

In summing up the belief of the Egyptians concerning the future state, one may well adopt the conclusions of Bunsen: "The Osiris-theology centres in the antitheses of right and wrong, holiness and vice. . . . According to the creed of the Egyptians, the soul of man was divine, and therefore immortal. It is subject to personal moral responsibility. The consequence of evil actions is banishment from the presence of God. Man, when justified, becomes conscious that he is a son of God, and destined to behold God at the termination of his wanderings. . . . With the comfortless symbolism of their faith were closely connected ethical ideas; those moral feelings which regulate human life and repress the outbursts of savage nature, namely, the faith in a moral government of the world, in personal moral responsibility, in a personal divine judgment."<sup>1</sup>

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## ARTICLE VI.

### THE SITE OF SODOM.

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THERE is no site, ancient or modern, which combines all the elements of interest that belong to the site of Sodom and the other "cities of the plain," whose destruction is recorded in the Book of Genesis. It has attracted, of late years, much laborious and learned investigation, but it is still invested with not a little mystery. The few remarkable facts of the scriptural narrative and a few remarkable local phenomena open a wide range of speculation; but in some important points they furnish no determinate data. The few points which we shall seek to elucidate and establish are definite; and we have introduced the discussion here, not to propose

<sup>1</sup> *Egypt's Place*, Vol. iv. pp. 64 and 642.

any new solution, but mainly to examine a new theory which has been propounded in Dr. Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.

The author of this theory is George Grove, Esq., of Sydenham, England, a gentleman who stands in the front rank of biblical scholars. Of the nearly seventy eminent writers and critics, whose multifarious learning has made the Dictionary such an invaluable Thesaurus of scriptural knowledge, there is probably no single contributor to whom it owes so much as to the one whom we have named. The wonderful versatility and competency which he has shown in the discussion of archaeological, exegetical, geographical, geological, historical, and topographical questions, pertaining to the sacred oracles, have given his name authority in biblical matters. Dean Stanley gratefully availed himself of his careful revision, in the successive works which he has published relative to the Bible and the Orient; and any theory in the department of sacred history and geography, emanating from such a source, will command attention, and is entitled to respectful consideration.

#### MR. GROVE'S THEORY.

It has been the universal impression heretofore, that the condemned cities lay either in what is now the basin of the Dead Sea, or contiguous to its southern section; that Sodom, especially, lay near its southern end, either on the site of its present bed, or adjacent to its shore. In opposition to this universal belief, Mr. Grove puts forth the theory that these cities were in the present plain of the Jordan, north of the existing sea. He has brought it forward in four different Articles which he has written for the Dictionary, namely, "The Salt Sea," "The Vale of Siddim," "Sodom," and "Zoar,"<sup>1</sup> all in the last volume of the English edition.

The reader will notice this peculiarity in these Articles, namely, that the theory is repeatedly stated without qualification, or any apparent misgiving, and yet in a subsequent

<sup>1</sup> The able writer of the Article "Gomorrah" accepts the old theory.  
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sentence the writer will seem to qualify his own belief in it. Thus in the first Article we have the following :

“ Of the situation of these cities [cities of the plain] we only know that, being in the ‘ plain of the Jordan,’ they must have been to the north of the lake ” (The Salt Sea, iii. 1187).

We understand the writer here to affirm that the cities were north of the lake, and could not have been south of it. In the next Article we find this sentence :

“ It should be remembered that if the cities of the plain were, as there is much reason to believe they were, at the north end of the Dead Sea,” etc. (The Vale of Siddim, iii. 1308).

The positive is here softened into the merely probable — “ must have been,” into “ much reason to believe.” In the third Article we have the following :

“ It is necessary to notice how absolutely the cities are identified with the district. The mention of the Jordan is conclusive as to the situation of the district, for the Jordan ceases where it enters the Dead Sea, and can have no existence south of that point ” (Sodom, iii. 1339).

“ From all these passages, though much is obscure, two things are clear : 1. That Sodom and the rest of the cities of the plain of Jordan stood north of the Dead Sea ” (Sodom, iii. 1339).

“ A more serious departure from the terms of the ancient history is exhibited in the prevalent opinion that the cities stood at the south end of the lake ” (Sodom, iii. 1340).

These extracts swing us back again to the absolute, the clear, the positive, the conclusive, leaving no doubt in the reader’s mind respecting the author’s opinion. But we are suddenly thrown into utter confusion by a later statement in the same Article :

“ It thus appears that on the situation of Sodom no satisfactory conclusion can be come at. On the one hand the narrative of Genesis seems to state positively that it lay at the northern end of the Dead Sea. On the other hand the long-continued tradition and the names of existing spots seem to pronounce with almost equal positiveness that it was at its southern end. How the geological argument may affect either side of the proposition cannot be decided in the present condition of our knowledge ” (Sodom, iii. 1340).

In the fourth Article, as in the others, we are brought back again to the almost positive in these words :

“*Zoar*, one of the most ancient cities of the land of Canaan. [A mistake; it belonged to Moab.] It was situated in the same district with the four cities already mentioned, namely, in the ‘plain of the Jordan,’ and the narrative of Gen. xix. evidently implies that it was very near to Sodom. The definite position of Sodom is, and probably will always be, a mystery, but there can be little doubt that the plain of the Jordan was at the north of the Dead Sea, and that the cities of the plain must therefore have been situated there, instead of at the southern end of the lake, as it is generally taken for granted they were” (*Zoar*, iii. 1856).

This is perfectly clear; the cities were north of the sea; but scarcely has the reader settled down with the comfortable conviction that he now understands the writer, before he is again set afloat by a concession in the same Article which after giving some of the opposite data, closes as follows:

“They only add to the general mystery in which the whole of the question of the position and destruction of the cities is involved, and to which the writer sees at present no hope of a solution” (*Zoar*, iii. 1856).

Our readers are probably ready to ask: What does Mr. Grove really believe respecting the site of Sodom and its neighbor cities? We cannot answer this question with confidence, though we have faithfully searched for an answer. After carefully weighing all his statements—the positive, the probable, and the perplexed—we are inclined to the opinion that in his own mind he accepts the theory which he has broached, namely, that these cities lay in the plain north of the sea. But it being an original hypothesis, in conflict both with the current belief and with weighty testimony, he does not feel that he can confidently press it upon the acceptance of others. If this is not his exact position, we think it will be necessary for him to define it for himself. But this is a secondary question. The theory is there, and the question which invites our examination is, whether there is any good ground for adopting it.

After our examination of Mr. Grove's theory was completed, we had the opportunity for the first time of reading the Rev. H. B. Tristram's published travels in Palestine, “*The Land of Israel*,” a work of decided merit, which has not been reprinted in this country. He has devoted special attention

to the natural history of the Holy Land, which he found almost a virgin field — to its botany and zoölogy, as well as its geology, — and has greatly enlarged our knowledge of the flora and fauna of the country, collecting and classifying many interesting specimens. He has become favorably known by his papers on these topics, some of which are embodied in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible. But while throughout his tour he was on the constant and keen hunt for "all manner of wild beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air," and fishes, and insects, and eggs, together with flowers, plants, minerals, and shells, and of all these accumulated rich spoils, he did not overlook important points of history and topography. In these departments, as in the province which was his specialty, he made some valuable observations, though his attention was mainly directed to physical history and phenomena. His large equipments would not seem to have included a compass, and even on the supposed heights of Pisgah, which were awaiting identification, he took no bearings. The basin of the Dead Sea and the adjacent region attracted his particular examination. His geological speculations respecting the pre-historic period do not, at present, concern us. On the points discussed in this paper he yields his assent to the theory which we controvert; and we were a little dismayed to find Mr. Grove, strong when he stands alone, supported by this able ally. In some essential particulars, however, the two writers differ widely, and refute each other. In the progress of the discussion we shall examine Mr. Tristram's reasonings in full.

#### *Submergence of the Plain.*

Connected with this theory respecting the site of the cities, there is another, relative to the submergence of the present bed of the sea, which Mr. Grove also advances in opposition to most of the writers who have preceded him. He holds "that neither the cities nor the district were submerged by the lake" (Sodom, iii. 1339); that no portion of the present basin of the sea was ever submerged; that "as to even the

southern and shallow portion, if it has undergone any material change in historic times, such change would seem to be one rather of gradual elevation than of submersion" (The Vale of Siddim, iii. 1308). The question of the submergence of the site of the cities, as we shall see, is distinct from that of the submergence of a portion of the valley. It is only on the latter point that we claim any clear historical data; the former is a matter of inference merely.

These two theories of Mr. Grove, though intimately connected, do not necessarily stand or fall together. In whatever way the question of submergence may be decided, the question whether the site of the cities, if they did not occupy the present basin of the sea, was north of it or south of it, might remain an open question; though the submergence of a portion of the plain, could it be ascertained, would unquestionably support the theory which Mr. Grove opposes, and discountenance that which he espouses. Its relation to the general subject renders it proper for us to devote some preliminary attention to this point.

