THE HIGH NUMBERS OF THE PENTATEUCH: ARE THEY TRUSTWORTHY? By Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S., Vice-President *Vict. Inst.*

1. MORE than a year ago, a paper on this subject, by the Rev. Dr. Thornton, was read before the Victoria Institute. If any apology were needed for going again over the trodden ground, it might be found in the grave importance of the subject, at least in its collateral issues, and in my own disagreement, *in toto*, with his conclusions. I say "my own disagreement," because I have no desire to share my responsibility with others; though I have reason to think that I do not stand alone in my judgment.

2. The subject is far from new. It is an old battle-field both of assault and defence. Of late it has been fought-over with fresh energy on the Continent, and in England. The author of the paper I have mentioned, apologises for a path, to some extent, at least, parallel with that pursued by Dr. Colenso; and it is but fair to add that he strongly disavows his conclusions. Dr. Thornton, whom I would not for an instant confound with the school which is represented by Dr. Colenso,—considers that he is "writing in the interests of that Scripture which he criticises." But of this others also may judge. I take the freedom (without at all impugning his intention) of judging whether his paper is in the interests of Holy Scripture, or adverse to it; and my judgment is very different from his. I believe that the reasonings of that paper, *if they are severely logical*, must inevitably lead to the rejection of inspiration, in the only sense in which inspiration is to me worth anything. This result its respected author would, I am sure, repudiate as vehemently as myself.

3. Therefore, while I would not write a word disrespectful, either to him or to any one else from whom I differ in judg-

ment, I may, without offence, I trust, examine his published opinions, and test his reasoning. This I propose to do in the following memoir; not without hope of establishing, on impregnable bases, conclusions of a very different character; and of satisfying the humble believer that the assailed High Numbers of the Old Testament, so far from being "weak points," which we must give up with a good grace, "lest we subject ourselves morally and intellectually to the same penalty and the same disgrace as military law assigns to those who obstinately defend a post plainly untenable," stand on the same broad footing as the narrative itself, and possess the very same claim to our acceptance.

4. Let me at the outset distinctly say that my faith rests not on a translation, nor on a copy. We may most legitimately discuss whether στερέωμα in Greek, or *firmament* in English, adequately represents רקיע; and whether certain words or phrases have been omitted, added, or changed, by the infirmity of transcribers. It is upon the original autographs of the inspired writers that our faith rests with absolute confidence. Yet, as He who ordained the written Word was possessed of perfect wisdom, absolute knowledge, boundless resources, and could not but foresee that, to the overwhelming majority of human readers, this Word would be known only in copies or translations, it is derogatory to Him to suppose that He would not provide for the potential, if not actual, rectification of errors of frailty. A wise mechanician does as much as this. He who invents and constructs an electric cable forecasts the perils to which it will be exposed; guards the metals from contact with the oxidizing water; and, as far as possible, the cord from the violence of anchors and grapnels. And surely the Allwise will do, nay, hath done, no less. *Lectiones variæ* are checked by the collation of many copies, by the renderings of ancient versions, and by the citations of early writers; *translations* are checked by the wide diffusion of learning enabling many to test their correctness. In a very few cases, one inspired writer appears to be at variance with another;—as when the interval between the Exode and the Foundation of the Temple is given as 480 years in 1 Kings vi. 1, and as a century more by the Apostle Paul (Acts xiii. 18—22). In such cases, it is doubtless lawful and worthy to examine on which side the evidence preponderates, and to suggest explanations of the variance. Only (and this I say to myself, as well as to others), in all such disquisitions let us bear vividly in mind that it is the Truth of God with which we have to do. It is holy ground: we must tread with unshod feet. In no spirit of rivalry, no pharisaic assumption of superiority over

others, do I attempt this inquiry; but in a sincere desire that God's glory may be vindicated, and the faith of my fellow-believers sustained.

5. There appears in many even reverent minds, a somewhat morbid fear of admitting God's government, even when the legitimacy of miracle is, in terms, allowed. We are constantly meeting such a statement as this:—"Such and such could not have been without a miracle; but we must not bring in miraculous intervention needlessly." Granted most fully: but is there no *via media;* nothing between the ordinary experience of occidental Gentile life in the nineteenth century and a suspension of the "laws of nature"? I conceive that there is; and that the recognition of it will go far to silence all the objections which the De Wette school of theology brings against Holy Scripture. That Book presents relations sustained by the Blessed God to His creation, far other than the imposition of an unalterable law upon it at the first; very different from a mechanic's making a clock, and leaving it to go. Unceasing supervision and control are His. The Eternal Son is described as "upholding all things by the word of His power" (Heb. i. 3): "in Him all things hold together,"—συνέστηκε (Col. i. 16). Nay, so minutely vigilant is this supervision, that, as the Lord Jesus Himself avers, a sparrow falls not unnoticed by God; and that the very hairs of our heads are all numbered (Luke xii. 6, 7). We are then abundantly justified in concluding that the Blessed God not only suspends His own laws of created being when He pleases, but does also so hold them in His hand that their operation is directed and moulded to His ends. How what we call the laws of nature will act when there is no Divine reason for modifying their *average* action, is one thing: how, when God has a special object to accomplish with them, is another. And of this varying *modus* He alone is the judge; we, only after the fact, by reverently watching His dealing, by hearkening to the voice of His word.

6. One thing it is not difficult to see:—that the national birth of Israel, and the isolation of them from all other peoples, was a cardinal part of the Divine economy; since of them Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Here, then, we have a *dignus Vindice nodus.*

7. This seems to me to lie at the base of almost all the difficulties *de queis agitatur;* the reluctance to admit that One of infinite resources, having a will of His own, is not to be limited in action by ordinary average conditions. For, recognize this; fully, constantly, consistently admit this, that He doeth according to His will [not only] in the army of

heaven, [but also] among the inhabitants of the earth" (Dan. iv. 35); and the difficulty has vanished: the question becomes solely one of testimony.

8. Let me illustrate this. Suppose an intelligent and cultivated Siamese, who has previously had no intercourse with Europeans, suddenly, on some account or other, sent on a mission to England. He returns, and writes a report of his adventures. Perhaps he had seen one of the princely domains of our noblemen, and had been greatly struck with the gorgeous orchid-houses, many denizens of which were familiar to him from childhood. On this his narrative dilates; he mentions one by one the magnificent oriental flowers by their Siamese names; avers that he saw these in the distant northern land; that multitudes of others, novel to him, but of like forms and habits, were associated with these; that several hundreds were visible at one glance; that all were growing healthfully; that no other plants but these aërial parasites were present; no trees, no shrubs, no trailing briers, no thorny creepers, no tangling lianes, no grass, no weeds, no rubbish of any sort. He omits to state the conditions under which these facts occurred; the search for the plants in their native regions, their collection by many hands, and their transmission to England; the glass houses; the artificial heat; the selection and accumulation of one special order; the exclusion of everything alien to it; the learning, skill, and care bestowed upon the object;—all this he does not mention; perhaps he had little notion of it himself; he simply and straightforwardly narrates the facts.

9. Presently the critics in the Siam capital dissect his narrative. "With this tribe of plants we happen to be familiar; and here we shall have a vantage-ground for estimating the truth of his other statements. Now, he has already said, and we well enough know, that England is a cold country, with severe frosts every year; but these air-plants are found only in a hot climate; frost, or the approach to it, would certainly kill them. Here is contradiction the first! But, again, he saw hundreds at one glance. Now, we all know that, though they are common enough with us, to see half a dozen kinds together is very rare; we should have to take a weary walk, indeed, before we had observed a hundred of these beautiful parasites. Then again, whoever heard of such plants growing, as this romancer pretends, by themselves alone: all the vegetation composed, forsooth, of air-flowers! This fact alone stamps impossibility on the whole. Again, they are almost wholly—many that he actually names are invariably, epiphytes, parasites on the trunks and limbs of our forest trees; and mark! he

distinctly states that 'no trees' were within sight. It is, in short, abundantly clear, that whatever object the *soi-disant* traveller may have prescribed to himself in composing this narrative, it is totally destitute of all claim to historic verity.

