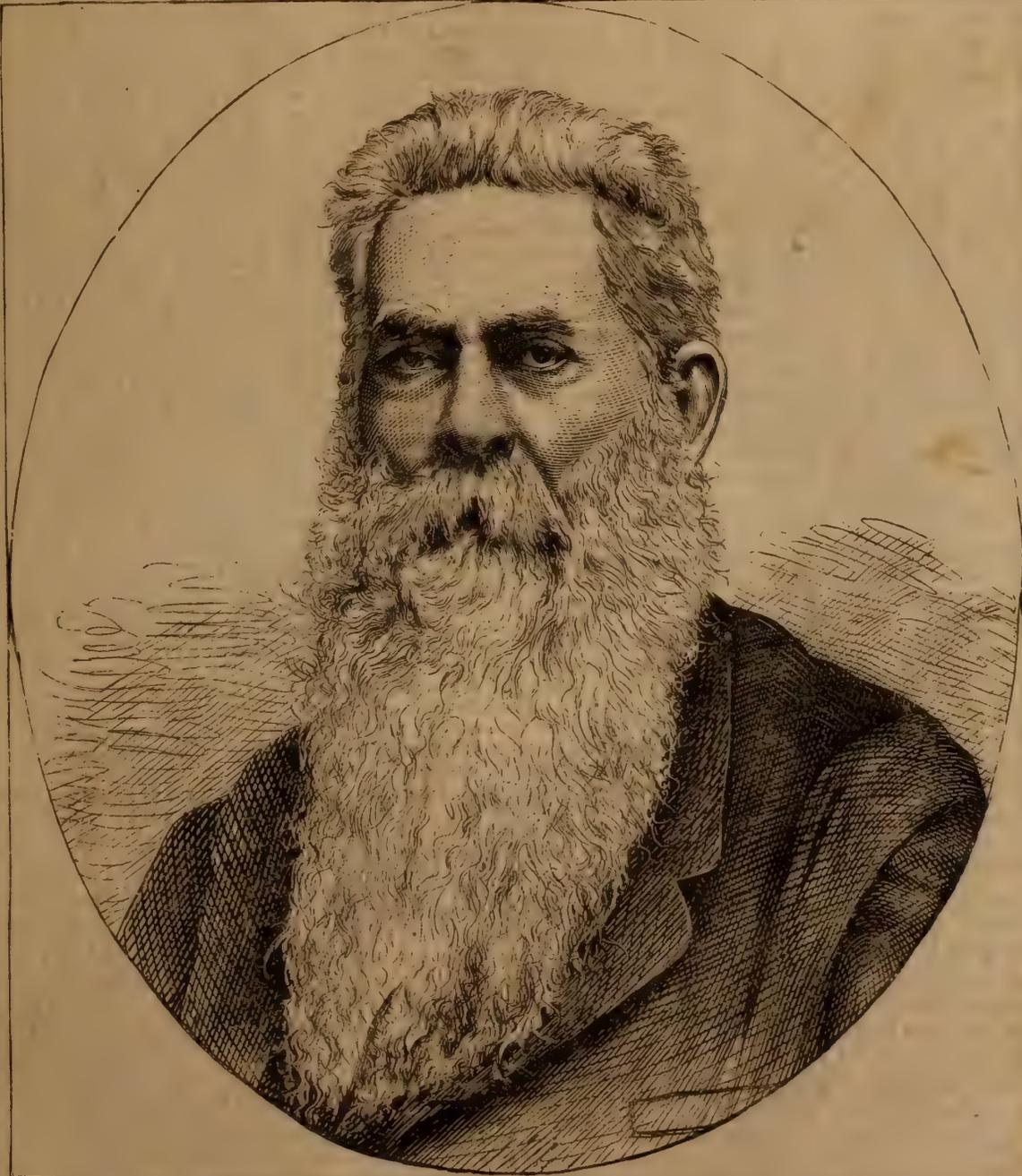
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### CONTENTS OF THIS NUMBER:

**PORTRAIT OF THE LATE REV. WM. S. PLUMER, D.D., LL.D.,** with Sketch of his Life.  
**THRESHED OUT.** A Sermon by Dr. Talmage.  
**JAMES GRAHAM'S BUSH LIFE IN AUSTRALIA**  
**WALKING WITH GOD:** An Address by Rev. Horatius Bonar, D.D.  
**MR. WILLIAM NOBLE'S VISIT TO OETEWAYO**  
**THE CAPTIVE ZULU KING,** with illustration.

