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ARTICLE V.

THE LAND OF MORIAH.

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A QUESTION has been raised within a few years respecting the locality designated in the divine direction to Abraham to offer his son Isaac in sacrifice. The command was: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Gen. xxii. 2).

The name Moriah occurs but in one more passage in the sacred scriptures, and in this it is given as the site of the temple which Solomon built: "Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (2 Chron. iii. 1).

Is the Mount Moriah in Jerusalem on which the temple stood identical with one of the mountains in the land of Moriah on which Abraham was directed to offer Isaac? Such has been the accepted tradition and current belief. The identity, naturally suggested by the name, does not appear to have been seriously questioned, except by the Samaritans in behalf of Mount Gerizim, which has been rejected by others as the unfounded claim of an interested party.

This discredited claim found, at length, a champion in Professor Stanley, who in his "Sinai and Palestine" gave his reasons for adopting it, and in his later "Lectures on Jewish History," ventured to assume it as an ascertained and established site. In this claim he has been supported by two eminent contributors to Dr. Smith's Dictionary of the Bible—Mr. Ffoulkes in the Article "Gerizim," and Mr. Grove in the Article "Moriah." These three writers, all versed in Bible

history and in the topography of Palestine, concur in rejecting the claim of Jerusalem, and in maintaining that of Gerizim as the scene of the offering of Isaac by Abraham. This theory could not have a more respectable authorship, nor a more weighty endorsement. But it cannot be established by authority; it must rest on its merits; and we propose to offer our reasons for dissenting from it. The arguments on the two points, which are really distinct, have been naturally blended in the discussion. We will quote them together, as they are given, but in the examination we will separate them as well as we can, and consider each locality by itself. Our quotations from the first writer are from the American edition of his first work above named; and from the other two, from the English edition of the Dictionary. We omit portions of each, to avoid repetition.

"Abraham was 'in the land of the Philistines,' probably at the extreme south. From Beersheba or Gaza he would probably be conceived to move along the Philistine plain, and then on the morning of the third day would arrive in the plain of Sharon, exactly where the massive height of Gerizim is visible 'afar off,' and from thence half a day would bring him to its summit. Exactly such a view is to be had in that plain, and on the other hand, no such view or impression can fairly be said to exist on the road from Beersheba to Jerusalem, even if what is at most a journey of two days could be extended to three. The towers of Jerusalem are indeed seen from the ridge of Mount Elias, at the distance of three miles; but there is no elevation corresponding to the 'place afar off,' to which Abraham 'lifted up his eyes.' And the special locality which Jewish tradition has assigned for the place, and whose name is the chief guarantee for the tradition — Mount Moriah, the Hill of the Temple — is not visible till the traveller is close upon it, at the southern edge of the Valley of Hinnom, from whence he looks down upon it, as upon a lower eminence. Hebrew scholars must determine how far the difference of the radical letters of מֹרֶה and מֹרִיָה is an insuperable objection to the identification. In Gen. xxii. the Samaritans actually read Moreh for Moriah" (Stanley, Sinai and Palestine, 247, 248).

"Let it be observed that it is not the mountain but the district which is there (Gen. xxii.) called Moriah (of the same root with Moreh see Corn. a Lapid. on Gen. xii. 6), and that antecedently to the occurrence which took place 'upon one of the mountains' in its vicinity, a consideration which of itself would naturally point to the locality already known to Abraham as the plain or plains of Moreh, 'the land of vision,' 'the high

land,' and therefore consistently 'the land of adoration,' or 'religious worship,' as it is variously explained. It is by no means necessary, as Mr. Porter thinks, that he should have started from Beersheba (see Gen. xxi. 34 'the whole land being before him,' xx. 15). Again, it is not necessary that he should have arrived on the actual spot during the third day. All that is said in the narrative is that from the time that it hove in sight he and Isaac parted from the young men, and went on together alone. Different reasons, in all probability, caused these two localities to be so named; the first, not a mountain, but a land, district, or plain, called Moreh or Moriah, from the noble vision of nature, and therefore of natural religion that met the eye; the second, a small hill deriving its name from a special revelation or vision, as the express words of scripture say, which took place by the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.' If it be thought strange that a place once called by the 'father of the faithful' Jehovah-Jireh, should have been merged by Moses, and ever afterwards, in a general name, so different from it in sense and origin as Gerizim; it would be still more strange that if Mount Moriah of the Book of Chronicles and Jehovah-Jireh were one and the same place, no sort of allusion should have been made by the inspired historian to the prime event which had caused it to be so called. True it is that Josephus in more than one place asserts that where Abraham offered, there the temple was afterwards built. Yet the same Josephus makes God bid Abraham go to the mountain — not the land — of Moriah; having omitted all mention of the plains of Moreh in his account of the preceding narrative. Besides, in more than one place he shows that he bore no love to the Samaritans" (Foulkes, Gerizim, i. 679, 680).

