

THE
Presbyterian Magazine.

NOVEMBER, 1822.

Communications.

LECTURES ON BIBLICAL HISTORY.

NO. XV.

“ And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went towards Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set: and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and, behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land: for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.—GEN. xxviii. 10—15 inclusively.

We wish it to be recollected, that these lectures are not designed to be a commentary on the whole Bible; but to explain and defend a few of the most remarkable facts and doctrines exhibited in the sacred text,—to trace the history of the church,—to bring into view her form of government, and rites of worship,—to notice the changes made therein, from time to time,—and, particularly, to show the faithfulness of Jehovah, in fulfilling to her his promises, in protecting her, and in augmenting her advantages, increasing her numbers, and extending her influence, through successive generations, for the accomplishment of his great and merciful designs in regard to our guilty race. Our readers are not, therefore, to expect us to give them even the biography of the patriarchs, except in so far as may be necessary to unfold the providence of God, as it has been employed in carrying into effect the stipulations of the covenant with Abraham, respecting the kingdom of our Lord Jesus

demption; Paulus the heretic abolished all such 'modern compositions,' because their orthodoxy was inconsistent with his heresy; Mr. M'Master in all the history, inspired or uninspired, of the three first centuries, finds no mention of the singing of David's Psalms, except that the little 133d psalm was sung in Tertullian's time 'when many supped together.' Yet he is so confident that only this book of Psalms was publicly used in those ages, that he accuses Dr. Latta of having a hypothesis which he would argue for 'at all hazards;' and of writing 'without fear' and setting 'at defiance the legitimate laws of reasoning.' The reader can now judge between the accuser and the accused." p. 8—12.

E. S. E.

PASTORAL LETTER.

The Synod of Philadelphia to the Churches and People under their care, wish "Grace and Peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

DEAR BRETHREN,

We live in a day strongly marked by the providence of God, as a day of his gracious power. The prophecies concerning the peaceful and extensive reign of the Messiah are in a course of rapid fulfilment. The spirit of zeal for the honour of Jehovah, and for the salvation of souls has fallen upon the four quarters of the globe, and Christendom is rising, in the greatness of her strength, and advancing to the help of the Lord against the mighty. On both sides of the Atlantic, we see the same apparatus of means in successful operation, employed by human agency, and owned by heaven's blessing, to usher in that sublime consummation of our best and purest hopes, in relation to the present world, the latter-day glory of the church. The symbolical angel seen by John the apostle, in the mystic visions of Patmos, is "flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying, with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come, and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

In view of these animating tokens of the divine favour to the guilty and wretched race of man, our hearts grow warm,—our hopes are revived,—our faith is confirmed, and we exclaim devoutly, "Even so; come Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

The limits of this letter will not allow us to attempt a description of what God is doing for his own glorious cause in the old world; nor shall we pretend to trace his footsteps extensively even in the American church: but it is our duty, and we regard it as a privilege to notice briefly the triumphs of redeeming grace, in that portion of the Lord's heritage with which we are most intimately and immediately connected.

The state of religion, within the bounds of this Synod, is cal-

culated to encourage and refresh the friends of Zion. The triumphs of the cross have been witnessed in many places where sin had reigned; and the cheering light of the gospel has dissipated the shadows of death. The Presbyteries of Philadelphia and Newcastle, and a few congregations in the Presbytery of Northumberland, have been specially visited with refreshing showers. In several churches in these Presbyteries, the effects of the presence of God, and the powerful work of his Spirit, have been sensibly experienced. The strong-holds of sin have been demolished; and sinners, roused from the trance of death, have been brought, with awful and deep solicitude, to inquire for the way of salvation. Converts have crowded the gates of Zion, and many have been added to the communion of the church, who have hopefully passed from death to life. In some congregations from forty to one hundred have been added at one communion season.

In the promotion of this great work, prayer-meetings, faithful ministerial labours and visits, personal conversation, meetings of communicants alone, and what are commonly called anxious meetings, for the benefit of persons recently awakened, have been signally owned and blessed. In other congregations sinners have been greatly excited, and the hopes of the pious much encouraged. It is deemed unnecessary to give you, in detail, an account of individual cases, or of the particular churches which have been blessed by the outpouring of the spirit of God. For particulars, on this subject, the Synod refer you to the religious publications in circulation among you; which, *as vehicles of glad tidings concerning Zion*, we earnestly recommend.

While the Synod, however, have much reason to lift up their hearts in thanksgivings to the great Head of the church, there is still too much cause for mourning. In many of our churches, coldness and formality continue to prevail. We have to lament that *family religion* is yet much neglected. In the absence of the stated ministrations of the gospel, many Sabbaths are suffered to pass by in silence, and the voice of prayer or praise is unheard in the sanctuary of God. These things ought not so to be. And we do earnestly recommend it to the elders, and other capable members of the churches, to hold meetings for social worship, and *particularly on the Lord's day*, when the services of ministers cannot be procured. The mode of conducting such meetings, must be left very much to the discretion of the eldership; but, we think, the exercises should consist mainly, if not exclusively, in reading the scriptures, in offering prayer and praise to God, and reading some wholesome religious tract, or a short sermon by some approved author.

