

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php

JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute,
OR
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

EDITED BY THE HONORARY SECRETARY.

VOL. V.



LONDON :

(Published for the Institute)

ROBERT HARDWICKE, 192, PICCADILLY.

1871.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

ORDINARY MEETING, FEBRUARY 7, 1870.

THE REV. WALTER MITCHELL, M.A., VICE-PRESIDENT, IN THE
CHAIR.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

The election was announced of the following member :—

J. N. Goren, Esq., M.A., 6 Stone Buildings, Lincoln's Inn.

The Rev. Dr. THORNTON then read the following paper :—

ON THE NUMERICAL SYSTEM OF THE OLD TESTA-
MENT. By the Rev. ROBINSON THORNTON, D.D., *Head*
Master of Epsom College, VICE-PRES. Vict. Inst.

IT will appear at first sight a somewhat anomalous proceed-
ing for a member of this Institute deliberately to argue,
as I am going to argue, in favour of views held and published
by one whom we all look upon as the very embodiment of
Scriptural scepticism—I mean Dr. Colenso. In his too well-
known Essay on the Pentateuch he devotes page after page to
the examination of the numbers recorded in that portion of
the Old Testament, and draws from his criticism the conclu-
sion that there has been a systematic falsification of those
numbers, and that consequently every one of the Books in
which they are found is entirely untrustworthy, and rather to
be accounted as a clumsy legend than as the Word of God. I
am about to follow him in his criticism, though not in his con-
clusions. Such a proceeding seems to need some apology ;
mine will be this, that I am writing in the interests of that
Scripture which I criticise. I propose to make my remarks
entirely independent of what he has written. To analyse and
comment upon his treatise *against* the Pentateuch (I prefer
the preposition I have employed to the milder *upon*) would be,
in my opinion, not exactly within our province, as being liable
to lead us into matters theological.

2. I cannot help remarking here that there must be some
ground for his assertions. They are not entirely the creations
of his own brain, evolved out of his own individual conscious-

ness. There must be some difficulty, some apparent, if not real, unsuitableness in Old Testament numbers, to form the basis of his sceptical structure; some spark, to account for all the volumes of smoke which he has emitted, to cloud both the sacred page and the mind of the believer. And it is our duty as seekers after, and champions of, truth, to agree with him where he is right, and not to consign his statements as a whole to the region of condemned falsehoods. If he has really found a weak point in our popular belief, it is not our duty only, but our interest, to give up that point, 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. Indeed, there is nothing, perhaps, which has more tended to alienate men of science from religion, and to bring about the present attitude of the scientific world towards the Christian Church, than the dogged and inflexible manner in which believers have maintained, as if part of the Christian faith, propositions at variance with philosophy, and either not really deducible at all from the words of revelation, or, if deducible from the letter, not necessarily and unavoidably so resulting. Revelation tells us of sunrise and sunset; and we may deduce from these words that the sun moves, while the earth remains still. But the conclusion is not inevitable, for the words may be used in a popular sense; and thousands of people, who carp at the unscientific phraseology of Scripture, do habitually use these words without thinking what an inference may be drawn from them. To insist upon this one conclusion, and to maintain it as an article of the faith, was the error of Galileo's opponents; and the error has remained even to the present time.

3. As I have thus frankly avowed our own faults, I take the liberty of digressing a little, to add that our opponents are by no means free from it. They insist upon affixing to Scriptural expressions one meaning and one only, and that the most unscientific they can discover, and then discuss leisurely the incorrectness and errors of the Bible, without listening to any declaration of the real signification of the statements they criticise. Thus, the *rakia'*, because, forsooth, the LXX. renders it *σφαιρωμα*, "firmament," means "something solid"; and we are not allowed to plead that the word signifies simply *extension*, and has nothing to do (necessarily) with *solidity*. Or, if we read of hares chewing the cud, we are told this means that they are ruminants with four stomachs, and cannot mean anything else; and are silenced or disregarded if we argue that there is nothing about stomachs in the word *garar*; that

it simply signifies to saw, and thence to chew, and that hares do constantly regurgitate (*he'elah*, cause to ascend) food and masticate it over again.

4. To return to my subject. We have no right, I say, to maintain an untenable point, any more than we or our opponents are at liberty to select one out of several possible meanings of a word or passage in Scripture, and insist upon it, in the teeth of all arguments to the contrary, as the only correct one. Such a point, I confess, I consider the numbers of the Old Testament to be. I cannot look upon them as trustworthy; in fact, I believe many of them to be incorrect: and I hold that believers will be doing a service to the truth by surrendering them, and acknowledging that they are probably inaccurate. Such an avowal will render nine-tenths of Colenso's essays powerless, and will cut the ground from beneath a number of sceptical arguments. I assert it to be a duty of our Institute to look into this matter, and,—while we mercilessly examine the hasty conclusions and unsupported dicta of our scientific opponents, and show their want of true philosophy and rigid inductive logic,—to prevent the faithful from forcing upon the belief of doubters and waverers, as revelation, what was really not revealed at all.

5. The numerical difficulty which first struck me, now some years ago, and before Colenso's books were published, was not suggested by an intellectual Zulu, but presented itself to my mind when I read in the books of the Kings and Chronicles that Ahaz began to reign at 20 and reigned sixteen years, and that Hezekiah succeeded him at the age of 25. Could Ahaz be a father at 11 years old? for there is no hint or appearance of an interregnum. The LXX., it is true, probably has twenty-five years instead of twenty in the passage in Chronicles; but even this reading is not certain; and the Greek in Kings, and the Hebrew (as we have it) in both passages, have simply 20. The Vulgate follows the Hebrew. Here was a plain case of incorrectness in numbers, or rather in notation. Was it not possible that other instances of inaccuracy in numbers might occur?

6. Of King Josiah we read that he began to reign at the age of 8, and reigned thirty-one years. He was succeeded, not immediately, but within the year, by his son Eliakim, or Jehoiakim, aged 25. He must have been born when Josiah was only 14: a state of things which I believe I am right in terming scarcely possible.

7. Then I came to that remarkable, and to me convincing, passage in 1 Samuel vi. 19: "He smote the men of Beth-she-mesh, because they had looked into the Ark of the Lord, even

he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men." This extraordinary statement is distinctly made in the Hebrew text, as we have it, in the LXX., and in the Vulgate. Fifty thousand, however, can hardly be accepted as a correct number. It is nearly one-tenth of the whole number given as the fighting force of the Israelites at the Exodus, and two-thirds of that given as the force of Judah. It is just one-tenth of that given as the male population of Judah in the time of David. It is seven times the male population of Gibeah, an important town, in the time of the Judges. It is more than the whole population of many a considerable town in our own country. Fifty thousand grown men imply a population of 175,000 in all. Fifty thousand corpses would make a heap of very nearly twenty yards in length, breadth, and height. But it is a number which long ago attracted notice. Dr. Kennicott thought the reading incorrect. Tindal, in his *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, sneers at the whole transaction, without, however, insisting so strongly as one would expect on the enormous number of 50,000. Waterland answers him by giving another rendering of the passage, "seventy out of fifty thousand." This involves the insertion of the preposition "out of," and the improbable number of 50,000 for the male population of the inconsiderable town of Beth-shemesh. Bochart, in his *Hierozyicon*, observes that (as the Hebrew runs, literally translated, "seventy men fifty thousand men") the meaning probably is "seventy men, viz., fifty out of a thousand," as if the seventy smitten were one-twentieth of the whole population of the town. In short, it is clear that there is an error as regards number in the statement, whatever mode may be adopted of rectifying that error.

8. It is not the primary object of my paper to suggest probable emendations. What I wish to prove and to impress upon others is, that there is reason for thinking the numbers, as read in our text of the Old Testament, to be corrupt; and if so, that we shall, by acknowledging it, remove a great stumbling-block from the way of those who are tempted to doubt. It is not my intention, nor is it the object of this Institute, to enter upon textual criticism or hypothetical emendations. Still I think I shall be pardoned if I suggest that in the *old* Hebrew character, the symbols of "out of a thousand" and "fifty thousand" might be most easily mistaken for one another, and that the seventy itself is but a mistake for the indefinite number seven. Those who understand Hebrew are aware that the tens are expressed by the plurals of the units: "seventy" is in Hebrew expressed by "sevens." Here is an easy opportunity for error; to which we may add

that, though the character expressing seventy is not particularly like that denoting seven, the names of the letters, 'Ain and Zain, are not unlike one another. In short, I understand the passage to mean that as many as a thousand *people* gathered about the Ark (the Vulgate makes a difference which is not in the Hebrew, between *septuaginta viros* and *quingquaginta millia plebis*), and that out of them several presumptuous men were struck dead whose sacrilegious curiosity had led them to profane the hallowed shrine of God.

9. These two, or perhaps three, instances of plain incorrectness in numerals led me to the conclusion which I have now ventured to put before you. I shall proceed to examine a few more details.

10. The earliest numbers, or sets of numbers, which we meet with in the Old Testament are, I need hardly say, those representing the ages of the antediluvians and of the early postdiluvians. An investigation of these belongs to a subject on which I do not propose to touch, Bible chronology. Let me only take this occasion of protesting against the elevation of Archbishop Ussher's chronology into an article of faith. With the highest respect for Ussher's learning, ingenuity, industry, and accuracy, I must decline to hold him infallible. Yet there are those who consider it scepticism and irreligion to doubt whether the Tower of Babel were built exactly 2,233 years before the Christian era, or to suggest that 1,491 does not necessarily show the exact number of years that passed between the Exodus and the theoretical date of the Nativity. With regard to the numbers themselves, I would suggest that, as our Hebrew text reads them one way, the Samaritan Pentateuch another, and the LXX. another, we may be excused for doubting whether we have the right numerals at all, and are by no means justified in insisting upon them in the teeth of scientific calculations.

