



GEOGRAPHY
AND NATURAL HISTORY
OF PALESTINE
BY THE
REV. DR. COX

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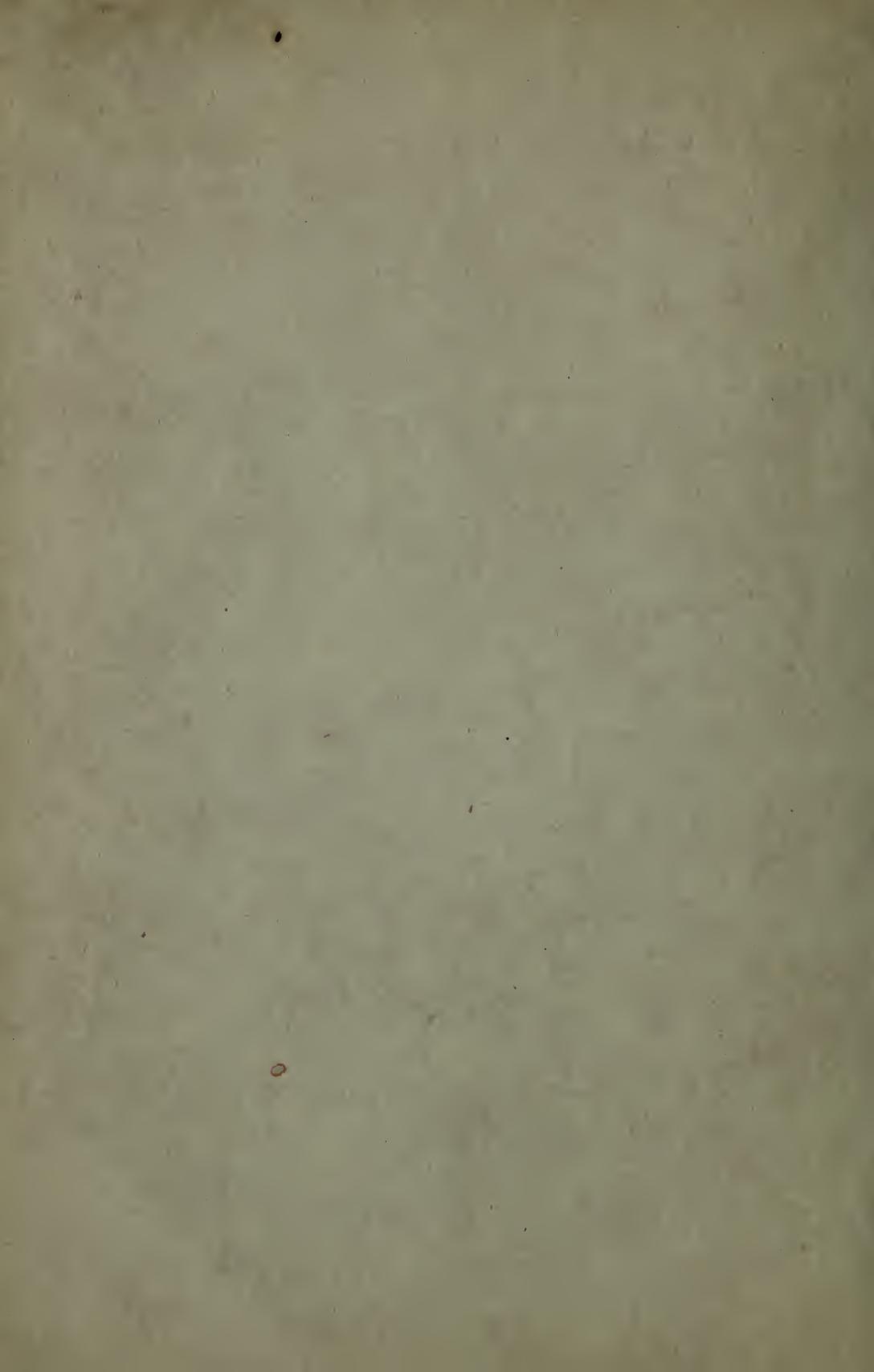