10. "But he has incidentally mentioned a trifling circumstance, in which again we are fortunately able to test his veracity; and here, too, we find it fails beyond all possibility of doubt. He contracted a friendship in England with a young student of noble birth, who, in fact, introduced him to this imaginary paradise of flowers. He declares that on the 1st of April, 1871, he was delighted to learn that his friend had attained great honours throughout England, by rowing in the successful one of two boats, that were striving on an English river for mastery. We will not dwell on the absurdity of a noble's toiling in rowing-boats, nor on the equal absurdity of a mighty nation like England's caring which boat won. We will probe him closer than this. He has happily committed himself to dates. Now we pin him. It was on the 1st of April, 1871, that this strife of boats occurred, and on this 1st of April, 1871, he declares that the news of the result delighted him. Where, then, was he on that day? Near the river, of course, you say. Not at all: he has actually recorded that at noon of that very 1st of April, 1871, he sailed from Bombay, a place several thousand miles from England! Thus he asks us to believe that information of the issue of a race of boats on an English river, necessarily occupying in all its concomitants several hours, was certainly known at several thousand miles' distance before the noon of the same day:—we need not say a physical impossibility! The day, however, selected for this feat, which sets both time and space at nought, is the 1st of April, a day for ages devoted by Western superstition to mockery and unreality; a circumstance which of itself ought to suggest the non-historic character of this document."

11. Exactly as my supposed Siamese critic deals with what, nevertheless, are irrefragable verities, does the Colensian school deal with the Pentateuch; and the sting and virus of both are annulled by the same principle. It may be replied to both,—"You assume that what is *ordinarily* true must be *ever* true; you make no allowance for intelligence, and will, and power, controlling the ordinary, and inducing the extraordinary." The taste of the Western noble chooses certain forms of plant-beauty; his wealth enables him to put in motion the maritime resources of his nation to gather the objects of his pleasure; mechanical skill to make an artificial climate for them; horticultural skill to grow them; while occidental science is perpetually discovering laws of nature,

whereby things accepted as impossible become matters of daily experience.

12. So with the Most High God: it is one of His titles that He is "Possessor of heaven and earth." All the laws of moral and material being are in His hand: He needs not be ever suspending; He wields, uses, controls them. Birth, marriage, life, death, health, longevity, puberty, fruitfulness, climate, weather, daylight, darkness, sunshine, cloud, military skill, order, discipline, power of command, of legislation, of administration, the very will of man, his pride or his docility; these, and a thousand more, are but the obedient and ready tools with which God effects His purposes. In what I have to say in reply to certain charges of untruth brought against the Pentateuch, I shall ever assume and fall back upon this principle as an impregnable truth, however convenient it may be to ignore it.

13. I grant to the full, and support with both my hands, the need of uprightness in such inquiries, that Dr. Colenso so strenuously contends for. Will a man lie for God? Yet, having accepted, *on other grounds*, the fact of revelation, and that the Pentateuch is an integral part of the divinely-inspired Word, I come *assuming* that, being of God, it is true; I will yield one iota of it only when absolutely compelled to do so. I require the objector to give absolute proof of the *non*. It will not do to say, as is so constantly said, "I do not see how." Perhaps you do not; perhaps *we* do not; but is this proof of the *non?* We stand on testimony: at least you must *drive* us out; we are not going to retire at the mere gleam of weapons.

14. Dr. Colenso (§ 10) observes, "My reason for no longer receiving the Pentateuch as historically true, is *not that I find insuperable difficulties* with regard to the miracles or supernatural revelations of Almighty God, recorded in it, but solely that I cannot, as a true man, consent any longer to shut my eyes to the absolute, palpable, self-contradictions of the narrative." This, at least, narrows our field of combat. "*Absolute, palpable, self-contradictions,*" he says. Well, let these be arrayed; but let us be quite clear as to what makes a contradiction. My ignorance in what manner such and such a result was obtained as is testified, is surely no contradiction. The Siamese might be ignorant—"might not see how"—the intelligence of a fact could be conveyed from England to India, within five minutes: was this therefore an absolute, palpable, self-contradiction? How many of Dr. Colenso's "contradictions" might in a moment be dissipated by more knowledge, as by Ithuriel's spear!

15. Against the principle avowed by Dr. Thornton, in his § 27, I cannot too strongly protest; that "the numbers recorded in our Scriptures stand on a very different footing from the facts; and while [he] clings most stoutly to the facts as recorded, [he] gives up the numbers." I protest against this eclectic process. The numbers are an integral part of the narrative, are thoroughly interwoven with the facts in it, and cannot be separated. Whatever of error the numbers are liable to, through human infirmity, to the same are the facts liable; for the statement that the numbers were expressed in the orginal MS. by alphabetic or other signs, modified by points, is not proved, and is not relevant. Do ancient MSS. exist in which the numbers are so expressed? But even if it be so, though isolated numbers which present difficulties (as 700 and 7,000, in 2 Sam. viii. 4, and 1 Chr. xviii. 4), may be thus accounted for, cases in which the number occurs again and again many times, with great amplitude of detail, and with many concomitant confirmations (such as the 600,000 of Israel), derive no light from this peculiarity. In our present Hebrew text the numbers are expressed in words at length, and there is nothing that I know of to throw *them* out of the category of words in which the *facts* are recorded.

16. I propose, mainly, to examine that number against which in all ages lances have been shivered. It is the *cheval de bataille* of the impugners of the Sacred Text. Dr. Colenso has mainly occupied his first volume with it. Dr. Thornton gives it a prominent place in his animadversions. I refer to the number of the people of Israel that left Egypt, "six hundred thousand men, besides children." It is said to be impossible that this number should be in itself true; impossible that it should be true as the increase of the households that went down into Egypt. These are distinct questions.

17. Dr. Thornton expressly admits the possibility of the number (§ 12), at least in the latter aspect, but he pointedly asks, "Is it probable?" He concludes that the true number was but 600 armed warriors. The gentlemen who led in the discussion sequent on the paper, allowed this number (for the most part, though with some diversity of judgment), to go by default.

18. That the people delivered by Jehovah were an immense host is seen on the surface of the whole history. I will enumerate some examples in point. In many passages they are spoken of under the term hosts, or armies (צבא). "Bring out the children of Israel. . . . . according to their *armies*" (Exod. vi. 26). "That I may bring forth mine *armies*, my people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt, by great judgments" (vii. 4). "In this selfsame day have I brought your *armies* out of the land of Egypt." "All the

hosts of the Lord went out." . . . . "The Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt *by their armies*" (xii. 17, 41, 51). In the wilderness of Sinai they were numbered in detail "by their *armies*" (Numb. i. ii. x., *passim*); &c. &c. It is in perfect consonance with this, that, on their entrance into the desert, they were able to win a pitched battle against the martial nation of Amalek (Ex. xvii.); and, just on their emergence from it, conquered, at the sword's point, the forces of Heshbon, and of Bashan, and of Midian, winning from the last-named much spoil, and from the first two a vast territory, full of walled cities and unwalled towns and villages (Num. xxi. xxxi.). There were threescore cities, "all of them fenced with high walls, gates, and bars," in Bashan alone (Deut. iii. 4, 5). The whole of this immense region was at once possessed and inhabited by two and a half out of the twelve tribes. Now, if we adopt Dr. Thornton's emendation, that the whole twelve could furnish but 600 armed men, we shall have the ludicrous result of an army of 600 men conquering these warlike nations, capturing their strong fortresses, and then occupying their great, fertile, and hitherto populous territories, by a sorry colony of one hundred and ten warriors!