The evidences which bear on the question of submergence are mainly of two classes, the historical and the geological. The latter we pass over entirely, leaving them to writers who are versed in the science of geology. Our own impression is, and Mr. Grove in a passage already quoted (p. 114) would seem wholly to concur in it, though in other passages he lays stress upon geological features, that the data as yet ascertained would not furnish the most scientific observer with the basis of a solid and adequate theory. It is sufficient for this discussion that no points have thus far been established by geological exploration which conflict with the historical testimony as we understand it.

The earliest historical evidence is contained in the oldest record extant: "All these were joined together in the Vale of Siddim, which is the Salt Sea" (Gen. xiv. 3). The writer here asserts that what was the Vale of Siddim at the time of the battle described, was at the time of his writing the Salt Sea. If we are to accept the unity of the authorship of the

book, it was so when the original record was made. If we may regard the book as a compilation, and the last clause of this verse as the gloss of the compiler, it was so when the compilation was made. Both theories leave us the ancient, indisputable, biblical testimony to the identity, in whole or in part, of the site of the Vale of Siddim and of that of the Salt Sea. This interpretation is sustained by Gesenius, who defines the Vale of Siddim (valley of the plains) as the plain "now occupied by the Dead Sea" (Lex. סֻדִּים).

Mr. Grove adopts the second of the theories just named, but he places on this passage the same interpretation that we do. He rejects the translation of those who would construe the latter clause of the verse, "which is near, at, or by, the Salt Sea," and insists on the other interpretation. He says:

"The original of the passage will not bear even this slight accommodation, and it is evident that in the mind of the author of the words, no less than of the learned and eloquent divine and historian of our own time already alluded to, the Salt Sea covers the actual space formerly occupied by the Vale of Siddim" (The Vale of Siddim, iii. 1308).

This is decisive; and thus understanding the scriptural testimony, which pointedly contradicts his theory, how does he dispose of it? In a way which we venture to say not one of our readers will conjecture before reading it. His explanation is as follows:

"The words which more especially bear on the subject of this article (v. 3) do not form part of the original document. That venerable record has — with a care which shows how greatly it was valued at a very early date — been annotated throughout by a later, though still very ancient, chronicler, who has added what in his day were believed to be the equivalents for names of places that had become obsolete. Bela is explained to be Zoar; En-Mishpat to be Kadesh; the Emek-Shaveh to be the Valley of the King; the Emek has-Siddim to be the Salt Sea, that is, in modern phraseology, the Dead Sea. And when we remember how persistently the notion has been entertained for the last eighteen centuries that the Dead Sea covers a district which before its submersion was not only the Valley of Siddim but also the Plain of the Jordan, and what an elaborate account of the catastrophe of its submersion has been constructed even very recently by one of the most able scholars of our day, we can hardly be surprised that a chronicler in an age far less able to interpret natural phenomena, and at

the same time long subsequent to the date of the actual event, should have shared in the belief" (*The Vale of Siddim*, iii. 1307, 1308).

Do our readers understand the allusion? Do they appreciate this reasoning from the modern to the ancient, from the greater to the less? The argument without circumlocution is just this: "Inasmuch as even Dean Milman has been misled, it is less surprising that Moses (or the ancient chronicler who wrote these words) should have been mistaken also." This is not a style of reasoning which we should have anticipated from Mr. Grove, nor should we have looked for it in a dictionary of the Bible. We take it that he does not mean to impeach the integrity of the sacred canon; it is not pretended, nor is there any ground for suspicion, that there has been a corruption of the inspired text.

"The clause is found in all the ancient MSS. and versions, and in the Targum of Onkelos. Its genuineness rests on the very same basis as the other portions of the narrative. We have the same evidence of its Mosaic authorship as we have of any other part of the book" (*Porter, Kitto's Bib. Cyc.*, iii. 801).

Any theory which may be held respecting the authorship of the book is of no consequence to our present discussion, if we have here an unblemished copy of the divine revelation. Any theory which gives us this, leaves this testimony of equal value to us. The authenticity of the record we understand to be conceded in the Article quoted; but it is alleged that the later, yet very ancient, chronicler, who compiled or annotated the original document, and gave it to us in its present shape, was in point of fact mistaken. We consider this surmise wholly unwarranted and unwarrantable, and believe the writer to have had far better data for his statement than any modern critic can possibly have for correcting him. The reason assigned for the supposed error, moreover, is irrelevant. The submergence of the Vale of Siddim, the conversion of its site to the waters of the Dead Sea, is simply a question of historic fact, the statement of which does not require a chronicler who is "able to interpret natural phenomena." — The allusion to these "annotations" in another

Article, with the remark that they "must stand or fall by their own merits" (*The Salt Sea*, iii. 1186) awakens doubt whether we have not placed too favorable a construction on the above; whether in fact it be not an attack, for which there is no apology, on the inspired text.

The other glosses or annotations, as Mr. Grove claims them to be, he does not hesitate to accept as valid historic testimony. He says of Zoar, that "its original name was Bela" (iii. 1856), of Bethlehem, that "its earliest name was Ephrath" (i. 201), and of Hazezon-Tamar, that it "afterwards became Engedi" (i. 764), on exactly the authority, and no other which he rejects as inconclusive here. "Bela, which is Zoar"; "the Vale of Siddim, which is the Salt Sea"; "En-Mishpat, which is Kadesh"; "the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale"; "Ephrath, which is Bethlehem"; "Hazezon-Tamar, which is Engedi"; annotations or glosses like these, if they are such (the first four occurring in the same narrative), are equally reliable or equally worthless. No law of interpretation will permit Mr. Grove to accept one and reject another on the ground that the writer was not a naturalist. Such a claim would rather suggest that some modern naturalist might have a theory which did not harmonize with the ancient record. Even if it were conceded, it would establish the fact that prior to the composition or completion of our Book of Genesis, the belief was current that the chasm now filled by the waters of the Dead Sea had been in part at least, a valley or plain; and then the question would remain: Whence could such a belief have originated? In attempting to withdraw from the view which he opposes the support of the ancient record, he is obliged to grant it the weight of a tradition older than the chronicler.

The sacred narrative names a single physical feature of the Vale of Siddim, namely, that it abounded with "slime-pits" (*Gen.* xiv. 10). These pits were wells of asphaltum, or bitumen, probably of various dimensions, "sufficient," as Mr. Grove states, either from their number, or size, or both, "materially to affect the issue of the battle." These asphal-

tic wells have disappeared ; but bitumen is still found around the southern section of the sea, and it rises to the surface of the water in large quantities, in that portion of it, when dislodged by an earthquake (Bib. Res. ii. 229 sq.) ; and the supply was formerly more copious than now. We have modern testimony to this effect, and we have that of three eminent ancient historians in the century before Christ, and the following : Diodorus Siculus, Josephus, and Tacitus, who represent the asphaltum as rising to the surface of the water in black and bulky masses. The theory that the Vale of Siddim is covered by the southern part of the sea harmonizes the ancient record and the late phenomena. It sustains the statement that it was full of bituminous wells ; it accounts for their disappearance, and it explains the occasional spectacle since, down to the present time, of large quantities of asphaltum on the surface of the water. Thus far we have a consistent, confirmed, uncontradicted testimony.

As we pass from the simple affirmation of the sacred writer, with the confirmation, in subsequent ages, of the only physical feature of the territory which he names, we leave behind us, of course, all direct testimony. The only remaining evidence, exclusively historical, is of that secondary and confirmatory kind which may be drawn from the investigations and impressions of later writers most competent to form a judgment, who have examined the subject, or who, as historians, have recorded the prevalent tradition, or the most intelligent opinion. Our earliest witness in this sense is the geographer Strabo, who was born some sixty years before Christ. In his statement, though amplified by tradition, we find imbedded the central fact implied in the scriptural narrative :

“ Shocks of earthquake, eruptions of flames, and hot springs, containing asphaltus and sulphur, caused the lake to burst its bounds, and the rocks took fire ; some of the cities were swallowed up ; others were abandoned by such of the inhabitants as were able to make their escape ” (Judaea, iii. 183, Bohn's ed.).

Our next witness, in the same sense as the previous, is  
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Josephus, who gives the following paraphrase (which Mr. Grove quotes) of the sacred narrative as understood in the first century of the Christian era :

“They encamped in the valley called the Wells of Asphalt; for at that time there were wells in that spot; but now that the city of the Sodomites has disappeared, that valley has become a lake, which is called Asphaltites” (Antiq. i. 9).

This is clear, positive, and unmistakable, like the record in Genesis, asserting unequivocally that the valley had been converted into a lake. It embodies the undoubted tradition of the Jewish nation. It exhibits their own interpretation of their own sacred writings. We regard the writer in Genesis as a trusty witness, and we accept the testimony of Josephus as corroborative. These authorities are our principal source of information respecting Palestine. This evidence is convincing until it is set aside by weightier; and in contravention of it, we have, as yet, nothing which can be called testimony.