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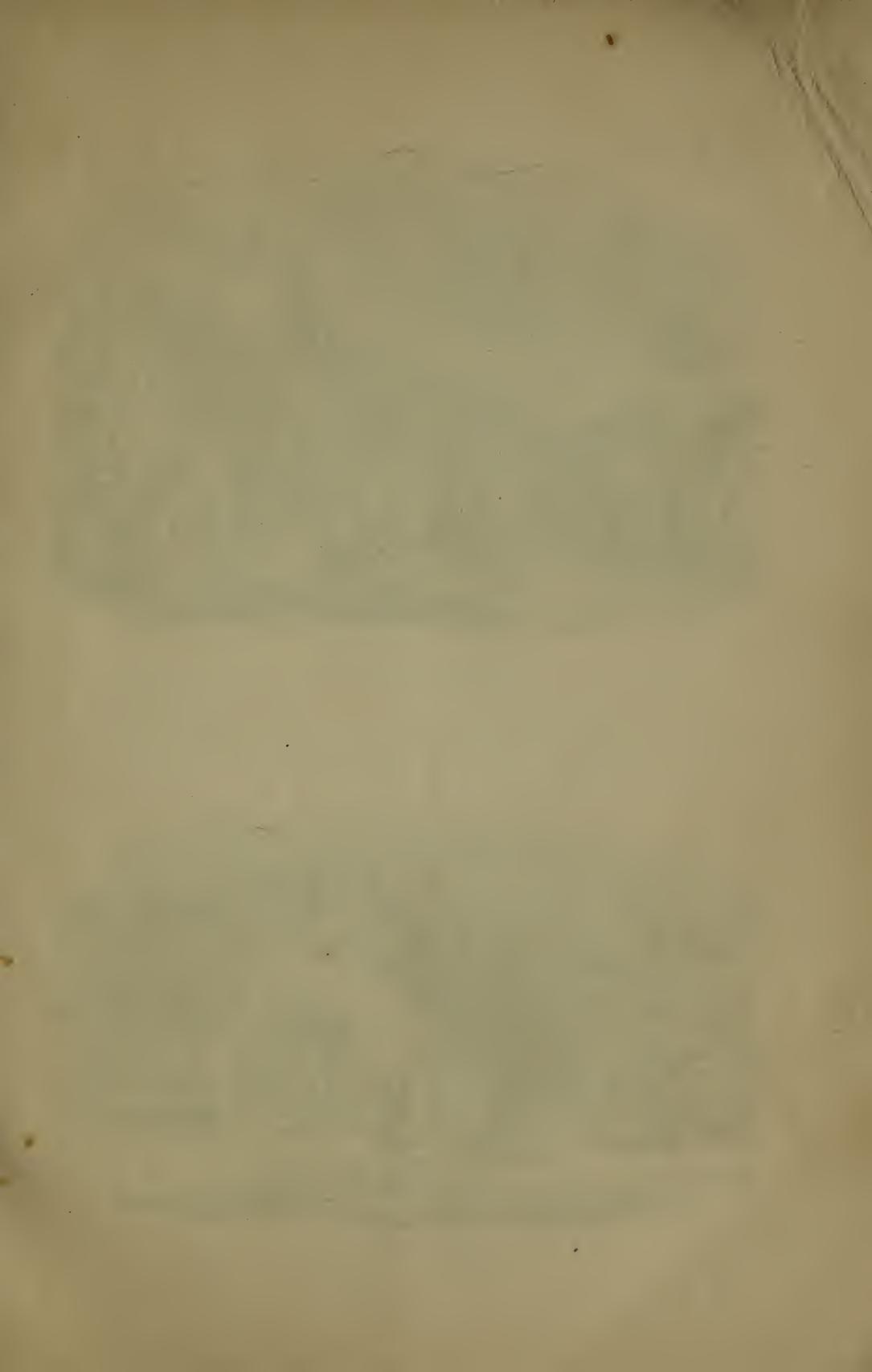
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Source of the Jordan.