19. The Sacred Story repeatedly calls the people of Israel by the dignified term "nation." Jehovah says, "Ye shall be unto me an holy nation" (Exod. xix. 6). Moses, appealing to their gratitude, asks, "Hath God assayed to go and take Him *a nation* from the midst of *another nation*. . . . . according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt?" (Deut. iv. 34). And, just before, he had pictured the surrounding peoples, saying, in admiration of the wise statutes possessed by Israel, "Surely *this great nation* is a wise and understanding people!" (Deut. iv. 6—8).

20. But let us listen to what other (and not friendly) nations really did say. More than eighty years before the Exode (for it was before Moses was born) we find the increase of Israel moving the jealousy and the fear of the powerful king of Egypt. He calls his people to his counsels, and thus he unburdens him of his misgivings. "Behold, the people of the children of Israel are *more and mightier than we*: come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land" (Exod. i. 9, 10). Let us weigh well these words. Granted that they express the exaggeration of terror; yet, can they conceivably consist with the hypothesis that, after nearly a century of multiplication (see verses 12, 20) yet to run, the people could muster but six hundred men-at-arms? Fancy a Pharaoh of martial Egypt quaking in mortal terror when he portrays what may happen from his having six hundred—no, the *progenitors* of six hundred—male aliens in his empire!

21. Pharaoh, however, stands not alone in his fear. At the close of the wilderness wandering, another king, Balak of Moab, sees the intrusion of the strange tribes into his smiling plains, and is "distressed because of the children of Israel." He craves the supernatural aid of a remote prophet, saying, "Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth [six hundred men with their households]; come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are *too mighty* for me [only six hundred warriors, remember!]; peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land." Surely this critical hypothesis of arithmetical expurgation deals somewhat cavalierly with the prowess of ancient monarchs, if the sight of six hundred warriors (without weapons, too, according to Dr. Colenso) could cause their courage thus to ooze out at their fingers' ends! On the other hand, all is in thorough consistency with the inspired statements of the population of Israel.

22. Again, these statements themselves, neither few nor uniform, sustain the most perfect harmony *inter se*. Thus we find reiterated allusions to "the thousands" of Israel. When Jethro visited his illustrious son-in-law at the Mount of God (Ex. xviii.), he saw with regret that he was "wearing himself away" with judging the controversies of the people (pause a moment, and weigh the probability of the litigation of six hundred householders wearing the judge away!), and counselled a transfer of subordinate spheres of the labour, by "placing over the people able men . . . . to be rulers of *thousands*, and rulers of hundreds," &c. And this advice Moses followed (vv. 21, 25; Deut. i. 15). Thenceforth such a subdivision is frequently recognized. The princes of the tribes, who at the first census were appointed to stand with Moses, are expressly designated (Numb. i. 16) "heads of thousands in Israel." When the different modes of sounding the silver trumpets were described, and the significance of each was defined, it was ordained (Numb. x. 4) that "if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes, *which are heads of the thousands* of Israel, should gather themselves." So, to adduce no more, for the avenging expedition against Midian

"there were delivered out of *the thousands* of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, *twelve thousand* armed for war" (Numb. xxxi. 4, 5; see also vv. 48, 52, 54).

23. Far more emphatic than any of these is that invocative formula which Moses was wont to utter when the Ark rested (Numb. x. 36):—"Return, O Jehovah, unto the many thousands (lit. *the millions*,—רבבות אלפי) of Israel!"—a phrase which, I think, has not been noticed in this controversy; yet one surely of great weight.

24. And, finally, there are numerous occurrences of high numbers, as characterizing Israel, expressed, not only in rounded phrase—"*totus, teres, atque rotundus*"—but in minute business-like exactness. For, not to speak of the judgments inflicted by the Divine sword on great masses of the people at once, as the 14,950 who perished in Korah's conspiracy (Numb. xvi. 49), and the 24,000 on the defection of Baal-peor (xxv. 9), this latter confirmed by an inspired Apostle (1 Cor. x. 8), who reckons it as 23,000 (the exact sum lying probably between the two round numbers),—not to press these, though these alone are quite sufficient to overthrow Dr. Thornton's hypothetic estimate, there are no fewer than four enumerations, all quite distinct and disconnected, of the sum total of the able males of Israel. In two of these, the round number alone is given. In the narrative of the Exode itself, it is recorded (Ex. xii. 37),—"The children of Israel journeyed . . . . . about 600,000 on foot that were men, besides children." And, on the promise of flesh at Taberah, Moses, himself quailing before the vastness of the gift, remonstrated with the Almighty Jehovah thus:—"The people among whom I am, are 600,000 footmen. . . . . Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall *all the fish of the sea* be gathered together for them, to suffice them?" (xi. 21, 22), where not merely the arithmetical expression must be looked at, for this might possibly have been miscopied, but the wonderment of the language must also be weighed, as expressing the vast equivalent of that number in Moses's estimation—"the flocks and the herds," "all the fish of the sea!"

25. But in other cases the round total is exchanged for the careful exactitude of an actual census. Twice were the people accurately counted by Jehovah's express command: first, in the early part of the desert sojourn, when the total sum of the able warriors was (Numb. i. 46) 603,550; and again just at its close, when it amounted (xxvi. 51) to 601,730.

26. Moreover, in both of these two cases last named, not only is the totality set down with much precision, but a great

number of subordinate sums—sub-totals—are given, the aggregate of which makes up the full amount. The numbers stand thus:—

	First Census.	Second Census.
Reuben	46,500	43,730
Simeon	59,300	22,200
Gad	45,650	40,500
Judah	74,600	76,500
Issachar	54,400	64,300
Zebulun	57,400	60,500
Ephraim	40,500	32,500
Manasseh	32,200	52,700
Benjamin	35,400	45,600
Dan	62,700	64,400
Asher	41,500	53,400
Naphtali	53,400	45,400
	603,550	601,730
Levi	22,000	23,000

27. The enumeration, in general, appears not to have proceeded lower than *hundreds*, save in one example in each census, in which it went as low as *tens*. In Levi's case *thousands* seem to have constituted the limit of inquest; but, as this tribe stood in a distinct category, and was forbidden to be numbered with the rest (Numb. i. 49), we may perhaps understand the direction in iii. 15, as implying an estimate, rather than a precise enumeration. Yet the comparison of the 22,000 Levites with the 22,273 first-borns (iii. 43), and the special provision for the odd 273, might suggest that the one of these numbers was as minutely accurate as the other; in which, of course, there is no impossibility.

28. This is unimportant. But I must press the correct additions of the constituent figures in the two censuses, and the deliveries of the exact totals, as absolutely proving, utterly beyond possibility of sane question,—*that these great numbers have not suffered from carelessness* of honest transcription. The whole elaborate theory of Dr. Thornton, often, however, put forth before, that numbers having been expressed, in ancient MSS., by alphabetic characters, modified by superadded dashes or dots, the consimilarity of certain of those characters became "the most fertile source of errors in the text of Scripture as regards numbers;"—a matter that was so much discussed afterwards, and so generally conceded;—may be admitted as theory,

and yet its relevancy to the present cardinal case must be wholly denied. The number of 600,000 certainly owes nothing to this cause. That all these constituent figures should have been miscopied by careless scribes, quite unintentionally, and yet that the totals,—addition-sums of five columns of twelve lines each,—should be delivered correct, could have resulted only from a special overruling Providence working expressly on behalf of falsehood!

