

# PLAIN POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

OF THE

## OBJECTIONS

OF THE RIGHT REV.

JOHN WILLIAM COLENZO, D.D.

BISHOP OF NATAL.

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BY THE REV.

GEORGE VALLIS GARLAND, M.A.

RECTOR OF LANGTON MATRAVERS, DORSET.

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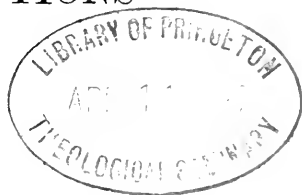
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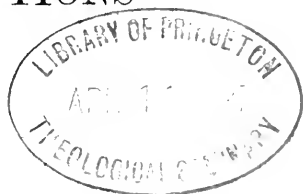
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LONDON :  
GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,  
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

## PLAIN POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS,

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It may seem most presumptuous in one, who is no Hebrew scholar, to attempt a reply to Bishop Colenso's work, "The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua critically Examined;" but some of the examples of alleged contradiction appear so groundless, that even at such risk I would venture on a few lines. With the general argument, however, I have nothing to do; for though every difficulty weakened, is a weakening of the whole argument, yet this is a work for educated and learned minds. My object is to offer solutions from the English text for the help of the ignorant sceptic, into whose hands, by means of these alleged contradictions in specific passages, there has been placed a handle, which, unless they are studied, and solutions for them discovered, must more or less paralyse the work of every parochial clergyman. Our office is to teach that, which from the time of the Saviour, and long before, has been accepted as the *inspired Word of God*. This, it is now asserted (p. xxxiv), should no longer have "*ascribed to it attributes of perfection and infallibility, which belong*

to God only, and which the Bible never claims for itself." There may be in translation an occasional technical error; but if it be true, as it is further stated (p. 8), "that the so-called Mosaic narrative cannot be regarded as HISTORICALLY TRUE," I can only add, in the words of St. Paul, "we are of all men most miserable;" as it is difficult to conceive how the falsehood of the Pentateuch does not also necessitate a similar charge against the whole Bible. (1 Cor. x.) The ground of my attempt to solve these alleged contradictions and incredibilities is, that *any solution, however improbable, if it does not involve an impossibility, or express contradiction in the sacred text itself,* is to be accepted, rather than the monstrous idea that the holy record itself is untrue, and that no solution can be vitiated except by being superseded (as doubtless it soon will be) by a better, or by involving such impossibility or express contradiction. I contend that no part of the sacred narrative should be considered *untrue* because *improbable*, but only because *impossible*; for if we admit one part of the Bible to be false, merely because *improbable*, where is the limit between the truth and falsehood of the rest? And on what grounds does such limit rest? Is it to be man's opinion? Yet in the very midst of this disputed narrative, after an injunction (Deut. iv. 2), "Ye shall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it," we find (in ver. 5), that it is expressly stated that these *statutes and judgments* were commanded to Moses by God Himself. These words are so united with the narrative, that they must stand or fall together, and thus become one of the great internal evidences of the inspiration of the Pentateuch. Yet we are asked to reject this account as *historically untrue*. And on what grounds? The *assertion*, I cannot

say *proof* (as I do not think any one of the alleged instances is substantiated), that *contradictions* exist in the sacred text, and that "*incredible*" and "*absurd*" events are therein related to have happened. The relinquishment of that belief, which we have inherited from our fathers, that that, which we call the WORD OF GOD, both in its separate parts, and in its integrity, is both doctrinally and historically true, which latter portion this book endeavours to disprove, is far too momentous to be entertained, except on grounds against which not a shadow of doubt can be cast; and in the objections cited I cannot find one that is not open to refutation of seemingly a simple character.

In chap. ii., p. 19, it is concluded that "*one of the two accounts must be untrue;*" either the *birth of Hezron and Hamul, in the land of Canaan, or the other series of events recorded to have taken place beforehand concerning Judah's family.*

The argument seems based on these data (p. 18),—

1. That Judah was *three* years older than Joseph.

2. That Judah was married when *twenty*, and when Joseph was *seventeen* years old.

3. That Judah was *forty-two*, when *he went with Jacob to Egypt*, and when Joseph was consequently *thirty-nine* years old.

Neither of these two latter data can, I think, be said to be *necessarily* deduced from Scripture. (Gen. xxxviii. 1; and xli.)