**THE REVISED NEW TESTAMENT IN RELATION TO PROPHECY.** By Rev. Wm. Maude.  
**CURRENT EVENTS:** The Suffering President—The Albany Deadlock Broken—The Death of Two Celebrated Men—The Arctic Whalers—A Sunday Excursion Train Refused—A Romantic Story of a Millionaire—A Law Suit over a Child's Toys, etc.  
**PICTURES AND DESCRIPTION OF LIFE AMONG THE GIPSIES—**Sacred Fragments.

**ZIKLAG; OR, DAVID ENCOURAGING HIMSELF IN GOD.** A Sermon by Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.  
**TOUCHES OF REAL LIFE (Continued.)**  
 Moses and the Magicians. S. S. Lesson. By Mrs. M. Baxter—The Boys of City Streets (Continued).  
**FOREIGN TOPICS:** The British Parliament—The Condemned Pashas—The Abuses of the Russian Government—Wholesale Counterfeiting in Egypt—Death of an Eminent Prophetic Expositor, etc.



The Late Rev. DR. PLUMER, The Distinguished Southern Divine.

**REV. WILLIAM PLUMER D.D., LL. D.**

**Birth and Early Life—College Education—Work as a Pioneer—Labor in Richmond—Appears Before the Legislature—A Victory over Lawyers—Work in Baltimore—His Connection with Alleghany—Political Troubles—His Election to Columbia—Last illness and Death—Eloquent Tribute by Dr. Hoge.**

A STRANGER witnessing the solemn and impressive gathering—the throng of mourning citizens, with grave and tear-stained faces, the ministers of the Gospel of all denominations, who crowded the First Presbyterian Church of Richmond, Va., on Sunday, October 24, 1880, and asked the cause of the unusual solemnity might have been appropriately answered in the words of David, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?" The occasion was the last obsequies of Rev. William S. Plumer, D.D., LL.D., the former pastor of the church, a man justly celebrated as a preacher, an author, and a professor, not only in the Southern States, where he was best known, but throughout the entire land. More than half a century had he labored in his Master's cause, and among those who assembled to pay the last tribute of respect to his memory, not a few owed to his instrumentality all they valued most highly for this world and the world to come.

Of the life and work of such a man it is fitting that every Christian should possess a knowledge as of "an ensample to the flock."

**BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE.**

William Swan Plumer was born at Greensburgh, now known as Darlington, Pa., July 26, 1802. He traced his descent back through seven generations, to one Francis Plumer, who in colonial times emigrated from England and whose name appears among the early settlers of Newburyport, Mass. During his infancy a heavy trial fell on the Plumer household. The father became involved, as many good and generous men have done, in liabilities he had no share in contracting, and their discharge resulted in his financial ruin. Disregarding the proverbial advice not "to be of them who are sureties for debts" (Prov. 22 : 26), Mr. Plumer Senior, pledged his name and credit for another, and when the fulfilment of that pledge was required, all his possessions were swept away before it was met. But the surety made no effort to evade the claim, he gave up his all and went westward with his young family to found a new home. He stayed a short time in Ohio, and afterward removed to Kentucky. The struggle of commencing life again with a spirit broken by disaster, with failing health and advancing years those realize best who have witnessed such an effort, and all know to be very sore and bitter.

Only by the strictest frugality and most untiring industry could the Plumer household maintain itself free from debt. There were no idle hands in the family, and many years afterward when the boy William had become the Rev. W. S. Plumer, D.D., LL.D., he alluded to this period of his life in graphic words. "I have swung the axe," he said, "and grasped the grubbing hoe. I have handled the plough, the cradle, and the scythe. I have had to work till this stiffened arm bears proof of its severity; but all this is play—mere play—compared with the labors of a studious, diligent, and faithful pastor." But while he worked on the farm, he did not neglect the cultivation of his mind. Such books as he could beg or borrow in the village, he procured and eagerly perused, giving to study the hours of the evening, few enough for rest and recreation. By the time he had reached his fourteenth year he had acquired sufficient learning to teach a country school, and having obtained an appointment in Kanawha County, W. Va., he bade farewell to his father and the loved ones at home, and went out to battle with the world on his own account.