We pass next to the learned Reland, a standard classic on Palestine, who with equal discrimination, candor, and conscientiousness has summed up the results of the labors of all who, a century and a half ago, had preceded him as gleaners in this field. On the point before us his critical decision is as follows :

“There is but one thing stated here (Gen. xiv. 3), that the valley which was formerly called Valley of Siddim, became afterwards the Dead Sea, a fact which I do not mean to contradict. Indeed this valley may have been flooded by the waters forming this sea, either in consequence of an increase of the Jordan, or of the gushing out of subterranean or other springs; but as no one knows how or when this has happened, nothing is gained by dwelling on this point” (Palest., i. 254).

Speculation respecting the mode may be fruitless; but this acute biblicist recognizes the passage as teaching plainly the occurrence itself.

The same conclusion was accepted by the historic judgment of the learned historian Milman, who also shared the mistaken opinion, prevalent until lately, that the Jordan flowed through the Arabah. On the question here at issue he says :

“The cities stood on a soil broken and undermined with veins of bitumen

and sulphur. These inflammable substances set on fire by lightning caused a terrible convulsion; the water-courses — both the river and the canals by which the land was extensively irrigated — burst their banks; the cities, the walls of which were perhaps built from the combustible materials of the soil, were entirely swallowed up by the fiery inundation, and the whole valley, which had been compared to Paradise and the well-watered corn-fields of the Nile, became a dead and fetid lake" (*Hist. of the Jews*, i. 15, 16).

Some of this, of course, is conjectural; but that a discerning writer of history should venture to construct so detailed a theory, shows at least the strength of his conviction of the literal truth of the scripture declaration on which it rests.

Professor Robinson, who brought to the solution of this question the results of a closer examination of the locality, as well as of a wider investigation of the topic than any who had preceded him, boldly propounded the theory which Mr. Grove controverts. He says:

"In view of all these facts, there is but a step to the obvious hypothesis, that the fertile plain is now in part occupied by the southern bay, or that portion of the sea lying south of the peninsula; and that by some convulsion or catastrophe of nature, connected with the miraculous destruction of the cities, either the surface of this plain was scooped out, or the bottom of the sea was heaved up, so as to cause the waters to overflow and cover permanently a larger tract than formerly" (*Bib. Res.* ii. 604).

These suggestions seemed to receive a remarkable confirmation in the explorations of the United States Expedition. The conclusion is thus stated by Lieutenant Lynch:

"The inference from the Bible that this entire chasm was a plain sunk and 'overwhelmed' by the wrath of God, seems to be sustained by the extraordinary character of our soundings. The bottom of the sea consists of two submerged plains, an elevated and a depressed one; the former averaging thirteen, the latter about thirteen hundred, feet below the surface. Through the northern and largest and deepest one, in a line corresponding with the bed of the Jordan, is a ravine which again seems to correspond with the Wady el-Jeib, or ravine within a ravine, at the south end of the sea" (*Off. Rep.* 378, 379).

The learned Professor, who was as little wedded to theory as any author whom we know, keeping his mind open to conviction and aiming to preserve an impartial judgment,

retained his views, as above expressed, after the published discoveries and speculations of the many explorers in Palestine who followed his steps; and they are embodied in his posthumous work — his last contribution to the cause to which his life was devoted — with even a more specific suggestion as to the method :

“ This narrative (Gen. xix. 24, 25, 28) is readily explained by supposing that in a tempest of thunder and lightning, the accompaniments, perhaps of an earthquake or some volcanic action, or both, these masses of bitumen were ignited by the lightning, and a conflagration produced which not only destroyed the cities but also consumed and scooped out the surface of the plain itself; so that the waters of the lake rushing in, spread themselves over the once fertile tract ” (Phys. Geog. of the Holy Land, 234, 235).

Ritter, our greatest name in sacred geography, assents to the theory of the combustion of the cities, and also of the great change which was wrought both in the land and in the water :

“ Russegger holds that at the bottom of the sea there are far greater accumulations [of asphaltum] than along the rocks on the shores, and that these are detached from the bottom by violent earthquakes and brought to the surface. Bitumen is often found largely filled with organic remains, as well as with earthy substances. The conglomerate burns freely, emitting a great deal of smoke and a strong bituminous smell. The fire which is said to have come down from heaven may be taken literally as lightning. The rocks whence the bitumen proceeds could be readily kindled by the lightning, and the punishment inflicted by a divine hand upon Sodom and Gomorrah would be entirely consistent with the working of natural law. Russegger discovered bituminous layers in the Jura formation, some of which were from two to three feet in thickness ” (Geog. of Palestine, iii. 156).

“ The extremely salt character which the lake now has, may be regarded as not having been peculiar to it from the very first. What is said of the fertility of the country adjoining it, the comparison of it with the garden-like valley of the Nile, the allusions made to its attractiveness in the eyes of Lot as well as of King Chedorlaomer, would hardly be said of a country blasted by the contact of such a mass of brine as the Dead Sea now is; it could only have been true of a tract laved by fresh water ” (Geog. of Palestine, iii. 162).

“ I discriminate between the primitive vast Jordan fissure running from the Lebanon to the Gulf of Akaba, regarding whose formation we have no historical account, and a late and secondary modification of the same, connected with which was a great catastrophe, of which we have a historical

record, because it took place in the territory under the immediate observation of the patriarchs" (Geog. of Palestine, iii. 165).

"Daubeny has wrought this theme out with singular clearness and force, and has shown that as water was chosen as the minister of God at the time of the deluge, so volcanic agencies may have been ordained to the same mission at the time of the destruction of the cities of the plain, a conviction in which I heartily coincide, and which does no violence to the statements of scripture" (Geog. of Palestine, iii. 166).

Mr. Tristram's exposition of the mode in which the cities were destroyed is as follows :

"I think there can be no question but that the old notions of volcanic agencies about the Dead Sea were erroneous, and that many writers, like De Saulcy, have been misled by endeavoring to square their preconceived interpretation of scripture with the facts they saw around them. But setting aside all preconceived notions, and taking the simple record of Gen. xix. as we find it, let us see whether the existing condition of the country throws any light upon the biblical narrative. Certainly we do observe by the lake sulphur and bitumen in abundance. Sulphur springs stud the shores, sulphur is strewn, whether in layers or fragments over the desolate plains, and bitumen is ejected in great floating masses from the bottom of the sea, oozes through the fissures of the rocks, is deposited with gravel on the beach, or, as in the Wady Mahawat, appears with sulphur to have been precipitated during some convulsion. We know that at the time of earthquakes in the north, the bitumen seems, even in our own day, to be detached from the bottom of the lake, and that floating islets of that substance have been evolved (see Robinson, Bib. Res. i. 518), coincident with the convulsions so frequent in northeastern Palestine. Everything leads to the conclusion that the agency of fire was at work, though not the overflowing of an ordinary volcano. The materials were at hand, at whichever end of the lake we place the doomed cities, and may probably have been accumulated then to a much greater extent than at present. The kindling of such a mass of combustible material, either by lightning from heaven, or by other electrical agency, combined with an earthquake ejecting the bitumen or sulphur from the lake, would soon spread devastation over the plain, so that the smoke of the country would go up as the smoke of a furnace. There is no authority whatever, in the biblical record, for the popular notion that the site of the cities has been submerged. The simple and natural explanation seems, when stripped of all the wild tradition and strange horrors with which the mysterious sea has been invested, to be this: That during some earthquake, or without its direct agency, showers of sulphur, and probably bitumen, ejected from the lake, or thrown up from its shores, and ignited perhaps by the lightning which would accompany such phenomena, fell upon the cities and destroyed them. The history of the catastrophe has not only

remained in the inspired record, but is inscribed in the memory of the surrounding tribes by many a local tradition and significant name" (Land of Israel, 358, 359).

Ritter's notions, just quoted, if "old" are not obsolete; and a more enthusiastic devotee to fact, simple fact, a more faithful gatherer, and a more thorough digester of facts has, perhaps, never lived than the author of "Erdkunde," which, in the English dress in which Mr. Gage has presented it to us, is absolutely fascinating to all who are interested in the field which it covers, to whom fact is pleasanter than fiction. That the cities were not submerged, we admit. Whether or not "the site of the cities has been submerged," in part, at least, is a distinct question, on which the biblical record is silent, neither confirming nor contradicting the hypothesis.

In a note and appendix to one of the volumes of Ritter's great work (iii. 171-173, 350-388), Mr. Gage has given the geological speculations of Dr. Anderson of the United States Exploring Expedition, and M. Lartet, an eminent French geologist, who accompanied the Duc de Luynes' expedition, respecting the formation of the basin of the Dead Sea, relating mainly, if not exclusively, to pre-historic times. The latter writer names seven "conclusions," of which the last two may possibly refer to the historic period:

"6. At a later period volcanic eruptions have taken place, etc.

"7. Hot and mineral springs, bituminous eruptions, similar to those which accompany and follow volcanic action, and earthquakes, which are still frequent in the district, were the last important phenomena by which the basin of the Dead Sea was affected" (387, 388).

The bearing of this (if it is supposed to have any) on the scripture narrative is not explained. It is most evident that geology has not yet reached the solution of a problem which to its students must be specially attractive.

