

THE CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTOR.

DECEMBER, 1856.

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"THAT THE SOUL BE WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE, IT IS NOT GOOD."—Prov. xix. 2.  
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LOCALITIES IN PALESTINE.

NO. III.

BETHEL :—ITS POSITION AND HISTORY.

THE word Bethel naturally calls up a crowd of hallowed associations, and brings vividly before the mind the devout and godly lives of the venerable patriarchs. The name is composed of two Hebrew words, and it signifies the House of God. It has come into general use as a descriptive term, and is employed to designate the scene of religious worship, where holy men, turning from the world, assemble to offer up their homage to the Most High. And thus the Church, the prayer-meeting, the family circle, or the field, becomes alike a Bethel, a house of God, just as they form the consecrated scene of divine worship. In every such scene the pious and devout worshipper may confidently expect the Divine presence, and say with Jacob of old, "Surely the Lord is in this place."

The exact position of ancient Bethel was lost, and remained unknown for centuries. Yet both its name and a knowledge of its site had been preserved among the common people,—the natives of the country ; and they were both discovered about ten years ago by the Protestant missionaries of Jerusalem. The world owes nothing to the indolent monks, although they have long held possession of the country, and claimed a sort of prescriptive right to the sacred places. They have neither industry nor enterprise for accurate research or patient investigation ; and the traveller who relies on their information will either be sent to search for Bethel twenty miles off, or be taught to believe that the city and its very name have both perished. The modern name of the place is Beitin, being the exact form of the Hebrew word according to the analogy of the Arabic language—now for a long time the native language of the country. The city was originally built by the Canaanites, and by them called Luz,—a term denoting a hazel or an almond tree,—probably during the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt ; for it is doubtful if any city stood there when Jacob first visited the place. It had become a walled city, at the division of the land by Joshua, of great strength and importance ; and being on the border between Benjamin and Ephraim, it was assigned to the former, but finally held in possession by the latter by right of