His journey to his new home was performed on foot. Arrived there he found among his pupils many who were older and larger than himself. One of his biographers writing of him in the *Baltimore American* recently, describes those early days, and recalls an incident which illustrates the decision and vigor which characterized him throughout his life. Young Plumer encountered at the

outset of his career as a teacher an insubordinate pupil, but the first case of insubordination was the last. His firmness, his determination, and his undaunted courage floored the bully, and ever afterward his authority remained undisputed.

While in Kanawha County he became a member of the Presbyterian Church. He was then eighteen years of age. Many circumstances had been used by the Holy Spirit to impress his thoughtful mind and to direct his attention to spiritual concerns. From his early boyhood he had been the subject of religious impressions, which were deepened by a tragical occurrence in his own family. A near relative had been drowned in a swollen river, and a very impressive sermon was preached on the subject from the text, "Thou carriest them away as with a flood;" a sermon which the young man never forgot and to which he often referred in after years. A short time afterward a young man with whom he was acquainted died despairing and impenitent, and his deathbed scene profoundly affected the young man. These and other circumstances, combined with early religious training, led to his conversion and his open profession of religion.

His connection with the church led to increased Christian activity, and very soon those who worked with him recognized in their young colleague talents which fitted him for a higher sphere. He was counselled to devote himself entirely to ministerial work, and one or two wealthy friends offered him as a loan a sum of money sufficient to defray the expenses of a college education. The offer was accepted, and among the happiest hours of his after life, Dr. Plumer was accustomed to say, was that in which he was able to repay the advance so generously made and to feel himself a debtor no longer.

**HIS COLLEGE EDUCATION**

was commenced at Lewisburg, W. Va., and there for the first time he opened a Latin grammar. At Lewisburg he was under the care of the eminent John McElhenny, D.D., for whom throughout his after life he entertained feelings of profound veneration and gratitude. Hence he proceeded in 1822 to Washington College, now Washington and Lee University, in Lexington, Va., where he graduated in 1824. In order to complete his theological studies he entered himself a student at Princeton, where he spent two years, at the end of which period he was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of New Brunswick. Although several flattering invitations were sent to the young minister, offering him the pastoral charge of wealthy and influential churches, he felt called to devote himself to the work of which the Apostle Paul was the most eminent example (Romans 15 : 20). He therefore accepted a commission from the Philadelphia Presbytery as an evangelist in Virginia, North and South Carolina. He commenced operations at Warrenton, N. C., and there he established his first church.

While laboring at Warrenton he received other invitations, but clinging to the work of an evangelist he continued laboring at Warrenton until the cause had progressed sufficiently to be intrusted to other hands. Then he removed to Danville, Va., where, when he first went, he found only one Presbyterian in the neighborhood, but before he left he was the pastor over a thriving, vigorous church. Still bent on the work of a pioneer, he spent several years in evangelistic work through North Carolina, his longest period of service being that of one year at the Briery Church, Charlotte County, Pa. While laboring there he made the acquaintance of Mrs. Eliza Garden Hazel, of Hillsboro, N. C., whom he married, and who remained his faithful and devoted companion until, in 1878, death removed her from his side.

The year 1834 found him in charge of the First Presbyterian Church

**AT RICHMOND,**

Va., where he remained twelve years and three months, the longest period he ever spent in one sphere of labor. But even in this sphere the same spirit of energetic activity which had characterized him elsewhere was manifest, only in a different form. Before this he had accepted the indications of prosperity in a church as evidence that his work

there was done, and having planted, he left the duty of watering to another. But at Richmond, when by his energy a new church was founded, he thought that his duty lay with his original church, and when he succeeded in obtaining for the new church the services of the earnest and eloquent Dr. Hoge, he left the work in his hands, confident it would be faithfully performed. The result justified Dr. Plumer's sagacity, Dr. Hoge has remained pastor of the church to the present time, and it fell to his lot to deliver the funeral discourse when nearly a year ago the remains of his beloved friend were committed to the dust.