11. The size of the Ark, or giant vessel constructed by Noah, has appeared to some unwieldy. But it is not monstrous. Reckoning the cubit at 1 ft. 6 in., we have the dimensions 450 feet length, 75 feet breadth, 45 feet height. We have no ancient vessel whose magnitude has been recorded approaching this in size, with a few exceptions: the vast galley said to have been constructed by Archimedes for Hiero, a naval edifice which we may banish to the region of the mermaid and the kraken; the cedar ship of Sesostris mentioned by Diodorus, and the Isis of Ptolemy Philopator, by Athenæus, to each of which is assigned a length of 280 cubits, or 420 feet. The vessel of Noah, however, was not intended for navigation, but for safety; and though we may reasonably doubt whether

Sesostris or Ptolemy or Hiero really had, as a matter of fact, such enormous ships constructed, there is no reason why Noah's vessel should not have reached the recorded size. One of the largest vessels in the English navy (the *Aboukir*) is, I believe, 241 feet in length by 60 in breadth; the *Great Eastern*, 324 by 51. In the size of the Ark there is, therefore, no antecedent improbability.* The next number that we meet with, the 318 trained servants of Abraham, is probably correct: it is just about the number of armed retainers we could expect a powerful sheikh of those days to be able to bring into the field.

12. But we now arrive at a number which has been a difficulty and an offence to many, and is, so to speak, the very basis of the operations of Dr. Colenso and his followers against the authenticity of the Old Testament,—I mean the number of the Israelites who passed the Red Sea into the Desert of Sinai. They are said to have been 600,000 men, besides children. A year and a month afterwards they amount to 603,550, besides the Levites, some 20,000 in number. And these having all died, their representative progeny, forty years after, amount to 601,730. I do not hesitate to say that I consider these numbers to be very different from those originally written by Moses. It is usually argued that such a multiplication was impossible without an absolute miracle. This argument, it appears to me, will not hold water. We are given to understand that the Israelites in Egypt were exceptionally blessed with issue. Now, if we suppose 70 men to have come down into Egypt, and each man in 35 years to have reared, on an average, 10 children, five of them boys, we should have, at the end of 35 years, 350 males; at the end of 70, 1,750; at the end of 175 years, 218,750; and at the close of the 210 years of sojourn, 1,093,750. I say 210 years, because (as the Palestine Targum explains) the 430 years mentioned in connection with the sojourn in Egypt are counted from Abraham's going down into that country. Now, adding half of each of these last two generations together, to represent those within the military age, we have 656,250. It is possible,

* I took these dimensions from a treatise on "The Ship," by F. Steinitz. Admiral Fishbourne very kindly writes to me as follows:—"You have been misinformed as to the dimensions of the *Great Eastern*, and have given those of the *Great Britain*. There are very many ships over 400 feet long now. The length of the *Great Eastern* is over 600 feet, and her breadth 82. . . . My belief is that the ark was 300 royal cubits of 24 inches; . . . and many have been built somewhat like the *Baron Renfrew*, of whole logs of timber." Its size was, therefore, as I have stated, by no means incredibly great. There is no reason to imagine that we have not the original number as given by Moses.—R. T.

therefore, that there may have been about 600,000 men of war, all descendants of the 70 who came down into Egypt 210 years before. It is possible, I say; but is it probable?

13. (1.) Could so large a number have dwelt in all Lower Egypt, not to mention the land of Goshen, to which they appear to have been restricted? The number of 600,000 men implies a population of 2,000,000 at least; the Targum of Palestine says that each man had five children with him, which, allowing each man one wife only, makes a total of 4,200,000. It adds that the "mixed multitude" amounted to 240 myriads; so that the total number of fugitives reached 6,600,000. Evidently Rabbi Jonathan ben Uzziel did not want to help us out of a difficulty, as he added this trifle of 6,000,000 to the already large number of 600,000. But adhering to the lower figure, 2,000,000, can we 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. I say known, because it is likely that some parts of China, as yet unvisited, are more densely peopled.

14. (2.) These 600,000 men, or rather more, nearly 620,000, as numbered in the wilderness, all died in the course of their forty years' wandering. Of these we are told 14,700 died in one fearful visitation, 24,000 in another, and some smaller number on two other occasions. But allowing 50,000 for those who died on these occasions, and supposing them all to be men, we still have 570,000 men dying in forty years, or very nearly forty per day. And as the women were not exempt from the common lot of humanity, the daily death-rate, excluding those who perished by pestilence, must have been at least fifty. Is this probable? I am not objecting to the number of deaths per thousand per annum; a death-rate of one-fortieth, or twenty-five in a thousand, is not a high one. The present rate in London and Paris is about twenty-seven, and in some of our unhealthier towns far higher. What appears to me enormous is not the proportion, but the actual number of dead bodies collected within a limited space.

15. (3.) 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.

16. The words translated six hundred thousand might, by a little straining, be rendered one thousand six hundred. This number of adult males would imply a total population of about 6,000, a manageable number. But I must frankly avow my belief that the word thousand, *eleph*, is an insertion; and that the subsequent numbers have been amplified by some similar misunderstanding; that 600 armed warriors, with a retinue of 2,000 or more, escaped from Goshen, crossed the Red Sea, and wandered and died in the Desert. The increase of the seventy original males into a total of 2,500 in 210 years is much above the ordinary rate. Taking $\frac{1}{210}$ th as yearly increase, a fraction which, I believe, represents the ordinary annual rate in France, we shall get about 360 as the progeny of 140 likely to be existing at the end of 210 years, at the average rate of increase in an old country here in the West. But the Hebrews increased exceptionally, and numbered some 2,500 at the end of that time; the progeny, doubtless, of others beside the seventy heads of tribal divisions who came into Egypt. We shall find similar misconceptions of numbers if we examine some subsidiary numbers in the account of the wanderings in the Desert. In the plague which ensued upon the matter of Peor, 24,000 are said to have died. The pestilence seems to have lasted but a few days, so that the daily death-rate must have been enormous; far exceeding that terrible mortality at Paris in the year 1832, when the cholera first appeared, and in six months carried off 18,000 victims out of a population of less than 900,000. What can have been done with the corpses? In cities or extended tracts of country furnished with all appliances for the burial of the dead, we can understand how a large number may be disposed of in a given time; but how could the 24,000, or the 14,700 who died in the matter of Korah, have been prevented from poisoning the whole locality by their decomposition? I shall be told that the dry sands of the Desert, by their desiccative power, destroyed or neutralized all that was pestilential. I must, however, doubt whether 24,000 corpses, interred at once within a limited space, would not severely tax these desiccative powers. It seems as if the whole Desert must have become a very *Aceldama*.

17. The spoil taken from the Midianites, as recorded in the 31st chapter of Numbers, is expressed in very high figures. I will not say much of the 675,000 sheep, the 72,000 oxen, and the 61,000 asses; those who have travelled with Tartar hordes, or even with wandering Arabs, speak of countless

herds and flocks as forming part of the cavalcade. The weight of the gold offering, too, 316 lb. avoirdupois, is not overwhelming. But 32,000 virgins! Surely there must be some inaccuracy here. These 32,000 virgins had at least 10,000 fathers and 10,000 mothers, and probably 30,000 brothers; and all these 50,000 people were to be put to the sword. Again I ask, what became of the corpses?

18. I shall trouble you with one more set of numbers from the Pentateuch. In the 38th chapter of Exodus, we have given us a sum total of the metal used in the work of the tabernacle, given in talents and shekels. There is some variation in the estimate formed by different writers of the value of the shekel, as represented by our own weights. On the authority of Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, I put the talent of gold at 1,320,000 grains, 7,000 of which go to a pound avoirdupois; and the shekel consequently at 132 grains. On the same authority I make the shekel of silver weigh 220 grains, and the talent 660,000; the shekel of copper 264 grains, and the talent 792,000. At this rate the 29 talents 730 shekels of gold weighed 2 tons, 7 cwt., 2 qrs., 19½ lb.; the 100 talents 1,775 shekels of silver 4 tons, 4 cwt., 2 qrs., 20½ lb.; and the brass or copper (70 talents 2,400 shekels, 3 tons, 11 cwt., 2 qrs., 2½ lb.): total, upwards of ten tons. All this had to be transported from place to place, with boards, hangings, and other fittings. Is there not some misapprehension of figures here? The gold by itself, at 3l. 5s. the ounce troy, would be worth 259,840l.; a large sum for the Israelites to have become possessed of by borrowing from the Egyptians.

19. In the 35th chapter of Numbers we have, on the other hand, a figure which, though it contains the fatal word thousand, has every appearance of being handed down to us without exaggeration; although, curiously enough, there seems to be a false reading in our Hebrew text, corrected in the LXX. The *migrash*, or "suburb" of the Levitical city was to extend 2,000 cubits, or a little more than half a mile each way from the city. The Hebrew says first a thousand, and then two thousand; but the latter is given by the LXX. and the Vulgate in both cases; the latter substituting, in the 4th verse, *mille passuum* for *mille cubiti*.

20. The Book of Joshua presents no numerical difficulties to the reader; but in that of Judges we find again the same misapprehension and distortion of numbers as I have pointed out in our text of the Books of Moses. The six hundred men slain by Shamgar, if not supposed to have been all killed on one occasion, may be considered a possible number, and Jabin's 900 chariots of iron a probable one, as probable as the 600

chariots of Pharaoh which pursued the departing Hebrews. But we find in the 8th chapter that the Midianites brought into the field 135,000 men, and that of these 120,000 were slain. Similarly in the 12th chapter we find in the feud between Gilead and Ephraim, 42,000 of the latter—more than the tribe amounted to according to the first numbering under Moses, and far more than given as the result of the second numbering—were massacred. Compare these with historical numbers. At the battle of Waterloo, where the forces of three great nations, with their auxiliaries, met in the field, the whole number engaged was not 175,000, inclusive of the 36,000 under Blucher; and the total loss, killed, wounded, and missing, amounted to about 23,000 on the side of the allies, and 37,000 on that of the French; 60,000 in all. Of these probably not one quarter were actually slain on the spot; but reckoning them all as “smitten,” the total is only half of what the Midianites are said to have lost. In the massacre of the Huguenots, in 1572, the number put to death, in various parts of France, was, according to De Thou, about 30,000; five-sevenths of the number of Ephraimites stated to have been slain at one place and one time. I must add to my list of improbable massacres the thousand men said to have been slain by Samson at one time with the ass’s jawbone. Consider what a number of blows it would require to deprive a thousand men of life. Consider the time which the carnage would employ; for, allowing but half a minute to each, it would take more than eight hours; consider the effects of leaving a pile of 1,000 unburied bodies beneath a Syrian sun! Happily in this passage we have a clue to the origin of the error. The poetical number, “a thousand,” used in Samson’s metrical song of victory, has evidently been permitted to take the place of the authentic number; but it no more means that 1,000 men were actually slain, than the song of the women after the slaughter of Goliath meant that myriads had fallen by the stripling’s hand. On the other hand, the Philistines gathered together to make sport over Samson in his captivity, do not seem exaggerated. The house, it is said, was full of men and women, and upon the roof were about 3,000. A gathering of 5,000 or 6,000 on such an occasion is far from improbable; and the percentage killed by the fall of the edifice, though not so great as that which would express the effect of the fall of one of our cathedrals, would, doubtless, be high enough to justify the statement that Samson slew more in his death than in his life, which would hardly be the case if we are to take into consideration the thousand we have just been discussing, said to have been slain at Lehi.