Whether the flame which kindled on Sodom and the guilty cities and consumed them, the inflammable bitumen entering largely into the composition of their walls, devoured also the adjacent Vale of Siddim, whose soil, abounding with asphalt-wells, would under a storm of fire be a magazine of quench-

less fuel, and thus burned out a chasm, which in whole or in part, now forms the lagoon ; or whether some volcanic convulsion, an agency of which that region has been the known theatre, upheaved the combustible strata, exposing them to the action of fire, and thus secured the result, each supposition confirming the sacred narrative that as Abraham, from his high point of observation surveying the terrible destruction, "looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and behold, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace"; or whether, in connection with the destruction of the cities by fire, some earthquake-throe, such as that stupendous crevasse has more than once felt, sunk a portion of the soil out of sight, leaving the stagnant waters above as its memorial, cannot now be known. The agency which destroyed the cities was plainly igneous. The agency which converted the Vale of Siddim into a sheet of water is not stated. Any theory is admissible which consistently explains the two facts.

The submergence of the Vale of Siddim and the submergence of the cities of the plain, or of their site, are distinct questions, because the cities were not in this valley. On this point we concur with the judicious Reland :

"The inspired writer does not say that the five cities, Sodom and the rest, were situated in the valley of Siddim ; on the contrary, the text (Gen. xiv. 3) leads to an opposite conclusion ; since the kings of these five cities, after having collected their armies, joined together towards the valley of Siddim. Supposing the translation to be *in* the valley, the meaning is still the same. The probability is, then, that the valley of Siddim was quite distinct from the country in which the five cities were situated" (Palestine, i 151).

We see not how any other opinion than this could have obtained currency among scholars. The vale and the territory of the cities, though distinct, were evidently contiguous and may have shared, and to some extent probably did share, a common catastrophe. The former may have been consumed with the latter, or the latter may have been depressed with the former. Neither the exact location nor extent of the Vale of Siddim can be ascertained. If it covered the whole

breadth of the southern part of the sea, the plain which borders on the south, ten miles long by six broad, was ample enough for the cities; but in all probability it was confined to a part of its width, leaving the rest for fruitful fields and walled towns, the sites of which are entombed by the sea. The vale was the battle-field between Chedorlaomer and his allies, and the confederate kings of the cities; and as the invaders apparently menaced the cities from the present point of Ain Jidy, and the kings went forth to meet them in this vale, it must have lain west or north of the cities.

If the rich vegetation of the well-watered plain of the Jordan, on whose tropical luxuriance Lot looked down from the highlands of Jordan, extended southward skirting fresh water along the site of a part of the present basin of the Salt Sea, and embosoming the Vale of Siddim with the cities which bordered it, the allusions in the scripture narrative are all adjusted and explained. This theory encounters no historic difficulty, nor any insuperable scientific difficulty, so far as is known. If there be a fatal objection to it, it lies buried in that vast, mysterious fissure, and awaits the resurrection of some future explorer. Should geology ever compel the substitution of a different theory, we may expect from some quarter the additional light which will enable us to reconcile it with the inspired record. In the mean time we rest on this hypothesis.

#### *The Site of the Cities.*

The question which Mr. Grove has raised relative to the site of Sodom and the other cities is, as we have said, distinct from that of the submergence of a part of the valley. The latter, however, touched the former, at so many points, as to impose upon us the demand of a prior consideration. This we have given it, and are now ready to take up Mr. Grove's position already quoted, "That Sodom and the rest of the cities of the plain of Jordan stood north of the Dead Sea," a position which, so far as we know, is original and opposed to universal tradition.

The argument from the scripture narrative (Gen. xiii.) is this: that Abraham and Lot, standing on some eminence between Bethel and Ai, surveyed the fruitful plain of the Jordan on the East — the region north of the sea being visible from that point, while what is now the southern end of the sea would be invisible; and that Lot selected the plain thus visible below him as his residence, and descending to it pitched his tent near Sodom, one of the cities planted amid its verdure.

The scene of the conference between Abraham and Lot is not stated by the sacred writer, but would seem to have been near the spot above named. The inference stated is also natural, and if there were no special reason to question it, it would pass unchallenged. But the location of the cities is not so definitely given as to compel us to accept the inference. Nor is it fairly implied in the narrative that Lot's view took in the whole valley; he surveyed a section of it, which in its fruitfulness represented the whole. The argument assumes that there has been no essential change in the plain and the sea since that day, except what would result in the former from disuse of the artificial irrigation which then made it so fruitful. But the phrase "before the Lord destroyed," etc., plainly indicates a marked change in consequence of the event; and there certainly is nothing in the scripture narrative inconsistent with the general belief that the catastrophe of the cities, which destroyed also "the country," wrought a great and general change in "the land of Sodom and Gomorrah," thus turned "into ashes." If the cultivated plain or valley, with or without a lake of fresh water in a part of the present bed of the sea, then extended as far as the present southern limit of the sea and adjacent plain, and the cities were in that section of it, the fact would not conflict with the sacred record. If the passage cited (Gen. xiii.) does not countenance this view, neither does it contradict it. The host of writers, ancient and modern, who have firmly held it, have never felt that this passage offered any objection to it.

We will now give in order the main reasons (some of them

involved and implied in the preceding discussion) on which we ground our belief that Sodom lay south, and not north, of the Dead Sea.

### *Site of Zoar.*

1. Its proximity to Zoar. The theory which places Sodom in the northern plain takes Zoar along with it, and is as novel in this application as in the other. The confusion which Mr. Grove has exhibited in the discussion of Sodom, takes in that of Zoar the form of direct contradiction, as will appear from the two following extracts :

“ Zoar was the cradle of the race of Lot [A mistake; their “ cradle ” was higher]. Although the exact position of this town has not been determined, there is no doubt that it was situated on the southeastern border of the Dead Sea. From this centre the brother tribes spread themselves ” (Moab, ii. 391).

“ These considerations appear to the writer to render it highly probable that the Zoar of the Pentateuch was to the north of the Dead Sea, not far from its northern end, in the general parallel of Jericho ” (Zoar, iii. 1857).

The first of these positions we propose to establish in opposition to the second. We wholly concur in the statement which follows the sentence last quoted :

“ That it [Zoar] was on the east side of the valley seems to be implied in the fact that the descendants of Lot, the Moabites and Ammonites, are in possession of that country as their original seat when they first appear in the sacred history ” (Zoar, iii. 1857).

Zoar was a frontier town of Moab. The “ burden ” or wail of Moab which appears in the prophecy of Isaiah (xv.) and is repeated in that of Jeremiah (xlviii.), both possibly derived from a more ancient common source, associates the town with the territory, and Mr. Grove includes it in his list of the towns of Moab (Moab, ii. 399). The borders of Israel and Moab touched, as we know (Numb. xxiv. 3), near the south-east corner of the Salt Sea. Zoar, then, was east of the boundary, and Sodom west of it, and both were near it.

The first allusion to the spot (Gen. xiii. 10) accords entirely with the position which we advocate, and does not readily admit of any other construction. The sacred writer refers

to the extent of the watered and fruitful plain of Jordan, before the Lord destroyed the cities, "as thou comest unto Zoar." Like a later description, in which Zoar is a terminus, the reader naturally understands a reference to the southern extremity of the plain. If Zoar had been east of the Jordan, on a line with Jericho, the description would be unnatural. It might still be claimed to be an allusion to the breadth of the valley divided by the Jordan, but it would exclude the more pertinent and manifest allusion to its length. So far is this "narrative in Genesis" from seeming to "state positively" that the site "lay at the northern end of the Dead Sea," that it becomes unintelligible to us on any other hypothesis than that it lay at the southern end. And the description is perfectly natural, though the terminus was not actually visible.

The above interpretation, which Mr. Grove sets aside as impossible, he has himself put forward as unquestioned and unencumbered, and in another Article in the Dictionary it stands as his own. His exposition reads thus :

"The two Hebrews looked over the comparatively empty land in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, and Zoar (xiii. 10). And Lot lifted up his eyes toward the left, and beheld all the precinct of the Jordan that it was well-watered everywhere; like a garden of Jehovah, like that unutterably green and fertile land of Egypt he had only lately quitted, Even from that distance through the clear air of Palestine, can be distinctly discovered the long and thick masses of vegetation which fringe the numerous streams that descend from the hills on either side, to meet the central stream in its tropical depths. And what it now is immediately opposite Bethel, such it seems then to have been 'even to Zoar,' to the furthest extremity of the sea which now covers the 'valley of the fields' ('Valley of Siddim,' Siddim fields), the fields of Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot 'chose all the precinct of the Jordan, and journeyed east,' down the ravines which give access to the Jordan Valley; and then when he reached it, turned again southward and advanced as far as Sodom (xi. 12)" (Lot, ii. 144).