Except the account in Genesis we have nothing to help us in fixing the date of Judah's marriage from chronology; and there we find no date fixed between 2208 A.M., when Esau was married, and when Jacob, being of the same age (Gen. xxv. 24),

was consequently *forty* years old (Gen. xxvi. 34), and 2288 A.M., the date of Isaac's death, a year before 2289 A.M., the first year of plenty,—a calculation drawn from comparing the date of Jacob's death, 2315 A.M., with his seventeen years' sojourn in Egypt, and the seven years of plenty, and two of famine, which occurred before the migration to Egypt.

To fix the date of Judah's marriage, we can only refer to Gen. xxxviii. 1, where we read it occurred "*at that time*,"—words that are assumed to refer to the period when Joseph was *seventeen* years old. (Gen. xxxvii. 2.) Now if Scripture events were all recorded in chronological order, there might be some grounds for such deduction; but this, we know, is not always the case; as, for example, Isaac's death is recorded (Gen. xxxv. 29) before the relation of the account of the sale of Joseph (Gen. xxxvii.), though the latter event occurred some years before. The style of the narrative would seem to refer these words, "*at that time*," to Gen. xxxvii. 1, the mention of the fact of Jacob's sojourn in Egypt, rather than to the record of the event which immediately precedes, the sale of Joseph to Potiphar (Gen. xxxvii. 36), which is further assumed to have occurred when Joseph was *seventeen*. For either of these two verses (Gen. xxxvii. 1. 36) seems the more probable antecedent to which to refer the words "*at that time*," than the relation of Joseph's age of *seventeen* in Gen. xxxvii. 2. For the whole of the events in Gen. xxxvii. cannot be said to have necessarily occurred *when* Joseph was *seventeen*, but only *after* he had arrived at such age. The expression of his "*being seventeen years old, and feeding the flock*," would seem merely to teach that at such age this was his habit of life, or that he then commenced such pastoral duties. The probability is that his



dreams, his relation of them first to his brethren, and then to his father, his visit to Shechem, the sale to the Ishmaelites at Dothan, and the second sale to Potiphar, did not all occur within one year. Besides, in Gen. xxxvii. 2, we read these words, "These are the generations of Jacob," or the history of the events connected with him, as in Gen. ii. 4, "These are the generations," or history "of the heavens and the earth." This chapter, then, proceeds with a history of Joseph, as one member of Jacob's family, and for a time it concludes with the end of the chapter. Chapter xxxviii., then, takes up that of another branch of the family; and therefore we may reasonably conclude that any specification of time, which regards such new history, will go back to the commencement of the generations of Jacob, and not be confined to, or commence at the point where that of Joseph broke off; in short, it seems to refer to Gen. xxxvii. 1, the relation of the sojourn of Jacob in Canaan, and then it informs us that during such sojourn Judah was married.

A similar interpretation of these words, "*at that time*," we find in Deut. x. 8, where they clearly refer to the 5th verse, without reference to the 6th or 7th verses which immediately precede.

For this reason I can see no just grounds for fixing the date of Judah's marriage, when he was *twenty years old*, and I conclude that the text only implies that it *occurred during the sojourn in Canaan*.

When Jacob returned from his abode with Laban to Canaan, Judah was most certainly not more than *thirteen or fourteen* years old. (Gen. xxix. and xxx.) In these warm climates, as it is admitted (p. 117), early marriages at the age of thirteen or fourteen were customary. The probability,—a probability far

greater than that the sacred narrative should be historically untrue,—is, that—

Judah married . . . . .	when	14
Er was born . . . . .	when Judah was	15
Er married when 13 years old, and that		
he died the same year . . . . .	”	28
Tamar’s incest occurred . . . . .	”	30
The twins Pharez and Zarah were born . . . . .	”	31
Pharez married when 13 years old . . . . .	”	44
Hezron and Hamul were born (possibly		
twins) . . . . .	”	45

which I would take as the year of the migration, when Joseph would be *forty-two* years old, or *twelve* years after the interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream, and consequently *three* years later than the computation, that he was *thirty-nine* at the time of Jacob’s entrance into Egypt.

Here I would ask, what grounds the text of Genesis gives for *necessarily* fixing the latter date. All we read is that Joseph was *thirty*, when he stood before Pharaoh. (Gen. xli. 46.) There is nothing, that says that the seven years of plenty began at once. Therefore, I submit, that the probability of a lapse of *three* or *four* years between the dream and its fulfilment is far greater, than the idea that the narrative is historically untrue.