While we acknowledge, with gratitude to the God of all grace, that which he has wrought in the edification of his peo-

ple, as well as in the conversion of sinners, we feel bound, dear brethren, to direct your attention to the large numbers in all our congregations that are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, without God, and without hope in the world. The truly pious have always been, comparatively, a little flock; this is the case even in those societies where the refreshing influences of the Spirit have been vouchsafed in the most copious effusions. You will find among your best neighbours, nay, among your near and beloved relatives, some who are utter strangers to vital piety; this is a painful—a heart agonizing fact, but it is undeniable. Christians, have you done your duty fully, in your respective places, in regard to those among you who are living estranged from God, destitute of that peace and hope *divine*, which support and cheer the believer? Alas! no: we all come lamentably short, in all respects; and in no one duty do we fail more egregiously than in that of faithfulness in religious matters, to our kindred and acquaintance. Might it not be followed by happy effects, if every church session were to meet occasionally, and take into serious consideration the state of the congregation under their particular spiritual guardianship? Would it not be useful for ministers and elders, to confer often on the interests of religion in their several churches? to count, and compare the professors and the non-professors of the gospel? to ask seriously, and carry the weighty inquiry to the throne of grace, if the case be so with them, why is not our congregation favoured, like others, with seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord? Inquiries of this sort, we are persuaded, would lead to important discoveries, and stimulate to greater exertions in many congregations where coldness and languor have reigned undisturbed for years, while in other places, at no great distance, multitudes have been pressing into the kingdom of heaven.

Beloved in the Lord, let us “exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin:” “The day is far spent; the night cometh, in which no man can work.” The resistless tide of time is bearing us down into the abyss of eternity; whatever we do for the glory of our Master, and for the good of souls, must be done speedily. While we bless God for what has been done, let us mark and commiserate the thousands, even within the narrow limits of this Synod, who, if not soon gathered into the fold of God, will be lost forever. Let us ponder the momentous question, “What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Let us remember that we are not straitened in God; his arm is not shortened, nor his ear heavy: “Ask, and ye shall receive.” The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. The atonement,

which we have received well authenticated intelligence of, in the blessed gospel, is of infinite value, and of never failing efficacy; it is a fountain *deep* and *wide*, whence flow the perennial streams designed for the healing of the nations; may its benign influence be felt as extensively as is the curse of the apostacy, under which the whole creation groaneth!

Impressed, as we trust, with sacred awe of God, in the dispensations of his providence, as well as in the sovereign displays of his grace; earnestly desirous of seeing and feeling a universal revival of pure and undefiled religion; and relying on the truth and faithfulness of *Him*, who is the hearer of prayer, and who has not said unto the seed of Jacob, "seek ye me in vain;" we have felt it our duty to designate, and recommend, Thursday, the fifth day of December next, as a day of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer, with Thanksgiving, in the congregations under the care of this Synod. And we do *affectionately*, and *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, exhort and entreat the ministers and people, in our synodical connexion, to lay aside, so far as may be practicable, their worldly cares and avocations, on that day, and assemble in their respective places of public worship, to hear God's holy word, and jointly to implore his pardoning mercy, his sanctifying grace, and the copious outpouring of his blessed Spirit.

It will be proper, on that occasion, to notice the dispensations of Providence, which have been various in different parts of our bounds, as respects the seasons of the year, the fruits of the field, and the health of the people. But that, which we desire may be kept *chiefly* in view, is the plenteous effusion of the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit; whose *personality*, and *official agency*, in the covenant of redemption, we deem it of vast importance to avow, and explicitly to acknowledge, as essential in the revealed plan of God's tender mercy and glorious grace towards a self-ruined and guilty world.

The ministry of the gospel, on which it is our privilege to attend, is styled, in scripture, the *ministration of the Spirit*. The Spirit is the Comforter, promised by the ascending Redeemer, to take of the things of Christ, and apply them with power and saving effect to the souls of men: and this blessed Comforter, our Saviour assures us, is to abide with the church for ever; it is his accompanying efficiency which makes the gospel, whether read or preached, the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation to all them that believe; it is by his divine operation that souls, dead in sin, are regenerated and born into the kingdom of God; and it is the Spirit that seals believers unto the day of redemption. In short, it is to the influence of this divine agent, that reading, preaching, and all other modes of religious instruction and means of grace owe their

efficacy. Let not Christians, therefore, fail to acknowledge his personal glories, and their dependance on his sanctifying and saving power.

And now, dear brethren, we close this address, by counselling you to use, with prayerful diligence, the best means in your power for the promotion of truth, righteousness, and piety, not only among yourselves, but extensively abroad in the world. Permit us to name, as particularly worthy your countenance and patronage, *Sabbath Schools, Tract, Missionary, and Education Societies*, and our *Theological Seminary*, designed to train up a succession of faithful preachers of the everlasting gospel. These institutions we regard as warranted and important auxiliaries to the cause and kingdom of Christ, our Saviour. Let them not languish for want of support; remember the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. Those of you who hope that God has made you partakers of his special grace, surely will not be backward to serve him cheerfully, and in just proportion to the talents with which he has entrusted you. Your best, your immortal interests are connected indissolubly with the kingdom of God's dear Son: "Be not weary, therefore, in well-doing; for, in due time, ye shall reap, if ye faint not:" "Be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.—Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Hold fast the profession of your faith; and be careful to demonstrate the sincerity of that profession, by your labours of love, and by a conversation in all respects becoming the gospel of Christ. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: he that soweth to his flesh, shall, of the flesh, reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever: Amen!"

By order of Synod,

J. J. JANEWAY, *Moderator.*

STEPHEN BOYER, *Stated Clerk.*

Lancaster, Nov. 1, 1822.

DRELINCOURT'S VISITS OF LOVE.

(Continued from page 474.)

Pastor. It is not sufficient merely to *speak* thus. This poor Pagan will not only put you to confusion, but he will rise in