Besides the passages in Genesis and the two in the prophecies which have been referred to, Zoar is named in but one other place in the Bible (Deut. xxxiv. 3), and that is decisive against Mr. Grove's theory. Moses had ascended "the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against

Jericho," to take his view of the Promised Land. The Lord showed him its different sections, and among others "the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees unto Zoar." Mount Nebo has been identified, if we accept Mr. Tristram's selection, and if we do not, Mr. Grove has stated precisely where, on the testimony of the Bible, and also of Josephus (*Antiq.* iv. 8, § 48) and the Fathers, it must be, "facing Jericho on the east of Jordan" (*Dict.* ii. 480, 879). If, now, "the Zoar of the Pentateuch was to the north of the Dead Sea, not far from its northern end, in the general parallel of Jericho," "on the east side, of the valley," it must have lain between Jericho and Nebo, near the base of the latter, a supposition which renders unintelligible the descriptive sketch just quoted, as also Mr. Grove's own declaration, that the site which, on this theory, thus lay directly below the prophet-leader, was "one of the landmarks which bounded his view from Pisgah" (*Zoar*, iii. 1856).

The two definite references in the Pentateuch to the extent of the plain obviously mean the same. They both describe it as seen lengthwise from northern summits, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side, of the valley. The incredible feature of Mr. Grove's theory is, that it makes Lot and Moses look across the plain of the Jordan eastward and westward on the same parallel, extending in both cases "unto Zoar," though one viewed it from the western hills, and the other from the eastern.

Has Mr. Grove considered, withal, the relation of the river Jordan to his theory? Lot was admonished not to tarry in the plain, but escape with all haste to the mountain — flee, that is, from the plain west of the river in the territory of Canaan, where Mr. Grove places Sodom, to the mountain on the further border of the plain east of the river in the territory of Moab, near which he places Zoar, crossing with his family, without any apparent facilities, the deep and rapid river.

Lot subsequently ascended the mountain and dwelt in a cave with his daughters; and thence sprung the mountain-

tribes of Moab and Ammon. The heights southeast of the Dead Sea have been the traditional seat and radiating "centre," as stated by Mr. Grove, of these "brother tribes." They pushed northward and eastward and spread over a large territory, keeping distinct, and the former were afterwards dispossessed of theirs as far south as the line of the Arnon by the Amorites, but retained their original fastnesses (Numb. xxi. 26). This natural interpretation of the sacred record is sustained by Ritter, who has sketched with great clearness the territories and courses of conquest of the "tribes outside of Canaan" (Geog. of Palestine ii. 149, 151).

The opposite view which Mr. Grove brings forward in one place is refuted by himself in another, as will be seen from these extracts :

"It is also in favor of its [Zoar's] position north of the Dead Sea, that the earliest information as to the Moabites makes their original seat in the plains of Heshbon, northeast of the lake, not as afterwards in the mountains on the southeast, to which they were driven by the Amorites (Num. xxi. 26") (Zoar, iii. 1857).

"The warlike Amorites, either forced from their original seats on the west, or perhaps lured over by the increasing prosperity of the young nation, crossed the Jordan, and overran the wider portion of the territory on the north, driving Moab back to his original position behind the natural bulwark of the Arnon" (Moab, ii. 392).

In the former of these passages, the "original seat" of the Moabites is represented to have been northeast of the sea. In the latter their "original position" is represented to have been southeast of the sea, and again, in the same Article, "the southeastern border of the Dead Sea" is spoken of as "their original seat." In the former they are said to have been driven by the Amorites out of their original seat; and in the latter they are said to have been driven by the same into their original position. This is the third distinct point, each of them an essential point in the history which we are discussing, and each of them resting on evidence distinct from that of the others, on which this eminent writer has expressed conflicting opinions while the publication of the Dictionary was in progress, in each instance denying his previous position

without recalling and renouncing it. With all his ability and affluence as a writer on biblical topics, these inconsistencies, repeatedly occurring in the same work, and unexplained, must weaken his authority on biblical questions. We accept the second interpretation quoted above as that which lies on the face of the sacred narrative, and has been received by all biblical students, including Mr. Grove until he was bewildered by his new theory. We have topographical confirmation of its truth. In the highlands above what we claim to have been the site of Zoar, are identified at this day, the ruins of the strongholds, Kir of Moab and Ar of Moab. To remove the cradle of these tribes northward is to disturb and dislocate the associations and allusions of the sacred writers, as universally understood by their readers.

Mr. Grove suggests that the locality assigned to Zoar would make it too far distant from Sodom, "assuming that Sodom was where all topographers seem to concur in placing it, at the salt ridge of Usdum" (Sodom, iii. 1340); and assuming, too, the necessity of the present circuitous route. While we recognize in the name of this singular mountain a memorial of ancient Sodom, it is not necessary to suppose that it designates the exact site of the city, nor is it certain that Zoar lay at the mouth of Wady Kerak. We only claim that both places lay not very far from a point southeast of the Dead Sea, and this we think demonstrable. We would suggest to Mr. Grove that a fugitive family might even reach Wady ed-Dra'a from near the site of Khashm Usdum with less difficulty and in less time (especially in the direct line which may then have been practicable) than they could cross the Jordan and reach the base of the eastern mountains on the parallel of Jericho.

The allusions to this site by Josephus are explicit. He says: "It is to this day called Zoar" (Antiq. i. 11, § 4). In describing the lake Asphaltites, he says: "It extended as far as Zoar in Arabia" (Bel. Jud. iv. 8, § 4) by which he plainly designates its southern point; conformably with his own definition, "Arabia is a country that borders upon Judea" (Antiq. xiv. 1, § 4).

Ritter, with his usual thoroughness, collates the early post-biblical testimony, and says :

“ Zoar is the very ancient name of one of the five cities which stood on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, and was the only one of the five which did not perish at the time of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It can only be looked for at the southern extremity of the Dead Sea. At the time of Ptolemy, Zoar was the single remaining city of the ancient Pentapolis. Stephen Byz. states that in his time it was a large place and a noted stronghold. Jerome says of it that it is a populous city of the Moabites, bearing the usual name of Bala; that it is the smallest of the cities mentioned, whence Jerome derives the name. He says further, that now it bears the name Zoar, or Tsoar, among the Syrians, but that the Hebrews call it Segor ” (*Geog. of Palestine*, i. 27-31).

These writers have been followed by crusaders and later historians and travellers, all concurring in placing the site of Zoar near the southeast corner of the Dead Sea.

Mr. Grove quotes two “mediaeval travellers” as apparent exceptions to this general current of testimony and belief (*Zoar*, iii. 1858). Only one of them wrote from personal observation, and both are nearly unintelligible. Their confused testimony, on which he lays no stress, is not worth sifting; and that it has no weight with him is evident from his admission in another place :

“ It will there be shown that grounds exist for believing that the Zoar of Josephus, Jerome, and the crusaders, which probably lay where Dr. Robinson places it, was not the Zoar of Lot ” (*Sodom*, iii. 1340).

This last point is really the issue which he raises, and he avows in this place that he does it with much diffidence. Our readers will decide whether the judgment of these early writers, Jewish and Christian, is sustained by the scriptural references which we have cited, and whether it is seriously impeached from any quarter whatever.

The cautious Dr. Robinson, who devoted a special paper to the site of Zoar (*Bib. Res.* ii. 648-651), speaks of it without references in his latest work as an ascertained site :

“ Zoar, as we know, was in the mouth of Wady Kerak, as it opens upon the neck of the peninsula ” (*Phys. Geog.*, etc., 233).

While this may have been the exact site of Zoar, we have

no data which give us absolute knowledge, and probably never shall have. The Professor's earlier conclusion was impregnable :

" All these circumstances seem to me decisive as to the position of Zoar on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, at the foot of the mountains near its southern end " (Bib. Res. ii. 649).

This is not more positive than Mr. Grove's original statement, in which we think he will again take refuge after his wanderings, finding no rest for the sole of his foot in the Jordanic or trans-Jordanic country :

" There is no doubt that it [Zoar] was situated on the southeastern border of the Dead Sea " (Moab, ii. 391).

#### MR. TRISTRAM'S POSITIONS.

Instead of proceeding at once with the arguments, of which the site of Zoar is the first, in reply to Mr. Grove's theory, we deem this the most suitable place to take up and examine Mr. Tristram's positions on the same side, the first being in substance, identical with Mr. Grove's :

1. " First there is the uniform expression, ' the Cities of the Plain,' or plain of Jordan, Heb. ' ciccâr,' i.e. the circle of Jordan, most appropriate, as all those will know who have gazed on the circle from the surrounding mountain tops, but wholly inapplicable, and one which never was and never could be, by any stretch of language, applied to the south end of the sea, where the Jordan never flowed, or, if it ever did, it must have been in a geologic epoch far remote from the appearance of man on the earth. Abraham and Lot stood together between Bethel and Hai, where ' Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan ; and Lot journeyed east ' (Gen. xiii. 10, 11). Now from these hills it is impossible to gain a glimpse of the south end of the Dead Sea, shut off by distance and by lofty intervening mountains, while the plain of Jericho is spread almost at the beholder's feet, and the bright green oasis of Ain Sultan shines like an emerald in the dreary waste. If the two fountains of Sultan and Duk can produce such amazing verdure by their waters in their present neglected exuberance, what must not the whole plain have been when it was well watered everywhere ' even as the garden of the Lord,' seeing that its whole subsoil, to the very edge of the seas, is, as has been before mentioned, a rich alluvial loam " (Land of Israel, 360, 361).