21. The affair of Gibeah, as recorded in the last three chapters of Judges, introduces us to some more apparently excessive and inconsistent numbers. This affair is generally referred to the earlier period of the Judges; some put it within fifty years from the passage of Jordan. In it we are told that the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were 400,000 men; and it is particularly stated that all Israel, including Gilead, that is, the trans-Jordanic tribes, were gathered together. Benjamin amounted to 26,700. So Israel had decreased by nearly 200,000, and the tribe of Benjamin by some 9,000, since the Exodus. At the second numbering Benjamin is said to have mustered 45,600 men; so that the tribe must have decreased by nearly 19,000 in no very great space of time. But these 26,700 men, of a rapidly decreasing tribe, were able to kill first 22,000, and then 18,000 of Israel, and that without the loss of more than 1,000 men; for 25,100 Benjamites were slain subsequently at Gibeah, Rimmon, and Gideon, and 600 escaped, and ultimately resuscitated the tribe, to become, though small, a very important one, inasmuch as it produced two Sauls, the King and the Apostle. It could muster 1,000 repentant men to meet David on his return from banishment, in spite of the loss of 360 in Ish-bosheth's rebellion, and furnish 380,000 body-guards in the time of Jehoshaphat.

22. The fifty children of Priam have always been considered as legendary; but they are nearly equalled by the forty sons of Abdon, and the forty-two brethren of Ahaziah, King of Judah, if they were brothers, not relatives only, and surpassed by the thirty sons and thirty daughters of Ibzan, and the seventy sons of Jerubbaal and King Ahab. Polygamy, perhaps, may render these numbers possible; there may be in Utah at the present day families as numerous. Still it is rather remarkable that we hear of but one single child of Solomon's, though his harem is said to have contained the enormous number of 1,000 women.

23. I have already discussed the 50,070 men said to have been smitten in Beth-shemesh. Besides this, the books of Samuel present us with two other apparently inconsistent numbers. The whole force of Israel and Judah mustered by Saul after a solemn summons amounts to 330,000. It is probable, however, that this and the 300,000 gathered in Telaim represents only a fraction of the whole fighting force. If not, it is quite irreconcilable with the census held by David some seventy or eighty years after, when the adult male population of Israel and Judah amounted, according to the Book of Samuel, to 1,300,000; according to that of Chronicles,

1,570,000. The discrepancy between these two is not great; but the fact of there being any difference at all, I think, tends to prove my point. The number, whether we take the higher or the lower, seems to me probably a correct one. It would imply a total population of about 5,000,000 or 6,000,000; half of the number we obtain by calculating the increase on 2,000,000 (the supposed number who came out of Egypt) at the rate of $\frac{1}{337}$ per annum for 475 years. But, though we find Judah numbered in 1 Chronicles at 470,000 only, still 100 years later, in the time of Jehoshaphat, the kingdom of Judah could muster, exclusive of Benjamin, 780,000.

24. But I will refrain from wearying you with tedious details. I will call your attention to a very few points more. The 7,000 who followed Ahab, king of Israel, killed, we are told, 100,000 Syrians in one day: that is, more than fourteen each; and 27,000 were killed by an accident on Aphek; so that the whole Syrian force seems to have been nearly 150,000. Can we consider that we have here the number really intended by the inspired historian? Or again, to turn to a different subject-matter, we read in the 1st Book of Chronicles that David prepared 3,000 talents of gold and 7,000 talents of silver; and his princes offered more than 5,000 talents of gold and 10,000 talents of silver; that is to say, David left to Solomon, in all, more than 673 tons of gold and 715 of silver! And on a certain day, we are told, they offered as burnt-offerings 1,000 bullocks, 1,000 rams, and 1,000 lambs. Can these be correct figures? Again, Solomon is said to have had 153,300 (the 2nd Book of Chronicles says 153,600) hands employed in bearing burdens and quarrying for the Temple, and offered at the dedication 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep; and yet this Temple, according to our text, was only 105 feet long, 30 broad, and 45 high, with a porch of 30 feet by 15; and a "house, that is the temple before it," *i.e.*, an outer court, of 60 feet in length, and an oracle, or chancel, as we should term it, of 30 feet long, broad, and high. These dimensions are as much under the mark as the other numbers I have just stated are above it; they are exceeded, I imagine, by every cathedral in England. The total length, court, porch, house, and oracle was but 225 feet, not half the length of St. Paul's (510 feet), not so much as the transeptal breadth from north to south portico (282 feet). Surely the great Temple of Solomon, the centre of worship for 5,000,000 of people, with all its golden, and silver, and brazen furniture, was larger than an ordinary parish church!

25. I will trouble you with only one detail more. When the children at Bethel, the stronghold of Israelite idolatry,

jeered at the prophet Elisha, urged to it no doubt by idol-worshipping parents, the honour of God's minister was vindicated by the punishment of the offenders. Two she-bears (the ferocity of the Syrian bear, especially the female, is well known) tare forty and two children of them. Can we accept this reading? Can we suppose that forty-two children were then and there destroyed by two animals? A very slight modification of the Hebrew would enable us to render "two out of those forty children," a rendering which seems very likely to give us the real number both of offenders and sufferers.

26. This is by no means an exhaustive treatise on the numbers recorded in our present text of the Old Testament; but they are sufficient, I think, to raise a discussion on the whole numerical system, as we at present have it, of the Hebrew Scriptures. I have, as I confessed at the outset, been treading in the steps of Dr. Colenso and his school. I rejoice to find, however, that I am not singular in so doing. Dr. Payne Smith, the Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, in his Bampton Lectures, distinctly avows it as his opinion that the Israelites at the Exodus did not exceed 80,000 in number, and that the actual descendants of Jacob were considerably fewer. Less than a hundredth part, I should say, as I have already said.

27. But though I agree with one of Colenso's premises, I do not with his conclusions. He argues, "These numbers are incredible, therefore the whole Scripture is untrustworthy." I argue, "Scripture is true, but these numbers are incredible, therefore they are not part of Scripture." I am not an opponent of the Book, but of a part of the received text. I am on the side of patriarchs, priests, and prophets, but against the upholders of Masoretic tradition. The numbers recorded in our Scriptures stand on a very different footing from the facts; and while I cling most stoutly to the facts as recorded, I give up the numbers. The Red Sea and the Jordan were divinely and miraculously divided, and the Israelites did pass through, led by the pillar of cloud and fire: but there were not two millions of them. The sacrilegious men of Beth-she-mesh were smitten, but there were not 50,070 of them. The Ephraimites were massacred, but not 42,000 of them. Samson did slay a number of his enemies with that rude weapon which Divine might made in his hands as effective as the sharpest and weightiest falchion; but he did not kill a thousand in one day. Solomon was gifted with wisdom and riches by the Most High, and built a sumptuous temple to His honour; but he had not so much as 673 tons of gold, or £71,500,000, and the Temple was more than 200 feet long.

28. As I do not hold that the credibility of Scripture as regards matters of fact is in the least degree impaired by the false readings of numbers which have crept into the text, so neither do I admit the sceptical conclusion that there has been "systematic exaggeration." Anything more unsystematic than their errors it would be very difficult to find; nor are they always exaggerated. Sometimes numbers appear enormously—if I were not speaking of a Sacred Book, I should say ludicrously—in excess; sometimes they come short of what seems most likely to be the truth; sometimes they are palpably correct and authentic. There has been no failure, as the infidel would have us believe, either on the part of the Divine or the human author, nor any villany on the part of the keepers of Holy Writ; only a few trivial mistakes on the part of the scribe, a few slight misapprehensions on the part of the reader.

29. But some one may reply,—“Why decline to accept these numbers as we have them? Were not the Israelites living under a dispensation full of miracles? Could not the Almighty have slain, if He so willed, 50,070 men, and then annihilated their corpses, so as to preserve the vicinity from pestilence? Could He not have enabled Samson to slay his thousand in the twinkling of an eye, and to dispose of their bodies before nightfall?” I answer, that there is no doubt of the infinite power of the Most High: most surely He *could*, but *did* He? It is not said that there were any special miracles beyond the single marvellous fact itself. We are not told of any special exertion of Divine power to enable a million of worshippers to take part in the great Paschal sacrifice within a space so contracted as the Temple, even supposing its outer courts included in the consecrated space. That is to my mind a low view of miracle, which tends to the acknowledging a number of miracles wrought *pro re nata*, or, what I may call a waste of miraculous power. When once I read that the Almighty did a certain thing, it is enough for me; but I decline to accept numerical accompaniments which would render necessary a series of subsidiary miracles.

30. There is little difficulty in assigning reasons for the alteration of numbers, while the history of facts remains incorrupt.

31. (1.) The word for *thousand* in Hebrew (*eleph*) also means *ox*. This may have led to one or two mistakes, if not more.

32. (2.) Marginal comments, and corrections, and the figures heading *haphtoroth*, or liturgical sections, may have become incorporated with the text.

33. (3.) The language of Scripture is popular, not scientific, and we therefore find round numbers used; and in poetical passages there is, no doubt, the same poetic freedom used that we find in the poetry of every age and nation. The man who said he had seen the ceremonies of the 9th of November hundreds of times did not intend to tell a falsehood; he merely employed the popular (and highly incorrect) mode of expressing that he had seen them a greater number of times than he could readily reckon up. So "hundreds," and "thousands," in poetry or *quasi-poetry*, simply mean large companies. Those philosophers who object to popular language must, as I have already hinted, cease to talk of *sunrise* and *sunset*, and of *moonlight* too; they must not think of *shooting game*, because they shoot (O.E. *scytan*, to send forth) the shot, not the animal; they must not say that they string their harps, guitars, or violins, with *catgut*, nor that they place their valuable papers in a *tin* box. If they use such phrases themselves, they must permit the employment of similar modes of expression in the Book which is intended for all men and for all time.