29. No, there is but one alternative possible. Either the numbers are truly given, and 600,000 is the thoroughly trustworthy sum of the men who left Egypt, or else the numbers have been systematically falsified, and this with elaborate care that there be no self-contained source of detection; falsified therefore wilfully and wickedly.

30. Thus we are brought face to face with those who, like Dr. Colenso (vol. i., pref. xvii.), deny the historical character of the Pentateuch. They see that no transcribers' errors will account for the amplitude of these figures; the narrative must stand or fall with them; if they cannot be received in their integrity, the Pentateuch is but a romance, a fiction, a comparatively modern "story," compiled out of "ancient legends."

31. All our hopes for eternity are inseparably linked with this book. If it is not absolute truth,—there was no Fall of Man; no arch Adversary; no promise of a Deliverer to bruise his head; no separation of Abraham; no covenant of blessing; no chosen seed; no divinely-appointed redemption by blood; no pictured reconciliation to God; no access into the Holiest. All these were worthless fables; unhistoric legends. If it is not absolute truth, then Jesus was indeed "a deceiver of the people;" or a brainless enthusiast; He was not God manifest in the flesh; He did not "speak the words of God;" the word which the people heard from Him was not "the Father's which had sent him;" His death was valueless as an atonement; He is not raised from the dead; and WE ARE YET IN OUR SINS; and they that have fallen asleep in Christ ARE PERISHED. Yes, this is what we have to face; every one of these results must follow if the Pentateuch is not the revelation of the unlying God,—ὁ ἀψευδὴς Θεός.

32. It is often asserted that some parts of the written Word stand on a different ground from others, in regard to their claims to our obedience of faith. In the discussion which followed Dr. Thornton's paper, Mr. Titcomb is recorded to have said,—"For if I see that in such matters, which are utterly indifferent to the purposes of eternal life, there are a variety of statements, one more full and another less full; one

appearing a little exaggerated, and another appearing incomplete; I fall back on the recollection that these things have nothing to do with the grand moral and spiritual truths of Revelation."

33. This sentiment reappears in so many forms, and on so many occasions; it is so often repeated, that the Bible is not intended to teach us science, but religion; it is so constantly insinuated that there are many things touched in it which are non-essential to its scope, and which, therefore, may be erroneously described, without derogating from it as a rule of faith and practice,—that it is worth while to examine it. I widely differ from the opinion. I believe it to be a great mistake. I judge it to have its root in a total misapprehension of the real object and scope of the written Word. Those who accept the Holy Scriptures as a rule of life and nothing more, intended to enlighten man how to live a righteous life; nay, those who see no more in them than a revelation how sinners may be saved from condemnation by the sacrifice of Christ, and delivered from the wrath to come;—fail to grasp the scope of the Word as really,—not as egregiously, not as fatally,—as those who see in it only a true history of venerable antiquity. The object of the inspired writings, uninterruptedly kept in view throughout the ages, as the successive portions were communicated by the Eternal Spirit to the prophets, may be, I think, described as the "Mystery of God's will, according to the good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He would gather into a Head (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι) all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth" (Eph. i. 9, 10). In other words, the reconciling of all things to Himself by the death of Christ, and the subjecting of all to Manhood in resurrection, in His person, to the glory of God the Father. (See also Ps. viii.; Heb. ii.; 1 Cor. xv.; Phil. ii.; Col. i.; Rev. v., &c.) This is a vast theme, on which the Holy Ghost has vouchsafed to discourse with man. The salvation of sinners, and their sanctification, forms indeed one chapter—a very important part, but still only a part—of the great Epos, which begins before man was made, and which runs on till the Church sits on the throne of glory with the glorified Christ, members of His body, [made] of His flesh and of His bones, and thence into eternity to come. Everything, therefore, may find place in the Scriptures of God. I dare not say, of anything, This is irrelevant or non-essential; natural history, geology, cosmogony, chronology, Gentile history, ethics,—whatever it is, its place in the record depends on its connection with the grand purpose, more recondite or

more obvious; and of this He alone is the competent judge, who unfolds the purpose. Of this, however, we may be confident; nothing that He sees fit to interweave into His Revelation will be other than absolutely true, absolutely worthy of our subjection of mind, whether it appear to our clouded vision trivial or momentous.

34. Having shown, as I trust I have, that the number assigned to Israel at the Exode is no *lectio varia*, no *lapsus calami* of a careless scribe, but an integral part of the text as it came from the writer, I proceed to test the demand that it be rejected, because of the "palpable self-contradictions" which cleave to it. This is, as Dr. Thornton remarks (§ 12), "the very basis of the operations of Dr. Colenso and his followers against the authenticity of the Old Testament."

35. It is argued that such a population, on the given conditions of origin and time, was, if not absolutely impossible without a miracle, at least so excessively improbable as to be unworthy of belief. How could the households which went down with Jacob have increased to 600,000 adult males during the sojourn in Egypt? Now, at the outset, what is probability? Is it not the assumption that the like results will follow certain conditions, as have invariably followed them hitherto within human experience, *cæteris paribus?* The application of this law to the case before us breaks down at once, as soon as we admit that the sacred narrative everywhere asserts, that God Himself had a special object in view; for what parity is there between human experience and the energy of the Most High God? (See *supra*, § 12.)

36. I admit that the period of the increase was 215, and not 430 years; the authority of Paul (Gal. iii. 17) being conclusive that the Giving of the Law was 430 years after the Covenant of Promise made to Abraham (Gen. xii. 3, 7). It is certain from the narrative that at the bisection of this term Jacob went down to Egypt. For, from the Covenant

To the birth of Isaac	25 years.	Gen. xii. 4; xxi. 5.
To the birth of Jacob	60 „	„ xxv. 26.
To the interview with Pharaoh ...	130 „	„ xlvii. 9.
	215	

37. That the multiplication of the chosen seed should be a matter of Divine care, was guaranteed by express covenant, often reiterated. "I will make of thee a great nation," was the promise of Jehovah to Abram when He called him to forsake his father's house (Gen. xii. 2). "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth" (xiii. 16). "Tell the stars, if

thou be able to number them: so shall thy seed be" (xv. 5). "I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee" (xvii. 6). "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation" (xviii. 18). "In multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven; and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore" (xxii. 17). So, in turn, to Isaac:—"I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven" (xxvi. 4). And again to Jacob:—"God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee" (xxviii. 3). "Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth" (xxviii. 14). "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee" (xxxv. 11). It may be objected that these promises of multiplication looked forth into the far-distant future, to be fulfilled in the mystic SEED. While I admit the mystic application, I note that *in most of these promises* this item is immediately followed by the assurance that the seed so multiplied shall possess the very lands of the Patriarchs' sojourn; which appears to limit the *primary* fulfilment, at least, to the Eisode into Canaan: while, in xlvi. 3, Jehovah expressly covenants to Jacob, that Egypt itself shall be the scene of the vast increase. "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will THERE make of thee *a great nation.*"

38. Antagonists charge the stated increase of Israel with high improbability. Nay, there is the highest *probability* in its favour. If there were no other passage collaterally bearing on the point than the promise last quoted, it would alone be conclusive for the probability. For what are the conditions? These:—the Omnipotent God, unimpeachable in truth, who possesses and wields all the resources of being, all the powers of nature and spirit, pledges His word that Jacob shall become not only a nation, but *a great nation, in Egypt;* and that He Himself will make him this. Could the result be otherwise than it is narrated to have been?