There is no question of the ancient fertility and present productive capability of the whole Jordan valley. If Mr. Tristram can prove that the present saltness of the sea and the present sterility of its shores existed before the catastrophe of the cities, we will concede all which he states above and all which he would infer from it. But if fresh water, verdure, and fruitfulness, as described above, anciently extended through the Ghôr to its southern limit, then it is not "any stretch of language," but a natural and appropriate designation, to apply to the whole expanse the descriptive sketch of the sacred historian. That this was the ancient condition of the whole plain or valley, we hold with Ritter, Robinson, Stanley, and others, as a view not only countenanced but required by the sacred record. And we accept Mr. Grove's conclusion, that the bearing of "the geological argument" on this theory "cannot be decided in the present condition of our knowledge" (Dict. iii. 1340).

2. "Again, after the destruction of the cities, we are told that Abraham when encamped at Mamre, 'looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace' (Gen. xix. 28). It is not here stated — and we mark the verbal accuracy of the scripture text — that Abraham saw, but that he looked toward the cities of the plain. From personal observation we may add that, while from the hill above Mamre the plain itself is invisible, yet the depression between the nearer hills and the distant tops of Ajlun is plainly to be perceived, which is not the case with the depression of the southern Ghôr, and that therefore Abraham could have at once identified the locality whence the smoke arose" (Land of Israel, 361).

Any hill which Abraham could have reached by an early morning walk or ride from Hebron must have been nearly opposite the middle of the sea as it now is; and if the lagoon were then land, it would be nearer that point than the other. The bed of the valley was not visible at either end, but if either section were involved in a general conflagration he could easily have "identified the locality." Besides, he had a divine intimation that the cities were to be destroyed, and knew very well "whence the smoke arose." Mr. Tristram's

explorations in "the southern Ghôr," to which we shall soon refer, throw some light upon this exposition.

3. "Again, in the account of the inroad of Chedorlaomer, we are told that the Assyrians smote the Horites in Mount Seir unto El-Paran, and returned and smote the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites that dwell in Hazezon-Tamar (Gen. xiv. 7). Hazezon-Tamar, we know, is Engedi. It was after this that the king of Sodom and his confederates met the invaders in the vale of Siddim, and on their defeat Abraham pursued the victors on their march home by Damascus, and overtook them in Dan. Had Sodom and the other cities been situated at the south end of the sea, it was certainly not after smiting the Amalekites and the Amorites at Engedi that they would have met the invader, but long before he reached Hazezon-Tamar. But when we place these cities in the plain of the Jordan, there is a topographical sequence in the whole story, while Abraham and his allies hurriedly pursue the plunderers up the Ghôr without delay or impediment till they overtake them at the sources of the Jordan" (Land of Israel, 362).

It is here claimed that if the cities had been at the south end, their kings would have met the invaders before the latter took Engedi. We cannot see any ground for this claim. The northern invaders, after making the distant circuit of the valley on the east and south, came up on the west and smote Engedi and secured that pass. The cities and their kings were in the deep valley below, whether north or south or opposite is wholly immaterial, so far as we can discover, in relation either to the previous route of conquest or to the subsequent "topographical sequence" of the story. Between the cities, wherever situated, and Engedi, lay "the green vale" in which the battle was fought. Did not Mr. Tristram overlook the necessity of an intervening vale in his location of Zoar?

The three points named are familiar, of course, to all who have held the old view, which they have construed them as sustaining, certainly not as invalidating. The remaining argument is in part original.

4. "Once more, in the view that was granted to Moses from the top of Pisgah, he beheld 'the south and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar.' Now, from the summit of Nebo it is utterly impossible to behold the southeast of the Dead Sea, or the situation of the

modern Dra'a; but if we place Zoar, as it naturally would be placed according to the narrative of Lot's escape, at the foot of the hill, between Wady Dabur and Ras Feshkhah, we see that here was just the limit of Moses's view, in accordance with the record. As we gazed from the top of Nebo, the plain of Jordan seemed to run on interruptedly till it was cut off by the headland of Feshkhah, and the force and literalness of the scriptural description of the panorama came vividly home to our minds" (Land of Israel, 362).

Mr. Tristram cannot be positive that he stood on Nebo, and that his view was identical with the vision of Moses. Granting that it was, it was more extended and detailed, and meets the conditions of the scriptural narrative more fully than we had before known. No one can have imagined that the southeast border of the Dead Sea and the walls of Zoar at that point were visible to the prophet from the top of Pisgah, unless, as suggested by Mr. Melvill in his sermon on the "Death of Moses," his vision was aided by God who was with his servant on that lonely summit. The suggestion of Dean Stanley on this point commends itself to us. He says:

"It was a view, doubtless, which in its full extent was to be imagined, rather than actually seen. The foreground of the picture alone was clearly discernible; its dim distances were to be supplied by what was beyond, though suggested by what was within, the range of the actual prospect of the seer" (Sinai and Palestine, 295).

Mr. Tristram's own description is as full a confirmation of the sacred record as we had ever anticipated from a visitor who should identify the locality and describe the scene. Of this section of the view he says:

"Still turning westward, in front of us, two or three lines of terraces reduced the height of the plateau as it descended to the Dead Sea, the western outline of which we could trace, in its full extent, from Usdum to Feshkhah. It lay like a long strip of molten metal, with the sun mirrored on its surface, waving and undulating in its further edge, unseen in its eastern limits, as though poured from some deep cavern beneath our feet. Then, almost in the centre of the line, a break in the ridge, and a green spot below, marked Engedi, the rest once of the Kenite, now of the wild goat" (Land of Israel, 537, 538).

Mr. Grove proposed to place Zoar "in the general parallel of Jericho, on the east side of the valley." Mr. Tristram

proposes to place it on the west side of the valley, south of Jericho. He suggests this location without any trace of name or ruin, or any hint of history or tradition. The locality would exactly suit his theory, which is all that can be said in its favor. This he supposes to have been the Zoar of scripture; but he suggests that another may have existed on the other side of the sea. He says:

“There is no difficulty in supposing either that there were two Zoars at the same time, or that a new town sprung up in a different locality, and assumed the name of the elder. How many Kadeshes, Gilgals, or Shalams may we not find through the country, like the Newtons or Suttons of England?” (Land of Israel, 360.)

Certainly “there is no difficulty in supposing” a dozen Zoars, only we actually know of but one; and we want something more than supposition. When we “find” (mark the term) two Zoars, or half a dozen, as we do Gibeahs and Ramahs, we will note them, and decide, if we can, which is the Zoar of the Pentateuch. Even the Frenchman, whose lively fancy located all the cities of the Pentapolis, though satisfied with slightest allusions or appearances, recognized the necessity of some sort of a trace of a site. He did not build on pure hypothesis; nor is it by such a process that the map of ancient Palestine is to be reconstructed. In selecting this site, without any indication, local or traditional, Mr. Tristram sets aside without answering it, the array of evidence convincing to Mr. Grove, as to the writers of note who preceded him, which makes the Zoar of the Pentateuch a town of Moab on the east side of the valley. He escapes the difficulty in the record of Moses’s view from Nebo, which is fatal to Mr. Grove’s theory, but he runs into an equal difficulty on the other side, and in accommodating Moses with the vision of Zoar, he leaves Lot unprovided for. For any actual sight of the place from the highlands of northern Judea, it might as well have been a thousand leagues distant, as below the mountains which overhang the western plain, where Mr. Tristram places it.

The distinction which Mr. Grove ventures to suggest be-

tween the "Zoar of Lot" and the "Zoar of Josephus," Mr. Tristram must establish between the Zoar of the Pentateuch and the Zoar of the prophets. By no possible interpretation can the plaintive cry and panic flight, recorded in "the burden of Moab," be associated with a city off on the northwestern shore of the sea :

"My heart shall cry out for Moab ; his fugitives shall flee unto Zoar, an heifer of three years old ; for by the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall they go it up ; for in the way of Horonaim, they shall raise up a cry of destruction" (*Isa. xv. 5*). From the cry of Heshbon even unto Elealah, and even unto Jahaz, have they uttered their voice, from Zoar even unto Horonaim, as an heifer of three years old ; for the waters also of Nimrim shall be desolate" (*Jer. xlvi. 34*).