34. (4.) Besides the use of round numbers, there was a tendency on the part of scribes, if not of authors, to employ multiples of the sacred numbers 3, 7, 10. Seventies particularly come under this remark. Indeed, if we may reverently say so, we have the highest sanction for considering them mere symbolic numbers: it was never meant that our forgiveness should cease at the 490th offence.

35. (5.) But the most fertile source of errors in the text of Scripture as regards numbers is the very inartificial manner in which those numbers were represented. There were no special marks to represent numbers, such as we employ; the numerals we call Arabic were used in India at an early period, but were not brought westward till considerably later. The letters of the alphabet were employed to signify units, tens, and hundreds; two dashes or dots after a letter made it represent so many thousands. A smear therefore, or a blot, would raise an authentic into a highly-exaggerated number. Again, numbers might be mistaken for words, and words for numbers; and the letters themselves might be easily mistaken one for another. In the square Hebrew character which we now use, Resh and Daleth, He and Kheth, Teth and Mem, Ghimel and Nun, Zain and Nun final, Mem final and Samech, are very similar; that is, 4 and 200, 5 and 8, 9 and 40, 3 and 50, 7 and 700, 60 and 600, might readily be interchanged. In the Samaritan alphabet, 2, 4, 200 (Beth, Daleth, Resh), 10 and 90 (Yod and Tsade), 9 and 70 (Teth and 'Ain), 1 and 400

(Aleph and Thau), are almost exactly alike; and in the older Hebrew character, Beth, Nun, and Caph, Gimel and Phe, Daleth and Resh, Vau and Thau, Tsade and Shin, are easily confounded.

36. It is worthy of remark, however, that as the LXX. contains all the exaggerated or diminished numbers, and occasionally varies from the received Hebrew text, the great majority of the errors must have crept in before that translation was commenced in the third century before Christ.

37. I have now completed the task I had proposed, namely, to lay before you my reasons for believing that we must not attach any weight to the present Hebrew text of the Old Testament as regards numbers. I believe, as I have already said, that such an opinion is compatible with the most firm belief in the truth of Holy Scripture, as regards the facts recorded therein and the doctrines it teaches, and that it removes a stumbling-block out of the way of many who are weak in the faith. To refuse to examine this opinion, and to decline discussion of the subject, would be to fall into that slavery to manuscripts of which St. Augustin (*De Doct. Chr.*, iii. 5) does not express himself too strongly when he says: "Ea demum est miserabilis animi servitus, signa pro rebus accipere, et supra creaturam corpoream oculum mentis ad hauriendum æternum lumen levare non posse."

The CHAIRMAN.—I call upon you to return thanks to Dr. Thornton for this important and valuable paper; and I shall now be glad to hear any observations which any gentlemen may wish to offer, and I hope we shall have a valuable discussion.

Rev. C. A. Row.—As I may have to leave early to-night, I will take the liberty of commencing the discussion. I am sure we owe great thanks to Dr. Thornton for coming forward to deal with this numerical difficulty, which we all undoubtedly feel. I am not prepared to endorse everything which is contained in this paper; but it is only those who have written and laboured in defence of revelation who know what are the difficulties which are raised both as to things contained in the Scriptures and as to the nature of their inspiration. I do not think it is necessary to accept everything in this paper, but Dr. Thornton has undoubtedly laid his hands on the great bulk of the numerical difficulties of the Old Testament. I do not attach the blame to Moses and to the other inspired writers; but looking on history generally, I may express the feeling that the difficulty with regard to numbers is enormous. In reading the papers which contained the accounts of the American civil war, I never could accept the numbers of those slain in battle as set down on paper; and it yet remains for us to get some accurate account hereafter from reliable sources. When we have to write history, I am satisfied that when the figures are taken

from popular tradition instead of from authentic documents, enormous exaggerations of numbers creep in. Now look at this point a little, for Dr. Thornton has done well to bring it forward. I was born in the year after the battle of Waterloo, and I lived in the immediate vicinity of one of our greatest seaports. I have often spoken there with men who were actively engaged in the great French war, and had there been no literature on that subject, and had I now to sit down and write a history from those men's stories—who were perfectly honest so far as they knew and believed—I should write a history which would be filled with enormous exaggerations. Take one case more. I have myself conversed with persons who took an active part in the defence of Plymouth, when the French and Spanish fleets were off that place. If I were to give an account of that and of the unprepared state of the town from the verbal reports which I have heard, I should write matter which would contain the greatest exaggeration of the real facts. Look at the numbers of men employed in the great French wars. The largest number of men ever moved in the course of those wars was contained in the great expedition of Napoleon into Russia; but there is a great difference between the estimated numbers on paper and the number of those who were really mustered under the standard. The general idea in this country—the traditional idea—was that those numbers were much greater than they were. It was commonly imagined that the number of men Napoleon had to invade England with was vastly in excess of what the number really was—some 110,000 or 120,000 men. We had an idea that the numbers were enormous. We always thought that one Englishman could easily thrash three Frenchmen (laughter), and when we got into any difficulty in fighting with the French, it was always thought that the number of the enemy must be very large indeed to account for it. Even within the last two years we have very nearly seen a frightful myth introduced into history; and even with the best information it is often very difficult to keep such things out. I allude to the story of Lord Brougham about the passing of the first Reform Act, which has been refuted by Earl Grey in the life of his father lately published. We are entirely indebted to Earl Grey for abolishing that myth. But I want to go a little further back, and show the general tendency to this sort of thing. At the time of the civil war of Charles I. there were means of obtaining accurate ideas of numbers, but I am unable to accept the numbers which were given in connection with the civil wars of the Roses. Then take the number of those who came over to England with William I. The number is commonly given at 60,000. Now I do not know what Freeman's estimate is, but I do know that Keightley has brought the number down to 20,000. The popular idea, however, is that there were 60,000 men with William, and when you consider that that was half the force which the mighty Napoleon could have brought into the field, that shows how immense is the tendency in the popular mind to exaggerate numbers. The old accounts of such things are simple incredibilities which we cannot at all believe. But I come now to more tangible ground, where we are acquainted with the facts. Any one who has read the first decade of Livy must feel assured that

the numbers given by him are thoroughly and entirely unauthentic. The nations around Rome must have been more prolific than rats and mice, if the numbers are correctly represented. (Laughter.) The account is entirely and purely unbelievable. Go further back, and you find still the same thing. Take the invasion of Greece by Xerxes. Two eminent historians, Thirlwall and Grote, have analysed the numbers said to have been employed by Xerxes in his invasion. Now I apprehend that it is impossible that an invading army should vastly exceed the population of the country itself; but it is stated that Xerxes carried with him 5,000,000 people, the whole number of his fighting forces amounting to 1,800,000. How would it have been possible to have procured provisions for them? The moment Xerxes advanced beyond Thermopylæ, he advanced into the native country of his enemy, and it would have been impossible to have got provisions. After the battle of Salamis, the whole number melts into the clouds, and the remnant is found to consist of a very small number indeed. The great difficulty would have been to advance such numbers at all, but after the destruction of the fleet I ask how was it possible in Thessaly to find provisions for such a vast number as between 300,000 and 400,000? These numbers show that in all history constructed upon the mere accounts of popular tradition the universal tendency is to exaggerate enormously. Herodotus, who occupied the same position in point of age with regard to the Persian war that I should occupy with regard to the first American war, gives us an account of the Persian war; and the numbers of the Persians engaged at another battle—the battle of Marathon—are according to him most incredible. He tells us that they were taken out in 600 triremes, which we know were inconvenient vessels for stowage. But I need not go further to show that there is a universal tendency amongst mankind greatly to exaggerate numbers when they cannot derive them from authentic documents. So with regard to the rapid mode employed by Xerxes for computing the size of his army. According to Herodotus, space was made for 1,000 men, and he marched his men into it; but who can tell whether they filled the space or not, especially as we know that in the late war, when the danger at sea was past, our ships were found to be not half manned, although on paper the number was swelled. I know in one case one person who was supposed to be in the navy fought all his battles in the parsonage-house of my own father. (Laughter.) I know the man who did it. I think I have established the fact that the tendency to exaggerate numbers is unquestionable. With regard to the sacred writers themselves, I think that certain portions of the sacred books have been actually composed out of other previously existing books. I think I take a safe ground in supposing that these numbers might probably have been merely transposed out of other than existing books, out of which the confusion has originated, those previously existing books having been composed not from authentic documents, or careful comparisons of numbers, which we know is very difficult, but from general or popular belief. That would account for some of the great exaggerations contained in the Scriptures. I will not go through all that Dr. Thornton has given us. In the main he has

laid his hand on all the most difficult questions, but there is one he has not mentioned, where we find in the Chronicles that one of the kings of Judah was older than his father by two years. (Laughter.) To those who find miracles in all things that occurrence does not present much difficulty (laughter), but I own I cannot believe it even on the statement of the book of Chronicles. There is another matter in the same book of Chronicles which Dr. Thornton has not alluded to—I mean the numbers of those who fought between Abijah and Jeroboam, when the men of Judah, 400,000 strong, fought the Israelites, who mustered 800,000 men, and killed 500,000 of them. Now these are numbers in our present version of the Bible which I cannot accept. They have got into the text somehow, and if we are really asked to defend these numbers as part of revelation, I say that our common sense will not allow us to do so; because it is impossible that those numbers can be taken as authentic. The greatest of all the difficulties is the one which Dr. Thornton has given the most space to—the numbers of the Exodus—and I have always felt that difficulty to be enormous. I have read Dr. Payne Smith's Bampton Lectures, and every one should do so. Dr. Payne Smith disagrees with Dr. Thornton in thinking that the average number of the families of the Israelites might have been ten children. Dr. Payne Smith expressly says that the families were decidedly small. I cannot go through the evidence of this, but any impartial person who reads Dr. Payne Smith's lectures will be satisfied that the commonly received numbers cannot be taken as correct, and no man can say that Dr. Payne Smith is not an eminently orthodox man. You cannot cry out, "infidelity!"—and yet Dr. Payne Smith says that the number of the descendants of Jacob did not exceed 80,000, and he goes on to show that in the families there were incorporated all the slaves. In Genesis there is the number of Abraham's servants, 318. They went on increasing very materially, and the goods and servants of Abraham descended to Isaac, and the family of Isaac was subsequently divided between Jacob and Esau. Jacob's share increased very largely, and Dr. Payne Smith is of opinion that many persons who had certainly not descended from the loins of Jacob became incorporated with the Israelites. He considers that the Israelites contained a body analogous to the Roman clients and plebs, and that they formed the deleterious element which we meet with so extensively in the Scriptures. The whole question, as commonly received, is involved in great and extreme difficulty. There is another thing I should like to refer to as presenting a great difficulty when one has to defend divine revelation. There are many professed Christians who are fond of introducing an exceptional and vast amount of miracles beyond those which are mentioned in the sacred page, and this is one of the most difficult things we have to encounter in the way of defending Christianity against infidelity. There is an old Greek proverb which is worthy of attention. It used to be said that it was very easy to praise Athenians in the presence of Athenians, but not so easy to praise them in the presence of Lacedemonians. (Laughter.) No doubt it is easy to make out a case in favour of a certain view when people are strongly biassed in its