Dr. Plumer's life at Richmond was one of ceaseless activity. Not only did he carefully prepare for his pulpit efforts, but as a Christian citizen and as a philanthropist he recognized his duties, which he strove to perform with conscientious care. It was mainly through his efforts that the institute for the deaf, dumb, and blind at Staunton, Va., was inaugurated, and he succeeded in establishing a Christian newspaper called "The Watchmen of the South," which, after undergoing various changes of name and management, is still regarded as the organ of the Southern Presbyterian Church. While at Richmond he was selected by his ministerial brethren to represent them in opposition to trained lawyers, when the vexed question of the taxation of ministers was under the consideration of the Legislature of Virginia. So ably did he conduct his case, and such marvellous forensic skill did he display, that one who was opposed to him on that day, in relating its incidents said, "Though the whole bar of the State was arrayed against him he beat them all and was wrong besides." On the latter point there was naturally a difference of opinion, but there was no difference on the question of the position Dr. Plumer might have attained had he chosen to devote his talents to a worldly pursuit rather than to the service of his Master.

In 1847 the Franklin Street Presbyterian Church

**IN BALTIMORE**

was built. A wide field of usefulness was opened in that city, and the earnest Christian men who had been active in the erection of the new church were anxiously considering the choice of a suitable man to occupy the pulpit. An invitation was sent to Dr. Plumer, whose character as an organizer and a worker was by this time well known throughout the churches. The prospect of doing in Baltimore a work similar to that he had been enabled to perform in Richmond and other places, was too congenial to be disregarded, and deeply to the regret of his church in Richmond the invitation was accepted. Here, as in his former spheres of labor, the blessing of God was upon him, and he was enabled in a short time to build up a church so strong that it could afford to send from its midst a colony of its most energetic members to organize a new church which was known as the Westminster Church.

Dr. Plumer remained at Baltimore until 1854, when the General Assembly, by a large majority, selected him to fill the responsible post of

**PROFESSOR**

of Didactic and Pastoral Theology in the Western Theological Seminary, Alleghany, Pa. His work hitherto had been that of an evangelist, the father and founder of new churches; now he was to devote his time to the work of training young men for the work of filling the pulpits of such churches.

There was a fitness, a congruity in the change of occupation which indicate not only the development of Dr. Plumer's character, but the estimate the churches placed on the man and his labors. Soon after the commencement of his work at Alleghany, the University of Mississippi conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Laws; he had previously received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Washington College, Pennsylvania, Lafayette College, Pennsylvania, and Princeton College.

Some idea of the success which attended Dr. Plumer's labors as a professor may be gained from the fact that during the eight years he occupied the chair the number of students rose from fifty-six at the commencement of his term, to one hundred and sixty-eight at its conclusion. It was with deep regret on the part of Dr. Plumer that his connection with Alleghany terminated. The year 1862 was a trying one in all senses of the word.

May we never see such another year as that, and those that immediately followed. Dr. Plumer's sympathies were altogether with the Southern States, and his separation from his charge became a necessity.

From 1862 to 1866 he was actively employed preaching in various cities, and in literary labor. From 1865 to 1867 he labored at Pottsville, Pa. One who knew well both pastor and people writes of that period: "The church had been worn out by political preaching, and cheerfully took refuge under the doctrine of the Cross, which was the only gospel Dr. Plumer ever offered to his hearers."

In 1867 Dr. Plumer was called upon to resume the work for which he always entertained the greatest affection, that of training young men for the ministry. He was elected to the professorship of Didactic and Polemic Theology in the Theological Seminary of South Carolina. He promptly accepted the position and went to Columbia. He entered upon his duties there, filling that chair eight years, when he was transferred at his own request to the chair of Historic, Casuistic, and Pastoral Theology. Here as at Alleghany his labors were signally successful, and the number of students rapidly increased, while the financial position of the college materially improved. Nor did he neglect pastoral work while fulfilling the arduous duties of his office. His custom throughout his periods of professional work was to lecture every day of the week, and on Saturday to leave the college to render help to some sick brother or to preach in some vacant church. During his residence at Columbia he also accepted the position of agent of the Southern Relief Association, and personally investigated the applications for assistance and superintended the work of dispensing money and goods. When the seminary was closed Dr. Plumer was made Professor Emeritus with a salary of \$1000 a year, and the Assembly cordially indorsed the action of the board.