In fixing the site of Zoar here, Mr. Tristram has to account for the mountain near Zoar, the refuge of Lot and his daughters and the birthplace of their offspring, and his theory does not shrink from the only alternative. He says :

"We are told that Lot afterwards went out of Zoar, and dwelt in a mountain in a cave (*Gen. xix. 30*). Zoar, we know, must have been near Sodom, from the short time in which Lot was able on foot to reach it ; and as his offspring were the founders of Moab and Ammon, it may be argued that his place of refuge should have been on the eastern side, where those two nations afterwards settled. But apart from the fact of a Zoar on the east being invisible from Nebo, the steep faces of the mountains which overhang the western plain are studded with caves, only a portion of which have been adopted by the hermits for their troglodyte dwellings, and in some of which may have been the safe refuge of Lot. That Moab and Ben-ammi should have afterwards settled on the opposite side of the Ghôr is not surprising, when we recollect that Western Canaan was thickly inhabited, that 'the Amorite was then in the land,' and there could be no difficulty in their crossing the river, as is continually done by the inhabitants of the eastern side to the present day" (*Land of Israel, 360*).

This suggestion, unsupported by any fact or hint, has been answered in advance by Mr. Grove, in a passage already quoted. These tribes first appear in history on the eastern mountains as their original seat, and Mr. Tristram's transportation of them thither, bodily, from the western side, is quite gratuitous.

We have now given Mr. Tristram's arguments, and have only to notice his concluding suggestion. He says :

"It is very possible that some of the cities of the Pentapolis may have been on the east side of the river, in the plain of Shittim, which is quite as luxuriant, and as abundantly watered as the western plain of Jericho. On that side, likewise, there is the broad belt of desolation, like the sulphur-sprinkled expanse between er-Riha and the sea, covered with layers of salt and gypsum, which overlie the loamy subsoil, literally fulfilling the description of holy writ, 'Brimstone and salt and burning, . . . . not sown nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein' (Deut. xxix. 23). 'A fruitful land turned into saltness' (Ps. cvii. 34). 'No man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it' (Jer. xlix. 18)." (Land of Israel, 363).

There are desolate tracts, once fertile, in the Jordan valley, caused by the lack of artificial irrigation, "now barren, but merely so from neglect"; "all that is required to restore fertility is the utilization of the abundant fountains," as Mr. Tristram elsewhere says, and the former culture would make the whole plain fruitful as before.

Mr. Tristram, after converting the only Moabite city of the Pentapolis into a Canaanite, here proposes to pass some of the other four, which were Canaanite, through a similar transformation, disregarding both his own allusions to Shittim as Moabite territory, as well as the scripture designations (Numb. xxxiii. 50, 51; Exod. xvi. 35; Josh. v. 2; xxii. 11), and Mr. Grove's definitions:

"Canaan; a name denoting the country west of the Jordan and the Dead Sea" (Dict. i. 246).

"The four cities [Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim] are first named in the ethnological records of Gen. x. 19, as belonging to the Canaanites" (Dict. iii. 1338).

"Shittim; it was in the Arabah or Jordan valley, at that part of the Arabah which belonged to and bore the name of Moab" (Dict. iii. 1296).

If the passages which Mr. Tristram quotes as "fulfilled" on the east side, describe the site of Sodom, as expressly stated by the sacred writers, he, like Mr. Grove, is under the necessity of getting the fugitives from it across the Jordan, only passing them the other way, hastening them, not to the eastern mountains, but to the distant hills west and south. After Mr. Tristram's experience in fording and swimming the Jordan (520 seq.), a theory which takes the women of the fleeing household across the stream in either direction, afoot and

without animals, would seem to leave them dependent on the kind offices of the attendant angels.

Our readers can now form a complete estimate of Mr. Tristram's arguments and speculations on this topic. It might well strengthen Mr. Grove's confidence, faltering at times in his theory, that a writer and observer of such ability and discernment should so promptly give in his adhesion to it. But the conflicting views and inherent difficulties which it has developed, incline us to the opinion that the new theory gains, on the whole, no real support from its first convert, and we suspect that its author will think the same. We now resume our direct argument in reply to Mr. Grove.

#### FURTHER ARGUMENTS IN REPLY.

1. The site of Zoar determines that of Sodom, which was so near it that it could be reached by flight between the early dawn and the broad daylight after the sun had risen over the mountains, and it was exposed to the same catastrophe, being saved by special interposition. If Zoar was in the district in which we have placed it, Sodom was south, and not north, of the sea. But on this point we offer further and cumulative evidence.

2. The names suggestive of identity with the original sites which adhere to the localities around the southern end of the sea, and of which we have no certain traces around the northern end. Mr. Grove concedes the force of this fact, and instances such names as Usdum, 'Amrah, Dra'a, and Zoghal (Sodom, iii. 1340).

3. The existence and peculiar features of the salt mountain south of the sea, with no corresponding object north of it. This, too, Mr. Grove acknowledges as "perhaps the weightiest argument" against the theory which he proposes, and refers particularly to the tendency of the mountain "to split off in columnar masses, presenting a rude resemblance to the human form" (*Ib*). If not more weighty than some other reasons, the fact named is certainly remarkable in connection with the sacred narrative, and irresistibly associates the flight of Lot and the fate of his wife, with this locality.

4. The living fountains and streams of fresh water which flow into the plain south of the sea, correspondent with its original features, if it was the southern extremity of the plain of Jordan which Lot surveyed, "well-watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar" (Gen. xiii. 10). This is a feature which Dr. Robinson specially noted :

"Even to the present day more living streams flow into the Ghôr, at the south end of the sea, from wadys of the eastern mountains, than are found so near together in all Palestine besides" (Phys. Geog. 234).

Mr. Tristram's observations of the soil below the surface, both at the foot of Jebel-Usdum, and in the salt marsh, confirm the theory that the whole region was once fruitful. He says :

"We collected specimens of the soil at the depth of two feet from the surface, where it is a rich greasy loam, but strongly impregnated with salt." "At the depth of eighteen inches in the plain, the soil was a fat, greasy loam" (Land of Israel, 322, 335).

Before this rich alluvial soil was covered with the saline incrustation of the marsh and water of the lagoon, we have an image of the fertility and beauty of the whole expanse, in Mr. Tristram's description of the present luxuriance of the oasis on the eastern border :

"All teemed with a prodigality of life. It was, in fact, a reproduction of the oasis of Jericho, in a far more tropical climate, and with yet more lavish supply of water. . . . For three miles we rode through these rich groves, revelling in the tropical verdure and swarming ornithology of its labyrinths" (Land of Israel, 336).

5. The testimony of unbroken tradition, ancient and modern. Strabo, Josephus, Tacitus, Galen, Jerome, Eusebius, "mediaeval historians and pilgrims, and modern topographers without exception," — is the formidable array which Mr. Grove proposes to turn aside by an interpretation, plausible in itself, of a single passage of scripture, which offers no bar to their unanimous verdict, and which seems to us even to require it.

Strabo, whom we have quoted in part, places the country containing the cities, "the capital of which was Sodom," "near Moasada" (Judea iii. 183); and as the site of Masada is unquestioned, this compels its location in the southern part of the valley.

Josephus, besides the testimony which we have already given, in describing the mountain range which overhangs Jericho, says:

"It extends itself to the land about Scythopolis northward, but as far as the country of Sodom and the utmost limits of the lake Asphaltites southward" (Bel. Jud. iv. 8, § 2).

This is decisive respecting both points, showing unmistakably (and he represents the national belief) that the reputed site of Sodom was not north near Jericho, and that it was south near the southern limits of the sea. In his account of the overthrow of Sodom he says:

"But Lot's wife was changed into a pillar of salt, for I have seen it, and it remains at this day" (Antiq. i. 11, § 4).

The remarkable salt-mountain and its singular pillars, one of which was sketched by Lynch, would seem to restrict this allusion to the southern end of the sea.

The testimony of Tacitus, which will soon be given, is introduced in a connection which makes it evident that he is describing the country adjacent to the south end of the lake.

The testimony of Galen, referring to the salt gathered at the Dead Sea is:

"They call it Sodom-salt, from the mountains adjacent to the lake, which are called Sodom" (de Simp. Med. Fac. iv. 19).

The reference can be no other than to Jebel-Usdum, south of the sea. The phrase "Sodomitish sea" (2 Esdr. v. 7) probably has a similar origin.

The later testimonies are in the same direction, and need not be given in detail. The whole series, of course, does not amount to positive proof, but it is so universal and unvarying that it has not a little value as corroborative evidence.

6. There remains a combined topographical and historical  
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argument which to us appears conclusive. No event has perhaps occurred on the globe more fitted to leave a permanent scar on its surface than the conflagration of the cities of the plain and the plain together. Of no recorded occurrence except perhaps the deluge, might we reasonably look for clearer traces. It was a catastrophe so dire that it became a standing comparison for signal and overwhelming destruction, and would naturally leave a perpetual mark on the valley which bore it. This impression, which every reader would receive from the original narrative, is confirmed by every succeeding notice of it and of the locality. The event occurred about nineteen centuries before Christ, and the fertile and populous plain was at once made desolate and tenantless. This is the record :

“ Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven ; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground ” (Gen. xix. 24, 25).

About four and a half centuries later, Moses, warning the Israelites against apostasy, admonishes them that the judgments of God for idolatry would make their country so desolate that a visitor would find its condition portrayed in these words :

“ And the whole land thereof is brimstone and salt and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein ; like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger and in his wrath ” (Deut. xxix. 23).