favour ; but what is to be done with those who are equally biassed on the other side ? (Hear, hear.) Before we go on multiplying miracles beyond any express warrant for them in the Scriptures, we ought really to pause and consider what we are doing in the way of throwing a tremendous stumbling-block in the path of those who feel that there are difficulties in the Scriptures, and who feel that some of them are very great difficulties. It is of the very highest importance that we should attend to this point, because if we multiply miracles in this way, I can see no reason, so far as evidence is concerned, why we should reject the early church miracles, as the miracles of Ambrose, and the rest. (Hear, hear.) Those are miracles that I utterly disbelieve, because miracles have high moral purposes to serve. We do not simply rely upon testimony to prove the miracles of the New Testament ; they bear a moral aspect of a very remarkable character which is a strong argument in their favour. With one or two exceptions, every miracle of our Lord's divine mission is stamped in this way. The miracles, such as are reported in the first four centuries, bear a different aspect from the miracles of our Lord, which are all of a consistent character throughout the Gospels. Compare these miracles with the miracles of the spurious gospels, and it is totally impossible for a rational man to arrive at any other conclusion than that those who originally fabricated these spurious miracles were utterly and hopelessly unable to elaborate the miracles recorded in the genuine gospels. I am very sorry when I hear of men inventing miracles, and I am much obliged to Dr. Thornton for adding the weight of his authority on this important point in the defence of Christianity. The real weight of infidelity does not so much rest on the scientific difficulties as on the alleged moral ones. And I say that the defenders of Christianity have in a great degree themselves created moral difficulties which modern infidelity has only been too glad to seize upon to use in her attacks upon our faith. (Cheers.)

Rev. JOHN JAMES.—I am thankful for the exposition of the various probable ways set forth in this paper, in which errors in point of numbers contained in the Scriptures may have arisen. Dr. Thornton's knowledge of the Samaritan has enabled him to point out to us the close resemblance which exists between the forms of various Hebrew and Samaritan letters, each bearing a different numerical value, and to show us the mistakes which were capable of being made by those who transcribed the manuscripts. I am very grateful for that—I am grateful for the knowledge that even a dash or a dot after a letter might make a difference of thousands in value. For want of that sort of knowledge which Dr. Thornton has to-night given us, I have often been unable, in speaking with those who had difficulties on these points, to support the arguments which I had been using. When Dr. Colenso's papers first came out, the very same argument which we have now had elaborately brought before us, occurred to me, namely, that I was perfectly prepared to suppose that there is great exaggeration in certain parts of the Scriptures, not of an intentional kind, but through some error in the manuscript or on the part of the transcribers. My hypothesis is now abundantly

supported. I can now show more clearly how easily such errors may have arisen. The only difficulty remaining with me is, as to the small number of manuscripts which are reported ever to have existed, and that we have no authentic account of them. It would be a great boon to literature if such an account could be set forth, and if the actual manuscripts which existed during the middle ages and before the time of our Lord could be produced or described. That there were various manuscripts is quite clear to my mind, from the fact, that the Septuagint version, although it agrees with the Hebrew in the main, still does materially differ in some particulars, as in the case of the post-diluvian patriarchs. The Septuagint gives 100 years more to most of these post-diluvians—

The CHAIRMAN.—I think you mean the ante-diluvians.

Mr. JAMES.—No ; I mean post-diluvians.* There are seven or eight generations in which the Septuagint gives 100 years more to each generation than the Hebrew does, and that must have arisen from the fact that the manuscript from which the Septuagint was translated differed from the manuscript from which our translation has been made. I cannot for a moment think that we are warranted in maintaining the absolute integrity of all the numbers given to us. No doubt, at one period of time, there was only one manuscript existing. In the time of Ezra they had only a single copy of the Pentateuch to refer to, and various persons were employed to transcribe from the one existing copy, and, no doubt, in the course of transcription, errors would naturally arise. The great vice of all those writers, such as Dr. Colenso, has been very well pointed out by Dr. Thornton, namely, the way in which they insist on one meaning of a particular text, and that the worst possible meaning. (Hear, hear.) But there are other meanings which bear better authority and which offer no difficulty whatever. Will you allow me to remind the meeting of one great case of the kind ? In the first chapter of Genesis (v. 20) it is recorded that the fishes were created in the water, and it seems in our version as if the birds were also created out of the water. But in the second chapter (v. 19), the birds are said to have been formed "out of the ground." Now Dr. Colenso points out these two statements as involving a discrepancy of great importance, whereas there is no discrepancy at all ; because the Hebrew in the first chapter does not properly bear the translation which is given in the English version. The correct version is given in the Bible margin. Nevertheless Dr. Colenso will insist upon it, as an argument against the Pentateuch, simply on the ground of our English version, which is acknowledged by all scholars to contain a mis-translation of that passage.

The CHAIRMAN.—I should like to ask Dr. Thornton one question, because he may have to go away early. He speaks in the 36th paragraph of his paper first of the square Hebrew character and of the mistakes which may have

* It is undoubtedly so likewise in the case of several of the antediluvian patriarchs.

resulted from it ; then of the Samaritan alphabet ; and lastly, of the older Hebrew character. Is that different from the Samaritan character ?

Dr. THORNTON.—Oh, very different—something similar to the Phœnician.

The CHAIRMAN.—Is not the Samaritan the same ?

Dr. THORNTON.—Oh no, not at all. The character which we now call Hebrew is the Babylonish ; properly the Chaldee character. But there is a still older character which bears a strong similarity to the Phœnician. It is found in its earliest form, I believe, in some inscriptions in Numidia, in company with Egyptian hieroglyphs. That character is very different from what we call the square Hebrew or the Babylonish character.

Rev. Dr. RIGG.—May I ask where these characters are to be found ?

Dr. THORNTON.—They are preserved on the Maccabean coins, and have been recognized in inscriptions. I think you will find them in the Phœnician inscriptions of Gesenius.

Mr. ROW.—Dr. Payne Smith gives some of them.

The CHAIRMAN.—There is an article in the *Penny Cyclopædia* which gives a representation of the ordinary square Hebrew, and then of the Samaritan, or ancient Hebrew, without making any distinction between the two latter.

Dr. THORNTON.—The Samaritan was one form, but a different form, of Hebrew writing. The older Hebrew form was that which you will find in Gesenius's Phœnician inscriptions, and on coins in the British Museum.

The CHAIRMAN.—The old Hebrew character is the character in which the Samaritan Pentateuch is written ?

Dr. THORNTON.—That is in the Samaritan character.

Dr. RIGG.—There were, in fact, three forms in use among the Hebrews : the ancient Hebrew, the Hebrew equivalent to the Samaritan, and the Chaldee ?

Dr. THORNTON.—Yes ; but the Chaldee was not in use till after the Captivity, the old Hebrew being used before.

The CHAIRMAN.—There is scarcely any more difference between the square Babylonish character and the Samaritan character than there is between our writing and our printing characters. The whole character of the Hebrew square writing is such writing as a man would produce by using a reed ; the other, such as would be produced by incised work, such as cutting inscriptions. In that article in the *Penny Cyclopædia*, to which I have referred, if you trace the Greek character and the Roman character from the ancient Syriac, which they consider the oldest type, there is not so great a difference between the Greek character and the Samaritan as there is between the Samaritan and the square Hebrew. In many instances you will find it is just the sort of character which you get in writing with a pliant reed.

Dr. THORNTON.—The Samaritan in its present state is not similar to the Hebrew.

The CHAIRMAN.—No, there is a great difference ; but if you take the Greek character, which originated from the Phœnician, there is no greater difference than in the square Hebrew derived from the Samaritan.

Rev. REGINALD EDWARDS.—Perhaps, as a stranger, I may be permitted to make a few observations on this paper. In the 16th paragraph, Dr. Thornton mentions the number of Israelites who went out of Egypt as being only 600. Now the rest of the paper impresses one so much with his knowledge of the subject, that I am very anxious to know on what ground he arrives at such a calculation. It seems to me that there is a certain amount of contradiction in the matter. Take two simple statements. In the first place we are told that Pharaoh pursued the Israelites with 600 chariots,—the Scriptural account implies that he took an army of horsemen and infantry with him. Now it is impossible that he should have taken such a force, translated into modern language, of ordinary cavalry and infantry in pursuit of a mere body of 600 men. Then again, Dr. Thornton takes $\frac{1}{17}$ th as the yearly increase of the people; and that rather increases my difficulty. That estimate is taken from the ordinary annual rate of increase of the population of France; but is it not notorious that the rate of increase in France is almost absolutely stationary—that it would not represent the increase even in England? Why increase the difficulty by taking France rather than the increase of our own population? I quite agree myself with Dr. Thornton's view, that the number is in all probability wonderfully exaggerated, and how that exaggeration arose I am not Hebrew scholar enough to attempt to explain; but I quite accept the view of Dr. Thornton and of most biblical scholars, that we cannot hold to the numbers of the Old Testament. But why should Dr. Thornton give the weight of his authority to so extraordinary a departure from all the received numbers as that reduction of 600,000 men to 600? If you diminished them by one-half, or by one-tenth, it would be a great diminution; but why go so far as to suppose that the number was so contemptible? I have no doubt Dr. Thornton has some reason for his calculation, and, as a matter of curiosity, I should like to know what it is—

Dr. THORNTON.—The reason I have made my calculation as I have is because I suspect the word "thousand," but I have said "with a retinue of 2,000 or more," leaving the 600 for the armed warriors. As to the $\frac{1}{17}$ th, I got that from a statement by M. Faa de Bruns, in the preface to Dr. Pusey's *Daniel*. In a note he says, "Take $\frac{1}{17}$ th as the rate of yearly increase." He founds upon that this argument, that counting Noah and his family, and calculating the increase at $\frac{1}{17}$ th per annum up to the present time, you get about the present population of the earth. I adopt that number—it is very simple; but still I wish to show that the Hebrews must have been propagated rather more rapidly than according to the rate of yearly increase in France—

Mr. REDDIE.—But perhaps that is not the present rate of increase. I believe the population of France is almost stationary now.