Fountain of Nazareth.

THE
GEOGRAPHY, TOPOGRAPHY,
AND
NATURAL HISTORY
OF
PALESTINE.

By F. A. COX, D.D., LL.D.

Illustrated by Engravings.

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P R E F A C E.

It is no less important to have *places* and *localities* distinctly fixed in the mind, than to be familiar with *events*. In truth, if the notions entertained of the former be imperfect or erroneous, the latter will become enveloped with a degree of dimness and uncertainty, which will prevent their retaining a very strong or permanent hold upon the memory. The *when* and the *where* are essential accompaniments to the facts of History. We cannot therefore be at too great pains in the study of Geography and Topography, as well as Chronology.

This consideration possesses additional force when we advert to the country of Palestine. Not only has it been the scene of those ordinary occurrences which produce changes of a more or less momentous nature upon the moral aspect of our globe, but it is emphatically the *Bible-Land*. There was the noblest of ecclesiastical edifices, the possession of the most extraordinary people, the dwelling-place of men the holiest and brightest ornaments of humanity, and, above all, the birth-place of CHRIST, the SON OF GOD and SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.

With the Geography and Topography, in this little volume, is connected the Natural History of Palestine, which, though not

given with elaborateness and minuteness, such as a large treatise would have demanded, contains whatever is most desirable to be known, especially by juvenile readers. While saved the trouble of great research themselves, they will assuredly find in these pages much to fill the mind with useful knowledge, and, as it is earnestly hoped, to induce Scriptural inquiry.

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GEOGRAPHICAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT OF CANAAN.

CIRCUMSTANCES have contributed to affix a great variety of Various names. names to the country in which the Israelites settled. Its most ancient, and, perhaps, even still, its most frequent appellation, is that of *Canaan*, *Χαναάν*, כְּנָעַן, derived from the grandson of Canaan. Noah, of that name, whose posterity were its inhabitants. *Palestine* (Palæstina Παλαιστίνη, from פְּלִשְׁתִּיִּים, Φυλιστιείμ, Jud. Palestine. xiii. 5, Philistiyim) is another title derived from the Philistines, whom the Greeks and the Romans called Palestines, who occupied that part of the land which bordered on the sea coasts, and were long the scourge of their Hebrew neighbours. After Canaan had been conquered by the Jews under Joshua, it was portioned out in twelve parts among eleven of the tribes descended from Jacob. From the tribe of Judah the most important of the twelve, which continued after the dispersion, and dwelt in the richest quarter, it obtained the epithet *Judæa*, after the period of the return from the Babylonish captivity. It has also been termed the *Land of Israel*, obviously Judæa. from that people having subdued it, and the *Land of promise*, Land of Israel. with reference to the remarkable promise of God to Abraham, Land of promise. which assigned this territory as in fee-simple to the descendants of that illustrious patriarch. It has derived the most honourable appellation of the *Holy land*, from its having become, Holy Land. by the instituted worship of God, his peculiar dwelling; and from its having been subsequently distinguished by the residence, actions, miracles, sufferings, and personal triumphs of the “holy child Jesus.” Profane historians have blended it with the countries of Syria, Cælo-Syria, Phœnicia, and other contiguous places, as forming in their estimation an insignificant portion of them, and it has been supposed, out of intentional contempt; but this, if it be indeed the fact, only evinces how ridiculous are the judgments, and how perverse the sentiments of mankind with regard to what is truly great and supremely honourable. The mighty scenes which have been transacted within the limits of the Holy Land country, are such as could derive no additional glory from any circumstance of an exterior

nature, and would render even a barren wilderness, or a solitary rock, of more real consideration than the most extensive region upon the page of history.

The
boundaries.