"Although it was more than two days' journey from 'the land of the Philistines,' yet it is not said how much more than two days it was. The mountain — the 'place' — came into view in the course of the third day; but the time occupied in performing the remainder of the distance is not stated. The former [Moreh] was well known to Abraham. It was the first spot on which he had pitched his tent in the Promised Land, and it was hallowed and endeared to him by the first manifestation of Jehovah with which he had been favored, and by the erection of his first altar. With Jerusalem on the other hand, except as possibly the residence of Melchizedek, he had not any connection whatever; it lay as entirely out of his path as it did out of that of Isaac and Jacob. The LXX. appear to have thus read or interpreted the original, since they render both Moreh and Moriah in Gen. by *ἰψηλή*, while in 2 Chron. iii. they have *Ἀμωρεία*. The one name is but the feminine of the other (Simonis, Onom. 414). The Jewish tradition, which first appears in Josephus, unless 2 Chron. iii. 1 be a still earlier hint of its existence, is fairly balanced by the rival tradition of the Samaritans, which is at least as old as the third century after Christ. The single occurrence of the name in this one passage in Chronicles

is surely not enough to establish a coincidence, which, if we consider it, is little short of miraculous. There is in the East a natural tendency when a place is established as a sanctuary to make it the scene of all the notable events, possible or impossible, which can by any play of words or other pretext be connected with it. Had the fact been as the modern belief asserts, and had the belief existed in the minds of the people of the Old or New Testament, there could not fail to be frequent references to it in the narrative, so detailed, of the original dedication of the spot by David; in the account of Solomon's building in the book of Kings, of Nehemiah's rebuilding (compare especially the reference to Abraham in ix. 7); or of the restorations and purifications of the Maccabees. It was a fact which must have found its way into the paronomastic addresses of the prophets, into the sermon of St. Stephen, so full of allusion to the founders of the nation, or into the argument of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But not so; on the contrary, except in the case of Salem — and that is by no means ascertained — the name of Abraham does not appear once in connection with Jerusalem or the later royal or ecclesiastical glories of Israel. . . . But in addition to this, Jerusalem is incompatible with the circumstances of the narrative of Gen. xxii. To name only two instances: (1) The temple mount cannot be spoken of as a conspicuous eminence [see Stanley above]. (2) If Salem was Jerusalem, then the trial of Abraham's faith, instead of taking place in the lonely and desolate spot implied by the narrative, where not even fire was to be obtained, and where no help but that of the Almighty was nigh, actually took place under the walls of the city of Melchizedek" (Grove, Moriah, ii. 422, 423).

The above citations give, we believe, all the points of the argument of these writers. We proceed to show the particulars in which it strikes us as inconclusive, discussing each locality separately, as far as practicable.

*The Claim of Gerizim.*¹

1. The assumed identity of Moreh and Moriah cannot be admitted. There is a radical difference in their roots, as Dean Stanley concedes; that of מֹרְיָה being מִרְיָה, to teach "the

¹ That portion of Hackett's edition of Smith's Dictionary which embraces the Article "Gerizim," though not issued when this goes to press, will probably reach some of our readers soon. The substance of this part of the argument will be found in that, as that of the remainder will be in the Article "Moriah" when it is reached; the Article here offered, like its predecessors, being not so much a criticism on the Dictionary as a discussion of topics in that work supplemental to the English edition. To prevent misapprehension, we add a fuller statement at the close of this Article.