Dr. THORNTON.—The estimate was taken some years ago, I dare say from authentic information, and it was given by Dr. Pusey—

Mr. ROW.—In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses says the Hebrews were the fewest of all people.

Dr. RIGG.—There is one point that ought to be remembered, that Dr.

Payne Smith's object in his statement and in his note to his lectures is to justify the numbers, on the hypothesis that you are to reckon all the descendants. Dr. Payne Smith's object is not certainly to throw discredit upon the numbers; he simply says, "In reckoning the Hebrews, you are bound to reckon, besides the Hebrew proper of pure blood, all those who were incorporated into the Hebrew families." We should bear that in mind when the force of Dr. Payne Smith's authority is quoted by Mr. Row—

Mr. Row.—I merely quoted him to show that from the loins of Jacob these vast numbers did not descend.

Dr. Rigg.—On the other hand, no doubt Dr. Payne Smith is decidedly in favour of the view that the average increase of the families cannot be reckoned at more than three or four children for every parent, and that is important; for Dr. Payne Smith seems to have paid much attention to the subject, and is unimpeachably orthodox. I cannot help thinking, that on these subjects, what we want is, that some persons of competent ability and sufficient leisure should give themselves to the proper elucidation of the books of the Old Testament. (Hear, hear.) I think that we have, in fact, no exegetical books on the Old Testament in the English language that are worth anything. I do not refer to Dr. Pusey's *Daniel*, because that is a special book with a special object; but as a general rule, you will find what I have stated to be the truth. Compare the exegetical books on the New Testament—such books as Professor Lightfoot's—with anything that we have on the Old Testament. All these objections to numbers would come to nothing if, by true scholarly appreciation and elimination, the real life of the record itself in each of the books of the Old Testament was properly brought out to the appreciation of the students of Scripture. Suppose that an English orthodox divine, of the calibre of the German Ewald, whose faith has not been impaired by the summary dictum that there can be no miracle, had his learning, his power, his immense application, and his intense love for historical research applied to such a subject; if such a man, believing rightly in the existence of a living God, and that He interposes by way of miracle when there is a proper reason for divine interposition; if, I say, such a man were to give himself to the work of elucidating these books of history then the truth coming out in the successive chapters of them, and being made to shine as history and likewise in the light of a consistent moral purpose, I am convinced of this, that all these questions of numbers would fade away. People would say at once, "We cannot accept these numbers as part of the record; they have come to us under circumstances which almost necessitated change and corruption; but they are matters of no moment; they may have been the work of some transcriber, or, if not, at all events, they are no more than the corruptions contained in the classical writers, and which are quite apart from the real worth and substance of the manuscripts themselves." But while things remain as they are, we cling to the idea of the minutely literal verbal inspiration of the Scriptures as we find them, and the consequence is, that a certain amount of disturbance and a certain amount of doubt are engendered where there ought to be no

doubt at all. (Hear, hear.) It has seemed to me for many years that this is the work of all works which needs to be done for our Christian faith. I greatly deplore that our learned universities do not give us men who would bring to the Scriptures the same sort of historical and critical faculty which similar men from the same universities have brought to bear on a number of what we call the profane historians of the ancient world. I hope that before long we shall have something of this sort done, and then we shall make no mountain of these difficulties, which are greatly and studiously exaggerated. If there had been any such thing done with regard to the Pentateuch, many men would not have been led to despair of the truth of the Old Testament from such writings as those of Dr. Colenso.

Rev. Mr. TIRCOMB.—Some of the remarks which I had intended to make have been already anticipated. I fully agree with Dr. Rigg as to the great desirableness of further elucidating the great difficulties which we have to encounter in these matters; although I think he rather underrates the importance of those works which do already exist upon the subject. I fear the whole of this discussion must have given pain to some here present, and if not to them, that it will give pain to a large circle of religious people outside. At this stage of the debate, therefore, as well as from my own position as a clergyman, it may be well to try and throw a little comfort into the minds of those whose thoughts may have been disturbed. The popular mind no doubt is completely wedded to the thought that the Bible is of no use unless every syllable is infallibly correct as it stands in the English language. I fully concur with Dr. Thornton in the utter impossibility of holding that view. Now that may be a shock to many persons' feelings. Yet why should it be? For the real truth is that the infallible character of Scripture rests on the original autographs, and not upon their translations. I think Dr. Thornton would, therefore, have worded the title of his paper better if, instead of calling it "On the Numerical System of the Old Testament," he had called it "On the Numerical System of the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament." That would have made the whole thing plainer, and would have put it in a position in which those who hold such strong views would not have felt the same difficulty which they may now feel. The grand truth that the infallibility of the inspired writers in the original autographs is one thing, and the possible fallibility of the present English text is quite another thing, no reasonable man can deny; indeed it is so transparent, not only in regard to numbers, but in other things, that any one of ordinary learning will admit it in a moment. It is, however, attended with this great difficulty, though it is no difficulty to me, that if one syllable in the English Bible be not true, an uneducated man who wants advice may say, "How am I to know that the rest is true?" But out of that difficulty no man on earth can get us. We cannot resist facts. For example, it is stated in the first verse of the sixth chapter of the first book of Kings, that the interval of time between the Exodus and the building of the Temple was 480 years. That is plainly stated in the English Bible, and the date is given as in the fourth year of Solomon's reign. But St. Paul says, in the 13th chapter of the Acts, that

the Judges themselves reigned 450 years ; which leaves only thirty years for the interval of time between the Exodus and the Judges, and for the interval between the end of the reign of the Judges and the building of Solomon's Temple. That there is some fallacy between the two statements is quite clear. It is utterly impossible that the Judges could have reigned 450 years and yet that the whole interval of time between the Exodus and the building of the Temple should have been only 480 years. That is a totally different type of fact from any of those mentioned by Dr. Thornton, but it is very remarkable. There is another difficulty. St. Paul says that the period of the persecution, reckoning from Abraham's going down to Egypt, was 430 years ; but in St. Matthew's genealogy, there are only nine generations between Abraham and Naasson ; and though, of course, there would be a little longer time allowed for each generation than we allow now, still nine generations could scarcely fill up 430 years. But that is a minor point—the first is the great difficulty, and I confess that the only solution of it is what I have indicated, that we certainly have in our version of the Bible some small errors—minute, microscopic in their smallness—on points which are utterly indifferent to the grand purposes of a moral revelation, and which do not in the least degree affect the happiness of mankind. If that be kept in view, it will be the salvation of the Bible against the attacks of modern science. Remember, it is war to the very knife between the Bible and the ungodly infidel science of the day, though science is not necessarily ungodly and infidel—God forbid that we should say that ! Still, in the main, it is war to the knife against Revelation ; and the process by which the war is carried on is by making Revelation ridiculous, through forcing the English text to prove too much. The English text follows the Hebrew. The Septuagint, however, gives 460 years more between Adam and Abraham than the Hebrew text does. Which is right ? Our Lord and the Apostles quoted the Septuagint, and received it as the inspiration of God, and it is incorporated in the Greek texts. Almost all the quotations in the New Testament are taken from it—

Mr. Row.—Not all.

Mr. TITCOMB.—I said almost all. The system of chronology in the one version is one thing, and in the other version it is quite another. How must we decide which is right ? It does not matter which is right. For no human system of chronology is a part of Divine Revelation. When the archaeologist tells us, for example, that man is so much older than the Bible says he was, I reply, that the numerical statements of the English Scriptures are to be received as we have discussed them here to-night, as not necessarily any part of the infallibly inspired Word. Nor is it merely a question of numbers. There are other unsettled questions of textual variations. For instance,—there is the introduction, in the genealogy of St. Luke, of a link between Arphaxad and Sala, which is not found in the book of Genesis. In St. Luke it is stated that Arphaxad begat Cainan ; and that gives us a new link not found in Genesis. The chapters and verses are these, if any one wishes to verify them, the eleventh chapter of Genesis, verse 24,

compared with the third chapter of St. Luke, verse 36. What is my inference from that? Simply this, that the inspiration of the spirit of God led St. Luke to incorporate that extra link into the genealogy of his gospel; therefore I receive it as a fact supplementary to the record in Genesis, and so far regard the genealogy in Genesis as defective. One thing or other must be true. If the link is rightly inserted in St. Luke, it must be left out in Genesis. Well, what is the inference I draw? Why, this: if there has been one link left out from Genesis, may there not have been others left out also? I do not say that that is necessary, but it is a kind of thought which gives me comfort. 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.

Mr. LAW.—I should like to ask Mr. Titcomb one question: Is not the link which he mentions as found in St. Luke also found in the Septuagint? Then, as to the alteration in the Hebrew text of the post-diluvian chronology. The Hebrew text detracts 100 years from every generation; it appears to be a very systematic withdrawal of 100 years from what is stated in the Septuagint. Perhaps that might form an interesting question—

The CHAIRMAN.—You mean ante-diluvian, I suppose?

Mr. LAW.—No; it only appears in the post-diluvian chronology.

Mr. BROOKE, V.-P.—Mr. Titcomb has anticipated one remark I was going to make, that these disputed numbers are not at all essential. But there is another great difficulty obviously in the way of those who hold that the literal acceptance of the numerical statements of Scripture is a necessity of the inspiration of Scripture. Those who hold that view seem to me to introduce much greater difficulties than they obviate; for it is evident that in some cases the numbers cannot be accepted, without at the same time we assume miraculous interpositions. It is difficult to conceive that there would be any circumstances which would necessitate the immediate destruction of 50,000 people; it seems so foreign to the general course of Divine interposition in regard to mankind. We must not introduce unnecessary miracles, or we shall be landed in a very great difficulty indeed.