The above is a picture of the site of Sodom as it appeared at that period. About seven centuries later the prophet Isaiah illustrates the destruction of Babylon by the same comparison :

“ And Babylon shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation ; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there ; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there ” (Isa. xiii. 19, 20).

A little more than a century later the prophet Jeremiah uses the same historic standard to measure the doom of Edom :

"Also Edom shall be a desolation; every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor cities thereof, saith the Lord, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it" (Jer. xlix. 17, 18).

This passage, like the preceding, exhibits the region as still desolate and deserted. The same century the prophet Zephaniah brings the future of two other nations to the same comparison:

"Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and salt-pits, and a perpetual desolation" (Zeph. ii. 9).

These phrases are descriptive of the appearance of the site of Sodom, through the Old Testament history. In one of the apocryphal books we find Assyria brought to the same comparison:

"Wo be unto thee, Assur; remember what I did unto Sodom and Gomorrah, whose land lieth in clods of pitch and heaps of ashes" (2 Esdras, ii. 8, 9).

And in another apocryphal book, Wisdom of Solomon, we find this reference:

"When the ungodly perished, she delivered the righteous man, who fled from the fire which fell down upon the five cities; of whose wickedness even to this day the waste land that smoketh is a testimony, and plants bearing fruits that never come to ripeness; and a standing pillar of salt is a monument of an unbelieving soul" (Wisd. x. 6, 7).

The geographer Strabo, giving "the common tradition of the natives," speaks of "rocks having the marks of fire; fissures in many places; a soil like ashes; pitch falling in drops from the rocks; rivers boiling up and emitting a fetid odor," etc.; and allowing that these, like most traditions, are exaggerations, the question remains: Of the features of what locality are they the least exaggeration?

The testimony of Josephus bears on this point as on others. After describing the lake he says:

"Adjoining it is Sodomitis, once a blessed region abounding in produce and in cities, but now entirely burnt up. They say that it was destroyed by lightning for the impiety of its inhabitants. And even to this day the

relics of the divine fire, and the traces of five cities are to be seen there, and moreover the ashes reappear even in the fruit" (Bel. Jud. iv. 8, § 4).

The Roman historian, Tacitus, gives the following sketch of the country in his day :

" At a small distance from the lake lie those plains which tradition says were once a rich and fruitful country, abounding with populous cities, but long since destroyed by fire from heaven, and now a barren desert. Amidst the ruins which still remain, we are told that the marks of celestial vengeance may be clearly traced, and that the soil, consumed and parched, has lost the power of vegetation" (Hist. v. 7).

In the New Testament we find the apostles Peter (2 Pet. ii. 6) and Jude (7) setting forth the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah as a perpetual example and warning, implying, though with a fuller meaning, all which is expressed in the references of the Old Testament. No historic proof can be more clear and complete, than that the site of Sodom, from the time of its destruction to the Christian era, and subsequently, was a blasted region, an utter desolation.

With these historical and physical delineations before us, it is only necessary to call attention to the aspect of the two sites which we have been discussing, to settle the question of identity. The south end of the sea and its surroundings present at this day such an appearance as the scriptural statements above cited would lead us to expect. The entire southwest coast and adjacent territory from above Sebbeh round to the fertile border of the Ghôr es-Sâfiéh on the extreme southeast, relieved at a single point by the verdure of the small oasis of Zuweirah, is, and has been, from the time of Sodom's destruction, the image of enthroned desolation. The sombre wildness and desolateness of the whole scene; the tokens of volcanic action, or of some similar natural convulsion; the Sodom mountain, a mass of crystalized salt, furrowed into fantastic ridges and pillars; the craggy sunburnt precipices and ravines on the west; the valley below Usdum, with the mingled sand, sulphur, and bitumen, which have been washed down the gorges; the marshy plain of the adjacent Sabkah, with its briny drainings, " destitute of

every species of vegetation"; the stagnant sea, with its border of dead driftwood; the sulphurous odors; "the sterility and death-like solitude" (Robinson); "desolation, elsewhere partial, here supreme"; "nothing in the Sahara more desolate" (Tristram); "the unmitigated desolation" (Lynch); "scorched and desolate tract" (W.); "desolation which, perhaps, cannot be exceeded anywhere upon the face of the earth" (Grove); "utter and stern desolation, such as the mind can scarcely conceive" (Porter); these and the like features impress all visitors as a fit memorial of such a catastrophe as the sacred writers have recorded. Whether we accept or not certain localities as particular sites, the *tout ensemble* is a most striking confirmation of the narrative.

The more detailed explorations of the region confirm the impression which its general appearance conveys. Mr. Tristram, who bestowed upon the whole locality a careful scientific examination, thinks that he discovered in the deposits of the Wady Mahawat, a broad deep ravine at the north end of Jebel-Usdum, traces of the agency which destroyed the cities. He says:

"There are exposed on the sides of the wady, and chiefly on the south, large masses of bitumen, mingled with gravel. These overlie a thin stratum of sulphur, which again overlies a thick stratum of sand, so strongly impregnated with sulphur that it yields powerful fumes on being sprinkled over a hot coal. Many great blocks of the bitumen have been washed down the gorge, and lie scattered on the plain below, along with huge boulders and other traces of tremendous floods. The phenomenon commences about half a mile from where the wady opens up on the plain, and may be traced at irregular intervals for nearly a mile further up. The bitumen has many small water-worn stones and pebbles embedded in it." "Again, the bitumen, unlike that which we pick up on the shore, is strongly impregnated with sulphur, and yields an overpowering sulphurous odor; above all, it is calcined, and bears the marks of having been subjected to extreme heat."

"I have a great dread of seeking forced corroborations of scriptural statements from questionable physical evidence, for the sceptic is apt to imagine that when he has refuted the wrong argument adduced in support of a scriptural statement, he has refuted the scriptural statement itself; but, so far as I can understand this deposit, if there be any physical evidence left of the catastrophe which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, or of similar occurrences, we have it here. The whole appearance points to a shower

of hot sulphur and an irruption of bitumen upon it, which would naturally be calcined and impregnated by its fumes; and this at a geologic period quite subsequent to all the diluvial and alluvial action of which we have such abundant evidence. The vestiges remain exactly as the last relics of a snow-drift remain in spring — an atmospheric deposit. The catastrophe must have been since the formation of the wady, since the deposition of the marl, and while the water was at its present level; therefore probably during the historic period" (Land of Israel, 354-357).

Our only surprise is, that the intelligent observer who finds these probable tokens "of the catastrophe which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah" in the very locality near which on other grounds we think these cities must have stood, should himself place them full fifty miles distant. He has proved to his own satisfaction that the smoke which Abraham saw ascended from the northern end of the sea; but if his interesting discovery is reliable, there must have been some "smoke," as well as "extreme heat," at the southern end. If in these and similar features we have not physical evidence of the visitation which destroyed Sodom, we have just such material phenomena as we should naturally look for in a territory which had been the theatre of such a catastrophe, and whose subsequent condition had been described in the passages which have been cited.

We turn now to the other proposed site, the country north of the sea, and we find neither names of the places nor traces of the events embraced in the scriptural record. Instead of a territory scathed as by hot thunderbolts, we find a district teeming with all the elements of fruitfulness. In the very year that Moses describes the site of the destroyed cities as brimstone and salt and burning, Joshua brings the hosts of Israel to the territory which Mr. Grove proposes as the site of these cities, and finds there forests of palm and fields of barley, "old corn and parched corn," supplies of grain and fruit for the multitude, which enable them to dispense with the manna. Through the succeeding centuries important cities stood on this territory. It was here that the assembled nation, with sacrificial offerings and rejoicings, invested Saul with the kingdom (1 Sam. xi. 15); and here were gathered

schools of the prophets (2 Kings ii. 5 ; iv. 38). Josephus gives glowing descriptions of the exuberant productiveness of this very district, speaks of the variety of its trees and herbs, and refers to the revenue which it yielded (Antiq. xv. 4, § 2), describes it as the garden of Palestine, and even calls it a "divine region" (Bel. Jud. iv. 8, § 3). This plain or valley is now marked by a belt of luxuriant vegetation along the sweet waters of the river, while the interval between it and the highlands on each side, though arid in the dry season from the great heat, and presenting from this cause broad, desolate strips, is yet susceptible of irrigation and high cultivation. Not a token do we find here either of the awful catastrophe in which the guilty cities, with the plain on which they stood, were consumed, or of the perpetual desolation which subsequently brooded over the scene. We find the opposite; and in contrast with the descriptions which we have given of travellers who have visited the district south of the sea we quote the expression of the latest visitor to the district north of it who refers to "the verdant meadows on each side" (Porter, Bashan, etc., 112).

Can there be a question which of these two sites is, and which is not, that of the historic Sodom? This combined topographical and historical argument against the pretensions of the new site, and in favor of the identity of the old, appears to us as conclusive as it well could be with reference to an event which occurred nearly four thousand years ago, decisive in itself, and jointly with other proofs potent enough to silence discussion.