39. And the infinite resources are presently put into operation. The Patriarch, already, in two generations (which there is no reason to suppose complete, as his sons were still in the prime of life), has become seventy souls; and they all migrate to Egypt. The next thing we read of them is as follows:—"And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was filled with them" (Exod. i. 7.) (Let us not fail to note the emphasis that attaches to these phrases, in the very variety and cumulation of them). Their abnormal increase (swarming, "like the fry of fishes," דגה, as Jacob had predicted of the progeny of Joseph, Gen. xlviii. 16) excited the

fear of the jealous king, as we have already seen, and evoked the most energetic efforts for repression. With what result? The inspired historian is most explicit:—"But the more they afflicted them, *the more they multiplied and grew*" (Exod. i. 12). Still the conflict went on, man against God; dread of the rapidly swarming alien population caused new measures of cruel repressive policy; but with the same result, "the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty" (i. 20).

40. By-and-by, after the deliverance has been effected, we find distinct and repeated recognition of the vastness of the population, not merely as an absolute fact (of which many examples have been adduced), but in relation to its increase from small beginnings; which increase is always presented as a wonderful manifestation of Divine power. Thus Moses, when, recounting the history, he alludes to his having, at an early period in the sojourn, painfully felt the burden of so great a people, pauses a moment to make this reflection (Deut. i. 10);—"Jehovah your God hath multiplied you, and behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude." In the same discourse he presently reminds them of the smallness of their origin (vii. 7),—"Ye were the fewest of all peoples;" and again, with a definiteness which strongly brings into prominence the marvellous augmentation;—"Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons, and now, Jehovah thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude" (x. 22). And yet once more, the growth of one man into *a nation*, and this *in Egypt*, was ordained for solemn and set remembrance, when the land of inheritance should be possessed. Let us examine the terms of this ordinance (Deut. xxvi. 1—11):—"And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein, that thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that Jehovah thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose to place his name there. And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, 'I profess this day unto Jehovah thy God, that I am come unto the country which Jehovah sware unto our fathers for to give us.' And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of Jehovah thy God. And thou shalt speak and say before Jehovah thy God, 'A Syrian ready to perish was my father; and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and *became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous. . . . .*'"

41. Thus, I venture to assert, it has been shown, upon abundant and impregnable evidence, that the facts that the children of Israel amounted to hundreds of thousands at the time of the Exodus; that these were the increase of Jacob's household; and that the increase mainly occurred while they were in Egypt; are no excrescences casually affixed to the Sacred History, but integral and inseparable parts thereof, and must of necessity stand or fall with it. If the number is false, it is wilfully, consciously, false; and the whole narrative is false,—"unhistoric," to use Dr. Colenso's euphemism; because in every page it either asserts or assumes this numerical condition.

42. If, then, the increase which the historian uniformly presents was in the highest degree probable, on the data which he also furnishes, viz. the covenant engagement of One who could not lie and could not fail,—the whole ground is cut from beneath our opponents' feet; and it seems almost an idle work of supererogation to show that the actual increase of the race within the given period was, after all, nothing so far exceeding ordinary providential supervision as to call for incredulousness, or even for wonder. The true wonder is that the Blessed God should condescend to take such interest in man.

43. Professor Rawlinson ("Aids to Faith," 280) cites the recorded fact that Jacob brought into Egypt fifty-one grandsons; and observes that "if, under the special blessing of God so repeatedly promised to Abraham, his male descendants had continued to increase at the same rate, they would long within the specified period have reached the required number." In a note, he adds:—"The *average* increase of the males in the two generations had been *more than* sevenfold each generation. A sevenfold increase would have given 857,157 males in the fifth generation, and 6,000,099 in the sixth."

44. It will, perhaps, be said that these computations are so old and stale that they ought not to be reproduced at this stage of the controversy. The true question is not, are they old, but, have they been answered? I have met with no answer to them. Dr. Thornton, indeed (§ 12), by a computation somewhat similar—viz., seventy men to begin, rearing each man in thirty-five years five sons; and then at the end of 210 years by uniting together the half of each of the last two generations for the men capable of arms—brings out a result of 656,250. This he allows will meet the requirements of the text; but he refuses it as improbable.

45. The grounds he adduces for this conclusion are the following:—1. So large a number could not have dwelt in all

Lower Egypt. 2. The number of deaths in the wilderness must have been nearly fifty per day. This, he thinks, not probable; not because the death-rate is unusually high, but because the number of corpses in a limited space would be enormous. 3. The total number did not increase during the forty years' wilderness wandering (§13—15).

46. Let us examine these *seriatim*. Dr. Thornton, taking 2,000,000 as the entire population required by 600,000 fighting men, asks if we can "suppose so many to have been able to find habitations? The present population of Lower Egypt is about 2,000,000. But at the time of the Exodus there must have been Egyptians as well as Hebrews living in the country. We cannot put them at less than 1,000,000. Now, as the present population of Lower Egypt gives 340 to a square mile, a population half as large again would give 510 to a square mile, which is considerably in excess of 438, the number per square mile inhabiting Belgium, the most thickly-populated country known in the world."

47. On turning to Professor Hughes's "Manual of Geography" (London, 1869), the latest authority I have, I find him saying, "The population of Egypt numbers upwards of 5,000,000." Of course, the great majority are resident in Middle and Lower Egypt. Why Dr. Thornton limits his inquiry to Lower Egypt I do not know; for the Pharaohs reigned over all Egypt, as is shown by their statues and pictures wearing the crowns of both the Upper and Lower provinces. The population in their days was, of course, far greater than under Moslem rule. Josephus sets it down as seven and a half millions in his time, and Diodorus at nearly the same. These facts sufficiently refute Dr. Thornton's first difficulty.*

48. His second I am somewhat at a loss to appreciate. As I read it, it is this:—Since 600,000, the generation of men above twenty years, perished in the forty years, the daily death-rate, including women, but excluding those who perished by pestilence, must have been fifty per day. He again asks, "Is this probable?" Is what probable? The death-rate of fifty per day, which is 15,000 per annum, or two and a half per cent.? No; there is nothing unusual in this, which is in fact exceeded by the death-rate of Paris or London. "What appears enormous is not the population, but the actual number of dead bodies collected within a limited space." I confess this surprises me, that a charge—at least a suspicion—should lie against the veracity of the Pentateuch numbers on such a ground as this! Why, is it not self-evident that even if the camp had been actually affixed to one spot for the entire forty years, they would have been no worse off for the disposal of their dead than London, which does manage to put its dead out of sight without pestilence,—

> "Though its clime
> Is fickle, and its year most part deform'd
> With dripping rains, or wither'd by a frost;"

though it lacks the burning sun and the desiccating sands of the Arabian desert. But what are the facts? The wilderness wandering (as any good map will show) covered about 40,000 square miles. Thus, fifteen corpses had to be got rid of, on an average, in every square mile of such a soil and such a climate, in the course of forty years.

49. And the third is like unto it. Here it is, word for word. "These 620,000, strangely enough, leave behind them a progeny somewhat less numerous than themselves. Instead of 603,550, we have, at the numbering in the plain of Jordan, only 601,730. Instead of five sons, each man would seem to have had, on an average, a fraction less than one." What is there *strange* in this, when "with many of them God was not well pleased;" when "forty years long He was grieved with that generation," and sware in His wrath that every one of the whole number that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, should die in the wilderness; when the whole period was one of judgment, and its protraction was expressly and solely in order that the carcases of that rebellious generation should fall in the wilderness? Why, I say, is it strange, with this key in our hand, that Israel's population did not increase during those forty years? It would have contradicted the whole economy of God, if it had.