oaks of Moreh, so called from their owner," "hill of Moreh, teacher's hill"; and that of מִרְיָהּ being מִרְיָהּ, *to see* (Robinson's Gesenius, Lex. ad loc.). To this high authority we add the following from a recent able English writer :

"Moreh is strictly a proper name, and as such, both in Gen. xii. 6 and Deut. xxix. 30, though in the genitive after a definite noun, rejects the article; the 'hill of Moreh,' mentioned in Judg. vii. 1, where the name has the article, being a totally different place. On the other hand, the name Moriah, in the two places of its occurrence, namely, Gen. xxii. and 2 Chron. iii. 1, bears the article as an appellative, whether it denotes the same situation in both places or not. It is true the LXX. render the Moreh of Gen. xii. and the Moriah of Gen. xxii. alike by the adjective *υψηλή*, in one case translating by the words 'the lofty oak,' in the other, by 'the high land.' It is plain that on whatever grounds they proceeded in thus translating, this gives no support to the supposition that the names, as names of places, are synonymous, inasmuch as they did not take the words for 'names of places at all, but as descriptive adjectives. Mr. Grove tells us that מִרְיָהּ is only the feminine form of מִרְיָהּ. According to no analogy of the construction of feminine forms can this be said; the masculine form should in this case have been מִרְיָהּ" (Quarry, Genesis and its Authorship, 210, 211).

Dr. Murphy makes the following just observation on this point in his Commentary :

"As the two names occur in the same document, and differ in form, they naturally denote different things" (Genesis, 339).

All the reasoning above quoted about the locality already known to Abraham as the plain of Moriah, the land of vision, called Moreh or Moriah, from the noble vision of nature, etc., is consequently, irrelevant.

2. The distance from Beersheba to Gerizim is fatal to this hypothesis. The suggestion that Abraham need not have "started from Beersheba" is gratuitous; the narrative fairly conveying the impression that he started from his residence, which was then at that place. From this point Jerusalem is three days' journey north, and Gerizim two days still further north. The journey could not have been completed "on the third day" with a loaded ass, whether the animal carried its master, or bore the wood for the sacrifice. We presume it to have been used for the latter purpose — for either it would have been "saddled" — and this accords with the view of Josephus: "he took Isaac, with two of his servants; laying

what things were necessary for a sacrifice upon an ass." The route, moreover, by which these writers would conduct the company to Gerizim, is an unknown and unnatural route.

3. The suggestions of Mr. Ffoulkes and Mr. Grove that the patriarch only came in sight of the mountain on the third day, and had an indefinite time for performing the rest of the journey, and the similar suggestion of Dr. Stanley that after coming in sight of the mountain he had half a day in which to reach it, are inadmissible. Acknowledging "that from the time it *hove in sight*, he and Isaac parted from the young men and went on together alone," these writers all overlook the fact, that from this point the wood for the burnt-offering was laid upon Isaac. Thus far the needed materials had been borne by the servants and the ass. That the young man could bear the burden for a short distance, does not warrant the supposition that he could have carried it for a day's journey, or a half-day's. In that case, it would seem that the donkey and the servants might have been left at home. They halted, apparently, not far from the spot of the intended sacrifice.

4. The commanding position of Gerizim, with the wide prospect from its summit, is not a necessary, nor even probable, element in the decision of the question. It was to *the land of Moriah* that the patriarch was directed, some one of the eminences of which, apparently not yet named, the Lord would designate as his destination. In favor of Gerizim as an elevated site, Stanley lays stress upon the phrase, "*lifted up his eyes*," forgetting that the identical phrase had been applied (Gen. xiii. 10) to Lot's view of the plain of the Jordan far *below* him.

5. The Samaritan tradition is unreliable. From the time that this people erected on Gerizim a rival temple to that in Jerusalem, they naturally desired to invest the spot with the sanctities of the earlier Jewish history. The substitution of Moreh for Moriah in their version of Genesis xxii. 2, is of the same character with this claim. If this had been the traditional site of the scene in question, it would have abated

something of the utter detestation with which the Jews subsequently regarded the spot. In the face of such a tradition Josephus would hardly have claimed Jerusalem as the site; and while he, doubtless, shared the prejudices of his countrymen against the Samaritans, his general fairness as a historian forbids the supposition that he was capable of robbing a community of a cherished site, and transferring it to another. Moreover, the incredible theory that Gerizim, and not Jerusalem, is the original site of the city of Salem, for which Professor Stanley earnestly argues, and which Mr. Ffoulkes is constrained to reject, has the same support of Samaritan tradition.