In August of last year Dr. Plumer first became aware that he was the victim of the

#### PAINFUL DISEASE

which ultimately proved fatal. He was told that by a difficult surgical operation there was a possibility of his life being prolonged, and though he was sixty-eight years of age he arranged to have it performed. On September 25th he underwent the ordeal, but although the operation was successful, other symptoms appeared which baffled surgical skill and on October 22d he passed away to his reward.

During his last illness, inexpressibly painful as it was, Dr. Plumer's friends have the gratification of knowing that he had throughout the support of the Master whom he had served so long and so faithfully. When near the close he said: "Jesus Christ has most lovingly died for me, and brought in a glorious and everlasting righteousness, which is infinitely well pleasing in His Father's sight. I trust Him—I trust Him only—I trust Him altogether—I trust Him forever. I wanted to give my testimony that the Gospel I have preached for so many years has not failed me in my hour of need. I did not want to die without giving my testimony on this bed that God is a faithful God." One of his latest utterances during a season of much suffering was: "One night in Jesus' bosom will be worth all this."

#### AS AN AUTHOR

Dr. Plumer was well known and of the good that has resulted from his works large and small it is impossible to form an estimate. It will be known only at the last day when "the books are opened, and another book is opened, which is the book of life." In addition to the larger works of which he was the author, such as "Studies in the Book of Psalms" and "Commentaries on the Epistles to the Romans and Hebrews," he published hundreds of tracts for the Presbyterian Board of Philadelphia, or the Methodist Book Concerns of Nashville and New York, for the American Tract Society, for the Board of Publication of the Protestant Reformed Dutch Church, for the Baptist Publication Society of Philadelphia, for the American Sunday School Union, and for the Presbyterian Committee of Publication of Richmond. Some of these works were republished in Europe. Others were translated into

German, French, and Modern Greek. Of one of these tracts, that entitled "Don't put it off," above a million and a quarter copies have been circulated.

We may appropriately close this sketch of the distinguished laborer in the cause of Christ with the touching words in which Dr. Hoge spoke of him in his eloquent funeral discourse: "We cannot say of such a man that he is gone. He lives in his descendants, whom he might have addressed, in the parting hour, in the words of the old patriarch, 'Behold I die, but God shall be with you.' What more could he wish for them than the guidance, the protection, and blessing of the angel of the covenant? He lives in the truths he preached and in the examples of his long and laborious life. He lives in the writings which have fortified the faith and comforted the sorrows of countless readers. He lives in the labors of more than five hundred young ministers who were his pupils in the Theological Seminaries in which he taught, and who are now scattered all over the world—some of them in these States, some among the Indian tribes of the West, in Brazil, Siam, Japan, India, and China. He lives in the souls of those converted by these varied instrumentalities. They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

#### WALKING WITH GOD.

By the Rev. Dr. Horatius Bonar.

(Address at the Mildmay Conference, June 24.)

Enoch, Noah, and Phineas, Levi's Grandson, were Three who Walked with God—They were Our Representatives—Walking with God is a Walk of Confidence, Affection, and Intimate Communion—Hewitson's Remark—I. How Does this Walk Begin?—II. How is it Carried on?—III. How is this Walking Consummated?—What are the Hindrances in the Way of this Walk?—Worldliness and the Spirit of Unbelief which will Culminate in the Future Personal Antichrist—Open Ears and Itching Ears—The Effect of the Walk.

If we were asked, What is a Christian? we should say he is one who has selected God as His companion through life; or, looking at the other side, we should say he is one whom God had selected for His companionship. It is this mutual selection of companionship that is embodied in the simple but wondrous words, *walking with God*. We find the expression or figure *walking* used in three different aspects.

There is walking *before* God. He said to Abraham, "Walk before Me and be thou perfect." And in realizing it we feel as if we had continually the eye of God behind, looking on and watching us.