Mr. REDDIE.—I should not have risen at this late hour at all, were it not for the feeling that many people will be pained by this paper, however carefully it has been put before us; and it is desirable, if there are any other facts which may be offered in explanation or modification, that they should now be stated, in order that Dr. Thornton may be able to deal with them in his reply, for, though he has now left us, he will be enabled to make a written reply. Mr. Edwards pointed out one difficulty or objection to Dr. Thornton's taking one of the lowest birth-rates by which to modify the number of the Israelites. But his further argument was open to some sort of answer which Dr. Thornton did not notice. Mr. Edwards argued that 600 chariots, with a proportionate number of other horsemen and foot-soldiers, would not have been sent after so small a number of Israelites. But

Dr. Thornton may suppose that the 600 chariots are as likely to be an error in number as the other—

Mr. EDWARDS.—He did not say so.

Mr. REDDIE.—No ; but it is just as likely—

The CHAIRMAN.—I think he said the very reverse.

Dr. RIGG.—He said that was not too great.

Mr. REDDIE.—Well, he conceded this to me, *sotto voce*—

The CHAIRMAN.—He says that these 600 were exceedingly probable ; that there was no difficulty in that.

Dr. RIGG.—No more than in the war-chariots in the other case.

Mr. REDDIE.—Well, be that as it may, I leave it to him to answer. There is, I think, less weight in Dr. Thornton's objection about the sacrifices. Granting that there may be some exaggeration in the numbers of the sheep and oxen sacrificed, I do not think it follows that they were all offered in the Temple. One or two might be offered there, and in that way you get over the difficulty as to the size of Solomon's Temple. If you consider that the whole of its interior was overlaid with gold, it could not have been a very extensive building, without almost accepting the immense quantities of gold to which Dr. Thornton objects—

Mr. Row.—But the Mosaic institutions positively required that the sacrifice should be made in the Temple.

Mr. REDDIE.—Yes ; in the court of the Temple, but not in the Temple itself, or literally, in the presence of all the people. That argument has been used against Dr. Colenso already. A certain number were there—a general turn-out of the people—what we should call “all London” in popular language. In the third paragraph of the paper, Dr. Thornton refers to the word *rakia'*, as given by the Septuagint, with the meaning of something solid, instead of “extension.” But in the margin of our English Bibles we have “expansion” put for it, and that is better—

Mr. Row.—Dr. Payne Smith has adopted the word “expanse” in his new translation of the first chapter.

Mr. REDDIE.—One other difficulty Dr. Thornton has made more of than he need—the getting rid of the quantities of the bodies that were slain. I quite admit that the numbers given are probably largely exaggerated, but in the case of the pestilence which cut off thousands of the people, and in other cases, the Jews would naturally resort to cremation, or burning the bodies. They would not allow a pestilence to arise from the collection of dead bodies. There is only one other point which arose in the discussion which I should like to notice. I would ask whether, in the discrepancy which Mr. Titcomb points out between the period of the Judges and the building of the Temple, St. Paul's statement might not refer to the dispensation of the Judges and not mean the time during which they reigned ?—

Mr. TITCOMB.—No ; he speaks distinctly of the Judges until the time of Samuel and the prophets. He makes it quite clear.

Mr. REDDIE.—This is what I mean ; that there was no prophet—

Mr. TITCOMB.—He says there were 450 years.

Mr. EDWARDS.—Samuel himself is distinctly called a judge. You may carry down the life of Samuel to the life of David himself.

Mr. TITCOMB.—Grant it all ; but still the period in the wilderness would be more than thirty years.

Mr. EDWARDS.—But if Joshua was the first judge and Samuel the last——

Mr. TITCOMB.—Joshua could not be considered a judge.

Mr. EDWARDS.—Why not ?

Mr. TITCOMB.—Joshua was the captain of the Lord's host.

Mr. EDWARDS.—But was he not a judge ?

Mr. TITCOMB.—Oh, no.

Mr. REDDIE.—Dr. Thornton will no doubt pay attention to all this in his reply, and give a satisfactory solution of the difficulty. Mr. Row has already mentioned that he did not agree with Dr. Thornton in the passage where he speaks of the upholders of Masoretic tradition. I thoroughly agree with Mr. Row, and I think this part of Dr. Thornton's paper is against his own view. You need not give up that Masoretic tradition because these errors of numbers are better explained in the 33rd and 35th paragraphs by blots and smears, &c. There is also one point in Mr. Row's remarks that it will be as well to notice. He talked of the tendency to exaggeration in profane history, and he gave us an example. He spoke of the fleet during the Russian war being only half-manned——

Mr. Row.—Not the Russian war ; I said the great French war.

Mr. REDDIE.—I thought you referred to the Russian war ; and as I have heard pretty much the same thing before, I was going to correct the error. We had 147,000 men at the time it seems Mr. Row was speaking of—the very largest number we ever had in our navy. At the time of the Russian war the same thing was said ; but it could only mean that our men were not half trained—that they were not thorough sailors—as to numbers we had enough. I ought also to notice that the *Aboukir*, mentioned by Dr. Thornton, in comparison with the ark, is not a good specimen of our largest ships. Admiral Halsted will tell us that we have ships half as large again, if not even greater in size than that. The ark corresponded almost exactly with the dimensions of the *Great Eastern*, which is 600 feet long ; and it has always been considered as a sort of indirect testimony to the supernatural knowledge of Noah, that he should have constructed a vessel corresponding so well with the greatest triumph of modern scientific shipbuilding——

The CHAIRMAN.—Was not the *Great Eastern* taken from Noah's dimensions ?

Mr. REDDIE.—I think not. It was only afterwards discovered that there was this extraordinary coincidence in their dimensions and proportions.

Mr. TITCOMB.—The true state of the case with regard to the Judges is very important ; and it is no use for us to put our heads under the sand, like the ostriches, thinking that no one sees us, In the 19th verse of the 13th chapter of the Acts these words occur ;—

“ And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan he divided their land to them by lot.”

That brings us to the first of the Judges ; and then it goes on to say :—

“ And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.”

In the clearest way, therefore, St. Paul says that the Judges reigned 450 years until Samuel—

Mr. REDDIE.—With the qualification of “ about.”

Admiral HALSTED.—I feel very grateful to Mr. Titcomb, for he has apprehended rightly that there are many laymen here to whom this paper has given great pain. It has broken up, but it has not resettled, and I do not find any comfort or consolation from anything stated in the concluding portions of the paper. Far more comfort may be derived from what has been stated by Mr. Titcomb. As to the question of all these discrepancies or incredibilities of numbers with regard to arms, being tested by the circumstances of modern warfare, that is simply childish and ignorant.

The CHAIRMAN.—I do not think this subject is altogether a novel one, for I think that all the objections of Dr. Colenso against the Pentateuch are very old ones revived, and they have been answered over and over again. These discrepancies of numbers have long been known by students of Hebrew and of the Scriptures generally ; and the very points which Dr. Thornton has given us as showing how these discrepancies are to be accounted for, have also been given so far back as Dr. Kennicott's time. When we come to the history of the Pentateuch, we are astonished how marvellously that text has been preserved for us. We have that text which is used by the Jews now, as handed down by jealous tradition ; and we have another text which they have guarded most jealously for 2,000 and more years. We have a translation of that text commenced, if not completed, well nigh three centuries before the time of our blessed Lord Himself, and we have that version in Greek jealously preserved by the Alexandrine Jews as against the other Jews up to the time of our Lord, containing a very important preface, which, if it had not been for that Septuagint, would have been said to have been concocted after the time of our Lord Himself. And in addition to that we have the Pentateuch jealously guarded by a class of people in opposition to the Jews of Samaria, and they have preserved it for us up to the present day. The Prince of Wales, when in the East, was shown one jealously guarded copy, and we are told of the superstitious reverence and fear with which the old priests unrolled that, which was one of the oldest copies, for they dared not venture to bring out the oldest of all. Those copies were preserved by a sect who were in complete antagonism to the Jews long before the time of our Saviour. Then we have the Septuagint, for 1,800 years and more, jealously guarded by Christian sects, the heretics fighting one against the other, and the Jews watching them. Then we can trace the passage of the Pentateuch from the Samaritan version into the Sinaitic version, for that is only the Hebrew Pentateuch written in the old character which they used on their coinage, a different character from that in use by the Jews themselves since the Captivity, but showing that the Pentateuch before the time of the Babylonish captivity

was substantially what it is now. When we compare the three versions, we find scarcely any discrepancy worthy of note. There are no great discrepancies between those three copies—the original Hebrew text, as handed down by Hebrew tradition; the Hebrew of the Pentateuch, as preserved in the Samaritan character; and the translation of the Pentateuch which we have in the Septuagint. There may be differences here and there, but are they more than would have been likely to occur in manuscripts so handed down? They are not greater than those in the manuscripts handed down of the New Testament—

Mr. Row.—I cannot agree with you there. The variations are very large.

The CHAIRMAN.—Well, are they greater than in the manuscript of the Septuagint itself?

Mr. Row.—Undoubtedly.

The CHAIRMAN.—Well, I hope people will look at the matter for themselves and judge for themselves. I have recently gone over them—

Mr. Row.—I am speaking of the Septuagint.

The CHAIRMAN.—I will confine myself to the Pentateuch, and this may be thrown out for the comfort of many people: let them compare the different versions, and they will not find anything to try their faith. Where do we find these discrepancies? Simply in matters affecting numbers. Are there no discrepancies as to facts between the Septuagint, the Samaritan, and the Hebrew versions? There are no discrepancies as to facts at all except with regard to numbers. Now there must have been some cause for that. With regard to the discrepancies in point of numbers there must also have been some reason for it, and it is pointed out by Dr. Kennicott and insisted on by Dr. Thornton, though not with the same force that he might have brought to it. What would be the errors in manuscripts now if, instead of using the Arabic system of notation, we used the Roman system? Take the variations that there are in Roman notation—the C with and without a stroke, and the D—how easily discrepancies might arise in the use of such a system. I do not see why people should be much disturbed even if we do find that there are discrepancies in these numbers—they could only be reasonably expected. But at the same time we should be very cautious not to give way too much to exaggerating these difficulties, and in that respect Dr. Thornton has given greater prominence to such difficulties than I think he need have done. Dr. Thornton tells us that he sees no difficulty in the pursuing force of the Egyptians following the Israelites across the Red Sea having 600 chariots, while he reduces the number of armed men on the side of the Israelites to 600 by his own interpretation. And as he has before admitted the probable correctness of Abraham having 318 armed retainers, I cannot understand how, if Abraham could have 318 soldiers at his command, there should only have been 600 men to go out of Egypt. Dr. Payne Smith pointed out at the University of Oxford, and he also pointed out at Zion College, immediately after Dr. Colenso's book appeared, that people when they come to these points always want to restrict you to the absolute progeny arising from the loins of Abraham, when you have the fact patent

before you that Abraham was a great sheik before he had a son, with 318 trained men, and that he increased in man-servants and maid-servants, while Jacob was marvellously blessed in the same way. Are we to suppose that the Israelites alone went into Egypt, and that their retainers did not follow them? There must have been a marvellous diminution of the retainers, if we are to suppose that Jacob was reduced merely to his own progeny—

Admiral HALSTED.—Esau met Jacob with 400 men.