50. The strength of the assault upon the cardinal number we are discussing lies, I think, in the argument which is embodied in Dr. Colenso's chap. xvi., entitled, "The Exodus in the Fourth Generation." His reasoning here is plausible; I hesitate not to confess it is forcible; at first reading it seems invulnerable. Yet, if it really cannot be answered; if it cannot be logically shown to be an elaborate *non sequitur;* our position must be untenable, his conclusion must be accepted, and, as a consequence, we must give up our Bible! For this is his conclusion:—"From this it can be shown, beyond a doubt, that it is quite impossible that there should have been such a number of the people of Israel in Egypt, at the time of the Exodus, as to have furnished 600,000 warriors in the prime

* Dr. Thornton has correctly given the population of the whole of Belgium as 438 to the square mile. But its most fertile and best-cultivated province, East Flanders, maintains upwards of 700 to the square mile. (Hughes.)

of life, representing, at least, two millions of persons, of all ages and sexes;—that is to say, it is impossible, *if we will take the data to be derived from the Pentateuch itself*" (i. 101).

51. The argument rests on the promise made by Jehovah to Abram, under circumstances of great solemnity (Gen. xv. 13—16);—"Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them 400 years. And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Of this last sentence Dr. Colenso says, with his usual confident assertion, "this can only mean in the fourth generation, reckoning from the time when they should leave the land of Canaan, and go down into Egypt." Then he adduces the recorded cases of Reuben and Levi, both of whom were represented by the fourth descendants in successive generation, reckoning in each case the son of Jacob as the first of the four. He arrays also Judah, another son, *some* of whose fourth descendants (in the same mode of computation) were in the Exode.

52. But these are all, *absolutely all*, the examples he is able to furnish, out of Holy Scripture, of the principle on which he so relies, and on which he builds so great an edifice. It is, when built, a pyramid standing on its apex. Let us see whether there is no counter evidence on the same matter.

53. I have already admitted that the reasoning built on these premises appears at first sight forcible. Yet it does not *prove* what is sought,—that *only* four generations intervened between the Eisode into Egypt and the Exode. And if this is not proved, nothing is proved. For everything depends upon the fact that *no more than* four generations occurred in any line; because else these may have been according to the abnormal and rare condition of patriarchal protraction, and rapid and frequent succession the rule. In some lines, four generations appear certainly to have reached from Jacob to the Exode, viz., those from Reuben, Levi, and Judah. But of *no other* of the twelve patriarchs can this be shown. On the other hand, some of them certainly produced more generations in the same time. Thus, Joseph, Manasseh, Machir, Gilead, Hepher, Zelophehad, —*six*. Again, Joseph, Ephraim, Beriah, Rephah, Telah, Tahan, Laadan, Ammihud, Elishama, Nun,—*ten*. And though Judah, through Hezron, reached the Exode in four protracted lives, yet, through the same fruitful grandson, he had more numerous stages of descent; for Judah, Pharez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon,—are *six*: and since Elisheba, the wife of Aaron, was the daughter of Amminadab, and her sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, were made priests at the ordination of the priesthood (Exod. xxviii. 1), three months after the Exode, and therefore the youngest of the four was at least thirty years old, we have *seven*,—Judah, Pharez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Elisheba, Nadab. And yet once more; Judah, Pharez, Hezron, Chelub, Hur, Uri, Bezaleel,—*seven*: for this last was, at the Exode, a man of sufficient standing to be put in charge of the whole artistic work of the tabernacle. Nahshon, too, though two generations lower than Moses, must have been, not a mere youth, but a man of weight and standing; for he was the prince or chiefman of the tribe of Judah, one of "the renowned of the congregation," at the Exode (Numb. i. 7, 16; ii. 3; x. 14).

54. And Shelah was a grown man some years before Pharez was born (Gen. xxxviii. 14); so that his descendants, though nothing is recorded of this line, may well have been a generation in advance of the latter; and so Judah may have been represented, through Shelah, by his *eighth* descent. The princes of the tribes are not, in general, traceable in the genealogies, either by their own names, or by their fathers'; or we should probably have additional evidence in this direction.

55. The lineage of Joshua, the sun of Nun, as given in 1 Chron. vii. 22—27, is the loftiest mountain in the way of Dr. Colenso's progress. He feels it, and labours hard to remove it (§ iii. *et seq.*). This he essays by three engines of war. (1.) "This is an exception to the rule, which prevails *universally* [the italics are his] in the Pentateuch." Supposing it were, it is of equal authority. But it is not true. That the rule does not prevail *universally* I have above amply shown. (2.) He throws overboard the Chronicles, as of no authority. (3.) He asserts that "the Book of Chronicles itself exhibits the rule of the Pentateuch in other cases," which he adduces. But, of these cases, two are Nahshon and Bezaleel, the one the sixth, the other the seventh, as shown above, instead of the fourth, which he arbitrarily calls "the rule."*

56. He then proceeds to undermine the statement in his

* Dr. Colenso argues that Bezaleel was the fourth from Hezron (though he was *not* the fourth, but the fifth, in the sense in which Moses was the fourth from Levi), forsooth; as if that were pertinent; because Hezron was born in Canaan. But again, if it were pertinent, it is not true: it is impossible. Pharez, the father of Hezron, *must* have been a babe in arms at the Eisode. (See Gen. xxxviii.)

way: assuming (for which there is not a shadow of proof) that Joshua was *forty-five* years old at the Exode; and asserting that the statement,—that "Elishama, the son of Ammihud, was the captain of the host of Ephraim (Numb. ii. 18), about a year after his *grandson*, Joshua, had commanded the whole Hebrew force which fought with Amalek,"—is hardly credible. (See § 58, *infra*.) Then he charges contradictions against the narrative in 1 Chron., which rest, however, wholly on his gloss, the passage being capable of a self-consistent interpretation; and at last cites a reconciling view of Kuenen's, the result of which, Dr. Colenso admits, "would perfectly agree with our other data." Yet he rejects it, "*for the reasons above given;*" by which, I presume, he means his own self-constituted rule of only four generations (I can find no other "reasons given"); and this is worthless.

57. My own mode of reading 1 Chron. vii. 20—27 would be somewhat like this:—Ephraim (whose very name signifies *fruitful*, see Gen. xlviii. 16, 19) had nine sons, Shuthelah, Bered, Tahath, Eladah, Tahath II. (named perhaps in memory of the former already deceased), Zabad, Shuthelah II. (as before), Ezer, and Elead. The Gittites slew these last two. Then another son, Beriah, from whom came, after eight generations, Joshua. As Beriah's daughter seems to have been co-ordinate with Aaron (in generation), she could have built the Bethhorons only by her descendants, who perhaps retained her name; unless, indeed, she had married a Canaanite, and had emigrated to Canaan in the early part of the sojourn in Goshen. This is by no means impossible: Elishama, who was six generations lower than she, was captain of the host of Ephraim at the Exode.

58. As to the generations, the following scheme is possible, and consistent:—

	An. Jul. P.
Assume that the Eisode into Egypt occurred in the year of the Julian Period ... ... when Joseph was 39, and Ephraim may have been 7.	3008
Ephraim may have had several wives, and so all his nine early sons may have been born by...	3033
Ezer and Elead, slain at Gath	3048
Beriah born...	3049
Rephah „	3068
Telah „	3086
Tahan „	3104
Laadan „	3122
Ammihud „	3140
Elishama „	3158
Nun „	3176
Joshua „	3194
Exode	3223

Thus Elishama would be 65 at the Exode and Joshua would be 29. This scheme supposes each son to become a father at the age of 18; an assumption surely by no means extravagant of the heirs of such promises.