In corroboration of our views of the untenableness of this claim for Gerizim, we will now quote the opinions of three competent writers, who have traversed the ground subsequently to the publication of Stanley's theory, and given their attention to this point.

Professor J. Leslie Porter, author of the valuable "Hand-book for Syria and Palestine," says:

"That Gerizim was the mountain in the 'land of Moriah,' on which Abraham was commanded to offer up Isaac, seems to be simply impossible. Abraham was undoubtedly at Beersheba when he received the command (compare Gen. xxi. 33 and xxii. 1-3, 19). It appears from the narrative that on the third day he reached the place, offered the sacrifice, and returned to the spot where he had left his servants. The distance from Beersheba to Gerizim, is about seventy geographical miles as the crow flies, which in such a country will give ninety of actual travel. Abraham's servants were on foot carrying wood; Isaac also was on foot, and Abraham rode an ass; they could not, therefore have travelled such a distance" (Kitto's Bib. Cyc. ii. 113).

Dr. Thomson, the veteran American missionary, whose personal acquaintance with the country is unsurpassed, says:

"Mr. Stanley's geographical argument is more than feeble. It is almost absurd to maintain that Abraham could come on his loaded ass from Beersheba to Nablûs in the time specified. On the third day he arrived early enough to leave the servants 'afar off,' and walk with Isaac, bearing the sacrificial wood, to the mountain which God had shown him, there build the altar, arrange the wood, bind his son, and stretch forth his hand to slay him; and there was time too, to take and offer up the ram in Isaac's place. That all this could have been done at Nablûs on the third day of

their journey is incredible. It has always appeared to me since I first travelled over the country myself, that even Jerusalem was too far off from Beersheba for the tenor of the narrative, but Nablús is two days' ride further north. Nor will the suggestion of Mr. Stanley that Abraham came up through Philistia and then turned eastward into the mountain bear examination" (Land and Book, ii. 212).

Mr. Tristram, the observant English traveller, who visited Gerizim two or three times says :

"I have traversed and timed these routes repeatedly, in a greater or less portion of their course, and feel satisfied that as long as the sacred text remains as it is, 'on the third day,' the claims of Gerizim are untenable" (Land of Israel, 153).

We believe that history will confirm the judgment of these three writers on this point rather than that of the three whose argument we are reviewing. The theory which claims the Moriah of Jerusalem as the locality of the scene in question has its difficulties; but whether that theory be accepted or rejected, the claim of Gerizim appears to us to have too slight a support to be entitled to any weight in the discussion.

The Claim of Jerusalem.

Rejecting the theory which would identify the Moriah of the patriarch with Mount Gerizim, we have the claim of Jerusalem clear of a rival. But this claim is distinct, and, like the other, must rest on its own merits. Its principal proofs are the identity of its name; the distance from Beersheba, which suits exactly the requirements of the narrative; and the tradition of the Jews, twice recorded by Josephus.

"It was that mountain upon which King David afterwards built [purposed to build] the temple (Antiq. i. 13 § 2). Now it happened that Abraham came and offered his son Isaac for a burnt-offering at that very place, as we have before related. When King David saw that God had heard his prayer and graciously accepted his sacrifice, he resolved to call that entire place the altar of all the people, and to build a temple to God there" (Antiq. vii. 13 § 4).

Without countervailing evidences these grounds would be accepted as sufficient. Let us now examine the objections which these writers bring forward to this view.

1. Abraham had little or no "connection" with Jerusa-

lem. "It lay out of his path," while Gerizim was "well-known" to him, and "was hallowed and endeared to him." The obvious answer to this is, that the patriarch did not choose the spot; he went to the place which the Lord selected for him, and started apparently ignorant of his precise destination. This argument further assumes that he not only went to a place of his own selection, but also that he started on an agreeable excursion, which he would naturally wish to associate with the pleasant memories of his pilgrimage; the reverse of which we know to have been the fact.