The northern boundary of this celebrated country was formed by the mountains of Antilibanus, or the province of Phœnicia ; on the south was Idumæa, having on the line of separation also a ridge of mountains ; on the east, the lake Asphaltites, the river Jordan, the sea of Tiberias, and the Samochonite lake ; on the west, the Mediterranean sea.¹ The extent has been variously computed, and if we reckon the utmost, it must appear comparatively small, when we recollect the descriptions we have of its population and natural opulence. These, however, are partly attributable to the care with which it was cultivated, and partly to the extraordinary blessing of Heaven upon its soil ; for the general aspect of the country presents only barren hills with small intervening valleys. Palæstina, or Syria Palæstina, was sometimes considered by the ancients as a part of Phœnicie, which extended from Orthosias, near the mouth of the Eleutherus, in lat. 34° 42' N. to Pelusium, or rather Gaza, lat. 31° 26' N. excluding the desert between Syria and Egypt, a distance of nearly 200 geographical miles, while Palestine Proper, which may be considered as reaching from Sidon, in lat. 33° 34' N. to Gaza, is only 2° 8', or 128 geographical miles in length, and not more than 105 geographical miles in its greatest breadth.

Extent.

Fertility.

Profane writers corroborate the Mosaic account of its fertility. Hecataeus, an author of the time of Ptolemy I. mentions it as an excellent and fruitful province, well peopled. Pliny celebrates the course of the river Jordan, the palm trees, and other productions.² Some ancient writers, however, as Strabo, for instance, and some modern travellers, have expressed an opposite opinion, and even poured contempt upon this land, as full of barren mountains and woods ; but if this testimony may be considered as enhancing the almost miracle of its natural capacities to sustain a large population, it does not contradict the fact of its extraordinary fertility in particular places ; and even some of the writers themselves, especially Jerome, while he descants upon its rocky character in general, and upon the frequency of the drought that prevails there, remarks also upon its productiveness. The Jewish legislator gives a detailed

¹ As defined by Moses (Gen. x. 19.) Canaan was a triangle, having Zidon for its apex, and the country from Gaza eastward to the valley of the Arabah, near Kadish-barnea, for the base. This includes the lost cities of the plain south of the Dead Sea.

² Hecat. ap. Joseph, cont. app. p. 1049. Pliny, lib. 5, cap. 14, 15. Compare also Tacit. Hist. lib. 15, cap. 6.

account of its fruits, and its oil, wine, and other produce: it is said to have exceeded all other countries. So rich was the soil, that it required no manure to force or to sustain its vigour. The corn was both excellent in quality, and abundant in quantity.

Under the Roman domination Palestine was subdivided into six parts, three on the Western and as many on the Eastern side of the Jordan; the former being Galilæa, Samaria, and Judæa; the latter Ituræa, Peræa, and Moabitis. To the South and East of these was Idumæa, a mountainous, and, for the most part, desert country, long hostile, and at last only imperfectly subdued by the Jewish kings.¹ The Canaanites and their neighbours in Moab and Edom (Idumæa) were small, independent, pastoral communities, probably subject to a patriarchal monarchy. They seem to have successfully resisted the Israelites as long as they preserved that federal union by which they had previously maintained their independence; in some cases the Jews, in others the Canaanites, were driven into the mountains, while their adversaries occupied the valleys; but when the Jewish power was consolidated by the vigour and enterprise of David, the Philistines and other Canaanites to the West of the Jordan were on one hand humbled, if not reduced to a state of dependence, and the mountaineers to the East of that river, in Moab, Ammon, and Edom, were, on the other hand, either completely subdued, or so far disabled as never afterwards to become formidable to the Jews.

Roman
division of
Palestine.

Moab,
Edom,
Idumæa.

The corresponding subdivisions of Palestine, at these different periods, under the Canaanites, Jews, and Romans, will be seen at once in the following table:—

¹ Edom, the Idumæa of the Greeks and Romans, occupied all the habitable country between the Southern extremity of Judæa and the confines of Egypt and Arabia. Edom and Idumæa may be considered as identical; for it is very probable that Idúm was the ancient name subsequently pronounced Edom, and therefore thus expressed by the Masorites when they, in pointing the Hebrew text, endeavoured to preserve the pronunciation then prevalent.

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