59. It appears then that, of four out of the twelve sons of Jacob, we are able to assert on the direct authority of Holy Scripture, that the generations from them to the Exode from Egypt vary from *four* to *ten;* while, of the remaining eight patriarchs, the records are not sufficient to enable us to determine the point. It seems to me likely that the average was nearer the greater than the smaller number; that the men, for the most part, married early. At all events there is no warranty for the assertion that, characteristically and normally, a generation (in the sense of the word we have been assuming) is to be computed at fifty-four years.

60. I venture to suggest, however, that the words of the great Promise (Gen. xv. 16), may have had a very different meaning. What Dr. Colenso confidently asserts, as a self-evident fact, that the four generations must be reckoned from the time when the seed should leave Canaan and go into Egypt, is a gratuitous assumption. It rather appears that the "fourth generation" of ver. 16, looks distinctly back to the "four hundred years" of ver. 13; that the two periods are conterminous and co-equal. Now that the four hundred years were to begin with Abraham himself, and to be reckoned from the birth of the seed, *de quo agitatur*, is generally admitted; and even by Dr. Colenso (§ 107). He was just a hundred years old at the birth of his son; and it might well be that Jehovah, speaking immediately with him, might take his own age at that then future epoch, as the standard of the generations He foretold, announcing that, after four such generations as Abraham's own, the seed should come back to Canaan.

61. It may be said this is but a gloss, a private exegesis of the passage, and that Dr. Colenso's is better. But, I submit, this is to lose sight of the true issue. It is enough for us, the defenders, to give a possible, a tenable interpretation, which being accepted, the narrative shall be consistent. It is for the opponent to show that there is *no possible* interpretation, on which the narrative can be true. If he has not done, if he cannot do, this, he has done nothing. Here is the venerable Record, bearing its witness: we must assume its truth, until it is *proved* false. It will not do to say, "If we take a certain passage in a certain prescribed sense, it is false," unless he can compel us to admit that sense; unless he can absolutely drive us from every other; unless he can prove no other tenable. Let us only be able to suggest

another sense of the given words, which is maintainable: it may not be necessarily the true one, but it affords an escape from his dilemma, and his argument is absolutely harmless.*

62. And such, I am bold to aver, is the case with this palmary argument of our great opponent.

63. The careful examiner will not fail to perceive that the ruling of Gen. xv. 16 ("fourth generation"), in Dr. Colenso's sense is the base on which the great majority of his numerical difficulties rest; and that this being shown to be unnecessary, to use no stronger a phrase, they also vanish. Such is, for example, the deduction of his chap. xvii., that, allowing the seed of Jacob to have had on an average 4½ sons each, in four generations they would amount to 4,923, instead of 600,000. Yes; but carry on the same rate of increase a few generations more, I will not say to the tenth, as in Joshua's case, but to the seventh or eighth;—and the result will be 448,596 for the seventh, or 2,018,632 for the eighth.

64. Such, too, the matter of his chap. xviii., the census of the Danites and the Levites. For, as Dan was about 42 years old, so his own son Hushim may well have been 24, at the Eisode. Allow the above average of 4½ sons to each generation, and we arrive at the vast number of 166,000 (or, including but the fathers and grandfathers as still surviving, considerably upwards of 200,000), instead of 62,700, at the Exode, in the *ninth* stage from the patriarch Dan, *which is parallel with Nun*, the father of Joshua.

65. The case of the Levites is, I admit, more difficult; because of the minuteness and precision with which the lineage of Moses and Aaron is limited to four stages from Levi. There may be a mystic reason for this,—considering their typical standing (*see* Heb. iii. 1-6; v. 1-4), analogous to that strange delay which seems to have marked the economy of God in the production of the Promised Seed of the Woman. Whether this be so or not, there is no certainty whatever, that the other sons of Levi were increased by no more than four successive generations in all, to the Exode.

* I ask careful attention to this point—one of very great importance in a discussion such as this; and the more because, by cursory readers and loose thinkers, it is generally overlooked. It is considered that the assaulter and the defender stand on the same ground with regard to suggested modes. In truth, as I say in the text, I am not obliged to prove my modus true; whereas, he is obliged to prove it false. In many and many a matter Dr. Colenso contents himself with asking, How could they do this? Where could they procure that? If I reply, I do not know how or where, he has gained nothing; but if I can suggest,—Possibly thus, or possibly there, it is amply sufficient, unless he can *prove* it impossible.

Since, if it were so, Libni and Shimi would be contemporary with Amram, and their sons contemporary with Aaron and Moses; and since Eliasaph, *the son of Lael*, was chief of the house of the Gershonites at the census, where can this Lael come? It seems there must have been more generations intervening than four. Gershon and Merari may both have had sons early, and so may their descendants; Kohath and his descendants late. Thus, while the latter has but four, the other two may have run on to eight or ten generations. In 1 Chron. xxiv. 26, 27, a third son, Jaaziah, is attributed to Merari.

66. The questions which Dr. Colenso raises connected with the duties of, and the provision made for, the priests, are of a different character, and must be met on other principles. He argues that, since the priesthood was limited to the male line of Aaron, and, after the death of Nadab and Abihu, there were but two sons of Aaron, there could not have been more than three priests in the wilderness. How could these have accomplished the multifarious duties assigned to them, particularly the sprinkling of the blood of the 150,000 lambs at the Passover anniversary? I reply, Eleazar and Ithamar may have had each numerous sons, though Nadab and Abihu died childless; and, though at the Exode none of these had attained priestly age, yet, seeing that Aaron was now 83 years old, his grandsons may well have been on the verge of 30, and so several, in succession, of each line may have soon taken their place in the priestly band.

67. But, in the opening of the national intercourse with God, there were already persons who had priestly standing, and performed priestly duties; and these seem not to have been Aaron and his sons. For, at the foot of Sinai, when the Law was given, not only was the whole nation set, contingently upon obedience, in a priestly standing, but (Exod. xix. 22) there were certain persons officially recognized as "*the priests*." And, somewhat later, on the summons to Moses and Aaron to come up to the Mount (xxiv. 5), Moses "sent young men, which offered burnt-offerings," &c. The absolute prohibition of all but the seed of Aaron to perform priestly service (Numb. xvi. 40) was not till after the insurrection of Korah; to the date of which we have no certain clue, though the margin of our English Bible puts it conjecturally, *cir.* 1471; that is, about the middle of the wilderness sojourn. It may be, then, that these primal priests for some years had a subordinate service in the sanctuary, till Aaron's grandsons were sufficiently numerous. Much of Dr. Colenso's difficulty is wholly dependent on our ignorance—*how* could they sprinkle

the blood of so many lambs? and is of a Siamese character. Perhaps the blood of many was collected into a common reservoir, and a basin of this being then dipped, the sprinkling of this was reckoned the sprinkling of the whole. Perhaps in other ways the case was met; but our ignorance *how* must not surely overthrow the distinct testimony. Even if the "how?" were absolutely inconceivable, the difficulty would not be greater than the carrying a verbal message from London to Bombay in five minutes would have been to our grandfathers.