2. "Had the fact been as the modern belief asserts, there could not fail to be frequent reference to it, by the writers both of the Old and New Testaments." The reply to this is strongly put by a learned writer whom we have already quoted:

"This *argumentum ab silentio* is notoriously not to be relied on; the instances of unaccountable silence respecting undoubted facts, where we might have expected them to be mentioned, are too numerous among ancient writers to allow it any weight, except as tending to corroborate arguments that may have considerable weight in themselves. In the present case, the clause in 2 Chron. iii. 1. 'which was seen' (רָאָה) or 'provided by David,' may fairly be taken as containing an obscure reference to the Jehovah-Jireh, and the saying: 'In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen,' of Gen. xxii. 14, so that the absence of all such reference is not so complete as is alleged" (Quarry, 213, 214).

Still, if this site had been selected for the temple by King David *because* it was the scene of the offering of Isaac (and another reason is assigned by the sacred writer, 1 Chron. xxi., xxii., without any intimation of this), the absence of some more distinct allusion to the fact, though not more unaccountable than other omissions in the scriptures, must yet be admitted to be unaccountable.

3. "The Jewish tradition is fairly balanced by the rival tradition of the Samaritans." Surely not "balanced"; the latter is later and less reliable. Josephus and the rabbinical writers doubtless embodied the honest tradition of their countrymen supported by the identity of names; the Moriah of Genesis and the Moriah of Chronicles being not only the

same word, but used in no other connection. The first tradition is natural; the second is suspicious—in keeping with other Samaritan claims, which we know to have been false.

4. "The temple-mount is not a conspicuous eminence, like the one to which Abraham 'lifted up his eyes.'" This objection we have already answered. The phrase simply indicates the direction of the eyes, whether up or down, and a further illustration is furnished in vs. 13 of this chapter.

5. The eminence was seen "afar off," and "the hill of the temple is not visible till the traveller is close upon it." The phrase, "afar off," is relative. It is modified by circumstances, as in Gen. xxxvii. 18, where it is limited to the distance at which a person could be seen and recognized on a plain. In most connections it would indicate a greater distance than is admissible here; but there is a circumstance which qualifies it in this passage. From the spot where the place became visible (as is conceded by Mr. Ffoulkes) Abraham and Isaac proceeded along to the appointed spot, the latter bearing the wood. The distance to be traversed with this load from the point at which Moriah becomes visible to a traveller from the south to its summit is fully as great as any reader would naturally associate with this fact in the narrative.

6. "If Salem was Jerusalem, instead of the lonely and desolate spot implied by the narrative, it took place under the very walls of the city of Melchizedek." Mr. Grove, who suggests this, not being convinced of their identity, nor inclined to admit it,—Dean Stanley is fully convinced that they are not identical,—this argument is for other minds, for those who hold other and positive views on this point. We accept the identity, and we feel the force of the objection. Our only reply to it is, that the environs of an Eastern walled town are often as free from observation, as secluded and still, as a solitude. The writer of this has passed hours together within a stone's throw of the walls of the modern Jerusalem at various points undisturbed by any sound, and

as unobserved as though the city had been tenantless. This view is supported by a writer already quoted :

“ Even under the walls of the city of Melchizedek the whole may have taken place without attracting the notice of the inhabitants, and the desolate loneliness of the spot, supposed to be implied in the narrative, has no place in it whatever. It is not implied that Abraham could not obtain fire, but going to an unknown place, he took with him, by way of precaution, what would be needful for the intended sacrifice ” (Quarry, 213).

This partially relieves the difficulty which Mr. Grove has raised for those of his readers who identify Salem and Jerusalem ; but only in part, we think. It must be acknowledged that close proximity to a city is not a natural locality for such a scene. We should suppose that the patriarch would have been directed — we should naturally infer from the narrative itself that he was directed — to some spot remote from the dwellings of men, where, in the performance of this remarkable rite, which even his servants were not to witness, he would not be liable to interruption or intrusive observation.