The CHAIRMAN.—Yes, and they were increasing and being blessed. This shows how difficulties may be exaggerated. Dr. Thornton has adopted the popular interpretation in saying that the children of Israel were only 210 years in Egypt. I know the difficulty of what St. Paul says, but if any one will candidly investigate all the facts, remembering the positive prophecy to Abraham that his people were to be afflicted in a foreign land for 400 years, the time must be fixed at more than 210 years, or otherwise you have to say that the people were afflicted for the whole period during which Abraham and his descendants were wandering before they went up to Egypt—

Mr. TITCOMB.—How about the generations? because that is an important element in the matter.

The CHAIRMAN.—I think it is consistent with the 400 years and perfectly explicable, and I think a very interesting paper might be written to show that the children of Israel were at least 400 years in Egypt. At the same time, while quite admitting the accuracy of the New Testament, and that there are no greater difficulties here than in other places where they can be fairly met, still I am not prepared to admit this point now, and I think it can be made to bear the interpretation which I have put upon it—

Mr. REDDIE.—Perhaps you will give us a note to your speech on this point when it is published.

The CHAIRMAN.—With regard to the increase of the population, people forget how differently population increases under certain circumstances. We have a great difference between the population here and the population in France. The population in France under certain circumstances is nearly stationary, while our own country is like a teeming hive, sending yearly thousands of people to America, distributing them over Australia, and nearly over the whole face of the New World. Suppose you give up the period of 400 years for this nation—a very large tribe; not 70 individuals merely, but a considerable tribe—going up to Egypt; and they being blessed with great fecundity, we want to know what may have been their increase. Let me point out the circumstances of our own country. What has this country done in 200 years? What population has it sent out? How many have gone out to North America and South America? How many to other lands? How many to Australia? If this fact of the increase of the population of this little island, and the marvellous population it has sent out to India and to every other quarter of the globe, were in the course of 400 years, and as a matter of history, to be compared with some authentic history of France, it would be pronounced perfectly ridiculous. The increase of population is

dependent in the main on the quantity of food and the means of supplying it to the people. If you have great wars decimating the people, then you have it as a known fact that triplets and twins become almost as common as single births were before. It is very dangerous indeed to argue rashly in regard to numbers. There has been one great crux in the New Testament with regard to St. Luke's assertion that Cyrenius was governor of Syria when Cæsar Augustus taxed the world. I was lately talking to the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, and he mentioned that he had used that point as a warning to some young men just ordained, and to show them how careful they ought to be not to have their faith upset. He said that in his day at college there was much difficulty in that passage, and none of the explanations given by the tutors would hold water. There were many ways proposed of getting out of the difficulty without making out that St. Luke had made a grievous blunder in stating that Cyrenius was governor of Syria some thirteen years before he actually was governor. It was found that that statement did not square with the statements contained in the approved archives of Roman history, and therefore the passage was twisted and tortured to bear anything but a common sense interpretation. Here was a great difficulty—how was it to be solved? But some man at last set to work—

Dr. Rigg.—Zumpt.

The CHAIRMAN.—Well, he made an investigation which does not agree with that in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible; but he examined some of the by-ways of Roman history, and he came upon the curious fact that there was the governor of a certain province about this time who was removed from his governorship, and the governor of the neighbouring province undertook his duties and was *de jure* governor for the time being of that province—

Mr. Row.—What is your authority for that?

The CHAIRMAN.—I am stating what the Bishop told me—

Mr. Row.—It is directly in the teeth of Tacitus.

The CHAIRMAN.—Well, I do not think Bishop Ellicott is likely to be mistaken in a matter of this kind. I only give you the statement for what it is worth. I have not got the authorities by me. I merely make a *vivâ voce* statement of what I heard in conversation. It turned out that Cyrenius was at that time governor of the neighbouring province, and the person who investigated the matter distinguished himself by going through a host of authorities, and finding the fact out in some out-of-the-way part of history and not in anything which is so commonly known as Tacitus. It was discovered that Cyrenius was at last actually made governor of Syria when he had been doing the duties of that office for something like fifteen years. He was rewarded at last for what he had done by being made the nominal governor where he had only been the virtual governor before, and he was then removed to the richer province. I merely give that as an instance to show how serious difficulties may be removed with a little knowledge. There

is one class of discrepancies in numbers which is of very great importance. It may be found in Bishop Kennicott's book ; but as that book is very rare, it may also be found, quoted, in Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentaries. A series of difficulties in numbers was drawn up with regard to the age and period of Jacob, there being thirteen or fourteen difficulties of chronology, if you take it for granted that Jacob only served in the whole twenty years with Laban. But Bishop Kennicott pointed out that these difficulties might be removed by supposing that Jacob was not twenty but forty years with Laban. That removed every difficulty. If you refer to Dr. Kennicott, as quoted by Dr. Adam Clarke, you will find that those difficulties were as serious as any which have been brought before us to-night. He takes this passage from the 38th verse of the 31st chapter of Genesis :—

“This twenty years have I been with thee: thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten.”

And it goes on in the 41st verse :—

“Thus have I been twenty years in thy house ; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle.”

Dr. Kennicott points out that a certain Hebrew pronoun is there used which in other parts means reduplication, and he interprets it :—“Thus twenty years have I served thee and twenty years have I served thee,” and he shows how the reduplication is in accordance with the use of that pronoun, and that wherever it occurs in the Old Testament it always means double the time specified. It may be met by saying that Gesenius says that that is not a good interpretation ; but he had a strong bias not to clear up difficulties in the Bible, but to increase them. Upon the construction to be placed on the Hebrew pronoun, Dr. Kennicott, when we remember what he has done for Hebrew literature, may be taken to be quite as good an authority as Gesenius, especially when he gives you facts with regard to which no other interpretation can be borne. There is just one other point I should like to mention. A constant taunt has been thrown out for a long time about the borrowing by the Israelites from the Egyptians. Dr. Kennicott has settled that by showing that the same word which has been translated “borrowed,” means also “prayed for,” “asked for.” They had gone to a foreign land by the invitation of the king of that foreign land, and he had taken them as a token of his gratitude for the preservation of the lives of himself and of his people, but his successors unjustly punished them and made them slaves, and God determined that they should have their full wages for their labour, and they were told to ask the Egyptians for their jewels, and the Egyptians were willing to give them. Dr. Kennicott asks those who will not accept the word “pray,” instead of “borrow,” whether they will translate the passage in the psalm, “Borrow for the peace of Jerusalem ?” (Laughter.)

The meeting was then adjourned.

REPLY BY DR. THORNTON.

My professional duties, joined with the unaccommodating habits of railway trains, having compelled me to leave before the end of the discussion, I am constrained to make my reply in writing. A reply I can scarcely call it; for every speaker but one seems to have fully comprehended my object, and to be at one with me on the general principle. To that one (Admiral Halsted) I would say:—Do not mistake me; my object is not to undermine, but to confirm faith. I am, and wish every one else to be, a firm and stout believer in the Bible, as being all of it, from beginning to end, the word of God to men, precious and true. But in face of objections to this written word, which I, as a professed teacher of it, hear made from time to time, I feel myself obliged to ask, Are we sure that the text we now have is the word of God as originally written?—and I have ventured to lay this answer before the Institute, to serve as a guide to us in our mode of defending the Word: “As regards facts, doctrines, moral and spiritual teaching, undoubtedly yes; as regards mere numbers, no.” I cannot imagine how such an answer can give to any one who considers it fairly any pain, but the uneasiness which always accompanies more or less the reception of a suggestion contravening what one has been content to hold for a long time without examination. It was a saying, I believe, of Napoleon, that one cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs; and we must in this matter think more of the omelette we are making than of the eggs it is our painful duty to break. Here is an acknowledged difficulty, which prevents some from believing as we do, and as we wish others to do. Ought it to remain a difficulty? Is it a matter we are bound to contend for? If not, we are leaving a removable stumbling-block in a brother’s way, which is the next thing to putting it there.

For the details of my own criticism I shall not contend one moment. I am not wedded to them. If Mr. Edwards thinks—if any member of the Institute thinks—that my removal of three ciphers from the 600,000 Israelites reduced the number too much, let us say 6,000, or 60,000; but all I want is, that thinking believers should not hold it imperative for a wavering Christian to be compelled to admit that two millions of people passed through the Red Sea in a night. I wish to be able to say to such a man, “Provided you allow that God did miraculously bring *some* people out of Egypt through the Red Sea, never mind about the ciphers.” So as regards the 600 chariots of Pharaoh, I do not think it unlikely that he had 600, and sent them all after the fugitives, few as they may have been. But possibly he did not; and I take no objection to read sixty, or even six.

There is one difficulty to which I have not alluded in my paper, and feel bound to mention here. The numbers of those who died in the matter of Peor are put by St. Paul at 23,000 (*σικκοιρπεῖς χιλιάδες*), 1 Cor. x. 8. I

frankly avow my disbelief of the genuineness of *χιλιάδες*, though found in MSS. ABCD^s. The original passage in Num. xxv. 9 has 24,000. Here we see St. Paul does not give the same number ; and I understand the fact to be that a *smiting* (*maggephah*), not a *plague*, of the chief men took place, according to the direction in verse 4. Two men were killed out of each tribe ; and St. Paul says twenty-three, because he omits the Simeonite killed by Phinehas.

As to the question raised by Mr. Titcomb, and left for me by Mr. Reddie, respecting the period of the Judges, I decline the subject, as I have already done in paragraph 10 of my paper. It belongs to biblical chronology.

I must remark, in conclusion, that those who differ from me in other points will agree with me in this, that a paper has not been altogether useless which has been happy enough to bring out such valuable speeches as those of Mr. Titcomb and the Chairman.