68. One of Dr. Colenso's earliest "impossibilities" is, that the congregation could not be "gathered unto the door of the tabernacle" (as commanded by Jehovah, Lev. viii. 3); because, he says, the words "at the door" require that "they must have come within the court" (§ 35). Now only nine men could have stood "at the door," if the words are to be pressed with a literality which would be indeed absurd; and if not, where can we put a limit? If one part of the crowd touched the door, are not the terms met? Then the court itself was merely an inclosure of linen hangings. What if these curtains, of some eight feet high, were unhung for the occasion? There would then be opened an area, before the camp-tents were reached, of 2,000 cubits every way; the tabernacle standing in an open square of 4,000 cubits (7,200 feet) the side. A man could stand in a square cubit well. Now, if we suppose the assembly to have been limited to the east half of the area, facing the tabernacle door, we shall have 8,000,000 square cubits;—that is, standing space for eight millions of men. Whereas, the actual men, 600,000 in number, could be contained in a space of 360 yards wide by 600 yards long. It is highly probable, however, that in this, and many other instances, the "whole congregation" was gathered representatively, by their chief men or heads of families, not individually. For when (Exod. xii. 3) Jehovah commanded Moses and Aaron to "speak to all the congregation of Israel" about the ordinance of the Passover, we are informed that Moses (v. 21) obeyed this command by "calling for all the elders of Israel." And so *this* difficulty melts to nothing.

69. The example of Numb. xvi., on which Dr. Colenso rests to disprove this latter hypothesis, is not conclusive; for the assembly might consist of chief men, from whom the elders might be officially distinct. But here, the congregation, though "gathered unto the door of the tabernacle" (v. 19), were also (in part at least) about the tents of Dathan and Abiram (vv. 24—27), which were not less than 3,600 feet

away. One of two things: either (1) the congregation was one which, while it was "gathered to the door," reached also three-quarters of a mile away; or (2) the congregation was, *in bulk*, occupying its ordinary place in the tents of the camp, while, *in delegate*, it was assembled at the tabernacle door. Either hypothesis consists with the text, and either solves the difficulty.

70. Dr. Colenso has another chapter on this matter. "How is it conceivable that a man should do what [Moses and] Joshua are here said to have done?" (p. 36.) To this it may be replied, "*Qui facit per alium, facit per se.*" In the delivery of the Law to the people at the close of his course, while, from Deut. i. 1, 5; iv. 44, 45; v. 1, &c., it would seem that Moses alone and individually was engaged; yet, from xxvii. 1, we infer that the elders were associated with him in the work, they speaking as his delegates, and so lightening the labour; while yet it was, *essentially*, in each publication, the utterance of Moses. Again, we learn (xxxi. 28—30) that the minatory Song of chap. xxxii., which is said to have been spoken by Moses "in the ears of all the congregation," was actually spoken by him "in the ears" of "the elders of the tribes and their officers." And we may well suppose that Joshua at Mount Ebal (Josh. viii.) availed himself of the like resource, he reading personally to "the elders and officers and judges," or else to the Levites, the words of the Law, which they then repeated in various parts of the assembled crowd. Of course, we need not understand that more than the curses and the blessings of Deut. xxvii. and xxviii. were read; and this reading had been expressly prescribed to the Levites (Deut. xxvii. 14).

71. The "impossibility" of the transaction on Mounts Ebal and Gerizim is so strenuously insisted on, that it comes up again in a later volume of the same work (iii. 539). A good deal of the difficulty is of the character which I call Siamese; "it is not easy to see"—"in what way" this or that was conducted. But an aspect which furnishes another thrust at the populousness of Israel deserves a moment's consideration. If two millions of persons were gathered—"all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them" (Josh. viii. 35), how could they stand? "They would stretch for miles" (§ 774); "no human voice could reach their ears" (§ 41). "Joshua cannot be supposed to have read first to one party, then to another: . . . . the day would not have sufficed" (§ 42). Therefore the account is imaginary.

72. Now, it is admitted that the length of the valley between

the two mountains is three miles, and its breadth 200 to 300 yards. But people in a dense crowd can stand each in 18 inches square. They often do in London streets; not, indeed, comfortably, but endurably. Allowing such a close crowd, 600,000 men could stand in 500 yards length of the valley, the width being 300 yards. For here would be 150,000 square yards, and four men to a square yard = 600,000. More than this is surely not required by the text. To suppose that every woman, and every infant, were present, merely to prove the story false, is to treat the Book of God as we would treat no other book; the words of Josh. viii. 35, legitimately mean no more than that there were women and children and strangers in the crowd, as is always the case in such crowds.

73. But, in the recent accurate survey of Palestine by means of the Exploring Fund, Lieut. Anderson finds and ("Recov. of Jerus." 464) describes and maps, in the side of Ebal, "a break in the regular slope of the hill, and a small, but steep, valley coming up from the vale below almost to the summit, forming a vast natural amphitheatre, in height equal to the mountain. Immediately opposite to this the steep slope of Mount Gerizim is similarly broken by a valley, forming a second natural amphitheatre of equal beauty and grandeur. In these two lateral valleys," continues the describer, "were assembled the twelve tribes of Israel under Joshua, six tribes on Gerizim, and six on Ebal. The Levites and the ark were in the strip of the vale, and the blessings and cursings were read before the whole congregation." Thus writes one, apparently without a misgiving of its truth, who was not only familiar with the scene, but was technically and officially surveying it. This oval amphitheatre is a mile and a half long at the summit, and a half or three quarters of a mile broad. (See the map.) It is 1,200 feet deep.

74. Now, what number of persons could crowd into this area, ready-made and provided for them? Taking, as above, the square cubit of 18 inches as our unit of measure, the area is $5{,}280 \times 1{,}760 = 9{,}292{,}800$ square cubits; to this, if we add a fourth more for the depth, we get upwards of eleven and a half millions of square cubits, or standing-room for an equal number of human beings.

75. I must close. At the outset I had prescribed to myself to adduce evidence that the numerical enunciations of the Old Testament are sound and trustworthy:—that they are, not only not systematically falsified, not exaggerated by wholesale, but, not even corrupted by unintentional infirmity, save in comparatively few examples, easily identified, and without much difficulty corrected. The theses I have essayed to maintain

are:—1. The numbers of the Sacred Narrative,—and more specially the 600,000 of Israel's warriors,—are integral parts of revelation, sustained by an immense array of collateral statements and allusions, of cross references, and computations whose elements are given. 2. Considering the circumstances, the numbers are not improbable, but very highly probable:—the ruling circumstances being—the Will, the Promise, and the Resources, of God. 3. The aim and scope of the Bible are other than are generally appreciated. In maintaining these, I have of necessity taken a place of antagonism to Dr. Colenso and the German school, who reject even the historical verity of the Pentateuch, and also to several much-respected members of this Institute, to whom the honour of God, and the Word of God, I know, are dear. I had intended to take up other points, against which charges have been laid;—the early paternity of Ahaz and of Josiah; the judgment at Bethshemesh; the ark of Noah; the metallic treasure in possession of Israel; the slaughter in battles, the captives, and the plunder; high numbers in the later historical books;—and I think that something in vindication might be said on all these points, without resting much on the suggested resource of error through confusion of consimilar abbreviant symbols.

76. But the length of this paper warns me that if these points be further discussed, either *seriatim* or in association, it must be on another occasion. And thus I relinquish the momentous subject, soliciting pardon of God if I have dishonoured Him in darkening counsel by words without knowledge, and also of my respected antagonists if I have been betrayed into any words unseemly towards them.

"Non mea, sed tua sunt, quæ sunt bona: non tua certè,
Sed mea sunt, si quæ sunt mala, summe Deus!
Nos tibi pro donis Grates quas possumus: at Tu
Suscipe quæ tua sunt, corrige quæ mea sunt."

The Chairman.—I am sure it will be your pleasure to return a vote of thanks to Mr. Gosse for his paper. But before inviting any discussion upon it, there is another on the same subject, which has been prepared by Mr. Moule, and probably it will be better to read that now, and then take the consideration of the two papers together.

The Rev. H. Moule then read the following paper:—