Then, again, there is the other expression, *walking behind* or *following*, "Follow Me," an Old Testament and New Testament word, taken up specially by the Master when He said, "Follow Me." "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." "Where I am there also shall My servant be." "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor."

But the words on which we come to meditate today are not these. It is neither the going before nor coming after—it is walking *side by side*. We find two special characters thus described in the Old Testament. Enoch walked with God and was not. And, again, Noah walked with God. Enoch walked thus until he was carried up—carried away from the evil thing. Noah walked and he was carried through the deluge safely, landed on the other side.

But there is a *third*, which we often overlook, in the Book of the Prophet Malachi. We read "He walked with peace and equity, and did turn away many from iniquity." Who is this *he*? If you look at the previous verses you will see the name of Levi; but if you turn up the references you will find that it was not Levi nor Eliezer his son. It is Phineas, Levi's grandson, who from the various notices we have of him in the Book of Exodus and in the Psalms, seems to have been a man pre-eminently of faith and signalized by his zeal for the living God. Phineas is the third walker with God.

We are called upon to be Enochs, Noahs, and Phineas, in these last days; and we shall find the

days of Enoch, and the days of Noah, and the days of Phineas correspond very remarkably to our own in these last times. We need the faith of those elders who obtained a *good report* through faith.

But who are these walkers with God? are they simply these three prominent saints, or are there others? Dear Christian brethren, it is the Church, the whole Church of God, that is represented by these three. It is each believing man and woman—and who are these? They are sons and daughters of Adam—fallen children of a fallen father; it is sinners whom God calls to His companionship, and it as sinners that we enter into this companionship through the blood of the everlasting covenant, under the covering of that perfect righteousness which enables Him in looking at us, the chief of sinners, to say, "Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee."

But we ask, brethren, *what this walking is*—what it expresses and embraces. Is it a *walk of confidence*? We begin with that mutual confidence, for there can be no walking without this confidence, no walking without agreement. But it is the *walk of affection*, the walk of love, love on both sides—the love that comes down from above to us here—love that goes up from us to Him yonder in mutual love—that love which casteth out fear, for "he that feareth is not made perfect in love."

And then along with this confidence and this affection, which is *interchange of thought and feeling*—God unbosoming Himself to us, and we unbosoming ourselves to Him daily, hourly—so that there shall be a constant intercourse, and an intimacy such as cannot be represented by any earthly intimacy—an intimacy between God and us which leads us to the fullest, frankest communications—we telling Him everything and He answering in response to us—intimacy, communication, communion—this is essential to walking with God.

In the biography of an old Puritan minister there occurs this concluding sentence, as if summing up the whole of his life, giving us the climax of his character: "He was one very intimate with God." Simple words, but of profoundest meaning; and I remember my friend William Hewitson, now many years with the Lord, using this striking expression, and he did it unfeignedly and without affectation. He said: "I am far more intimate with the Lord Jesus than with any earthly friend." His whole life manifested that intimacy with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost. This is walking with God.

But we are asked such questions as these in reference to the walking: *How does it begin?* secondly, *How is it carried on?* and thirdly, *How is it consummated?*

#### FIRST. HOW DOES IT BEGIN?

It begins with the *reconciliation*. There can be no walking till that is accomplished. Can two walk together except they be agreed? It begins, in other words, with our acceptance of the glad tidings that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. It begins here, it begins at the Cross—nowhere else. It begins at the altar—nowhere else. It begins at the blood of sprinkling; and if I speak to any here who have begun what they call a religious life at any other point, I tell them that their religion is vain. All true religion begins at the Cross of Christ, and only there in the reception of the reconciliation. That Cross is the meeting-place between God and the sinner which He has provided for the sons of men. This is our message: "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

And if I speak to any in this great assembly conscious that there is no such agreement, no such intimacy between God and them, then I proclaim anew what, it may be, they have heard a thousand times. I proclaim the reconciliation of the Covenant and of the Cross, and beseech such *uncertain* ones, such *unbelieving* ones, in Christ's name, on this very spot, at this very hour, in this very hall, and upon these very seats, be reconciled to God. Then the walk will begin.

(To be concluded.)