It must also be admitted that the selection of this spot, with or without a design, for the two events associated with it, is a most unlikely occurrence. “ It would take a vast amount of contrary evidence to force me to abandon this idea,” says Dr. Thomson. It would require very little to lead us to relinquish it; for in itself it seems to us the height of improbability. That the altar of burnt-offering for the Hebrew worship should have been erected on the identical spot where centuries before the great progenitor of the nation had erected the altar for the sacrifice of his son, led thither for the purpose three days’ journey from home, — that this should have occurred without design, have been a mere “ coincidence,” — we must concur with Mr. Grove in pronouncing “ little short of miraculous.” Yet if it did occur, this is a somewhat less incredible supposition than that it was by design. That the locality became invested by sanctity in the Divine mind — was divinely selected as the scene of the second sacrifice — that it had been the scene of the first — it is

uncountenanced by any fact or analogy within our knowledge. The "natural tendency" of the Eastern mind, moreover, to cluster supernatural or sacred events around the supposed scene of a known miracle, is correctly stated by Mr. Grove. Nothing could be more natural than for the Jews, without any clear warrant, to connect if possible the scene of their sacrifices with the offering of Isaac, and associate the altars of their typical worship with the altar on which the son of promise was laid. This correspondence is thought by some to favor the identity; we cannot but regard a double claim, so peculiar, as in itself a suspicious circumstance.

We would say in conclusion that in favor of the identity of the two sites may be urged the identity of the name, used without explanation in these two passages of Scripture alone, and "in both places alike as an appellative bearing the article"; the possible allusion in a clause of the latter to a clause in the former; the correspondence of the distance with the specifications of the journey; the ancient and consistent Hebrew tradition, universally received in Christendom; the failure to establish a single presumption in favor of any other locality; and the absence of any fatal or decisive objection to this identification. On these grounds the traditional belief will probably abide. Nevertheless, for reasons above intimated, we cannot feel the absolute confidence in it which some express. And the most which we think can be safely affirmed is, that Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, on which the Temple of Solomon was built, was probably, also, the spot where Abraham offered up Isaac.

In this and preceding numbers of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* we have examined three different theories relating to Biblical topics, which have been advocated by contributors to Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, and which we regard as unsound and untenable: namely, the fantastic theory originated by Mr. Fergusson, which would identify Mount Zion with Mount Moriah, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with the Mosque of Omar; the theory propounded by Mr. Grove, and adopted

by Mr. Tristram,¹ which would locate Sodom and the Cities of the Plain north of the Dead Sea; and the theory urged by Dean Stanley, and supported by Mr. Ffoulkes and Mr. Grove, and assumed by its author as proved, which would identify Mount Gerizim with the Land of Moriah. These several theories, with whatever names associated, we anticipate the concurrent judgment of our readers in pronouncing fanciful speculations.

Should any of our readers who have not examined the Dictionary receive from these discussions the impression that it is largely the refuge and repository of new and crude theories, they would form a very inadequate, mistaken, and unjust estimate of this great work. These theories are exceptional. In the department to which they belong they are, perhaps, the only points which invite serious criticism, though others admit of minor corrections and additions. The touchstone of discussion and of time should, doubtless, have been applied to these speculations before they were incorporated with a work like this, designed for permanent reference. New theories touching disputed localities, of which Palestine is prolific, should be treated, on their first promulgation, like her own visitors on their arrival — put into quarantine, until their salubrity has been ascertained.

But with these deductions, no one can study the Dictionary without gathering from every examination a more profound conviction of the breadth and value of the learning and research which it embodies. It is only surprising that a work so vast, prepared in detached sections by so many original contributors, should, when brought together, be on the whole so coherent and correct. With the whole work issued, so that its parts may be compared, the new edition occupies the high vantage-ground of a revision which, without abridgment, can adjust, balance, and supplement the original, and give it completeness and symmetry. Some of our scholars who have used and prized the English edition find the American so enriched by its editors as to be a necessity by the side of the

¹ We have private advices that Mr. Tristram has abandoned this theory.
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other. We have no living countryman who, in this special field, so nearly occupies the place vacated by our lamented Robinson as Dr. Hackett, both in the thoroughness of his Biblical investigations and in the carefulness of his conclusions. The positions in the Dictionary which have been discussed in these pages all illustrate the propriety of a revised edition; but in connection with our repeated criticisms we deem it a duty to guard against an impression which might do injustice to the original work.