The next objection (chap. iv.) is grounded on “*the size of the court of the Tabernacle, as compared with the number of the congregation,*” where exceptions are taken to the text of Lev. viii. 1—4, it being stated (p. 34) to be “*inconceivable how all the assembly could have been summoned to attend at the door of the Tabernacle by the command of God.*” Such conclusion seems drawn from *deductions*, and

not *recorded* facts. The data seem these (sect. 35—38):—

1. That the words “the *door of the Tabernacle*” refer to the *door of the Sanctuary*.

2. That the consecration of Aaron was performed *inside the Sanctuary*; for I presume the word “*Tabernacle*” is used in the same sense in both places in sect. 35.

3. That from these two assumptions it is further inferred that the people were “*within the court.*”

4. That the assembly, when thus summoned to the door of the Tabernacle, must be collected in ranks of the width, either of the Sanctuary or of its court, and these extending for either *twenty* or *four* miles respectively in front of the Tabernacle.

There really seems no reason for *necessarily* deducing any one of these data from Scripture.

For, first, it is assumed that the words the “*door of the Tabernacle*” mean the door of the Sanctuary. By referring, amongst others, to the following texts, we shall, I think, find that the word “*Tabernacle*” may bear a more general sense, as meaning not merely the Sanctuary, but also the court around it; just as is, both in the Old and New Testaments, the similar use of the word “*Temple.*” In Exod. xxxi. 7—9 we find that the altar of burnt-offering and the laver, (neither of which were placed in the Sanctuary,) are reckoned among the contents of the Tabernacle. In Exod. xxxiii. 7, Num. ii. 2, vii. 1, it clearly refers to the whole establishment, as also is the case in Exod. xxxix. 33—40, where in the 33rd verse we find the “*Tent*” itself mentioned as part of the Tabernacle. In Lev. viii. 33 the priests are forbidden to go out of the door of the Tabernacle for seven days, while in the 35th verse they are told to abide at the door of the Tabernacle; the 33rd verse must clearly

refer to the whole establishment, including the court. In Num. viii. 24 the Levites are told to *wait on the service of the Tabernacle*; part of which service, attendance on the priests, was performed in the court, and not in the Sanctuary, around the altar of burnt-offering and the laver. Now, in most of these places it appears most *probable*, and in some of them *certain*, that the word "*Tabernacle*" is used in the wide sense of the whole establishment, and not confined to the restricted meaning of the Sanctuary. The calling together of the assembly may therefore at once, I think, be said to refer to their muster at the *door of the COURT* of the Tabernacle.

2. It is next assumed that the *consecration service was to be performed inside the Tabernacle or Sanctuary itself*. This seems inconsistent with the narrative of Exod. xxix., which teaches us (ver. 10) that part of this service consisted of a sin-offering, when the bullock was slain at the door of the Tabernacle, and that Aaron and his sons put their hands on the head of the bullock. They could not have been within the Sanctuary when they did this. Neither in Exod. xxix., xl. 12—15, nor Lev. viii. do we find any express command given them to at all enter the Holy Tent, if we except Lev. viii. 33, where the use of the word "*Tabernacle*," we have already seen, seems to refer to the whole establishment. I therefore conclude that the grounds for saying that the consecration service took place *inside the Sanctuary* seem insufficient.

3. The next position, that the people were *within the court because at the door of the Tabernacle*, and to enable them to witness the consecration of Aaron *inside the Tabernacle*, seems, therefore, for these two last reasons, to be overthrown.

4. Let us, therefore, proceed to the last assertion, that really appears puerile, "that this assembling of

the congregation at the door of the Tabernacle involved the necessity that the whole multitude should be ranged in ranks, of the widths of either the Sanctuary or its courts, and that such ranks would extend respectively a distance of *twenty* or *four* miles, immediately in front of the door of the Tabernacle." To show the great weakness of such idea we must consider the mode of encampment of the whole congregation. From Num. ii. 2 we learn that every tribe encamped by itself "*far off*," or "*over against*" the Tabernacle; that the twelve tribes were divided into four divisions, which occupied respectively positions north, east, south, and west of the Tabernacle, which thus became the centre of the whole encampment. On a summons, then, to attend at the door of the Tabernacle, the natural action of the people would be to approach as near as possible to this door, each successive person advancing to this point as far as the preceding multitudes would admit, and these coming from every point of the compass would thus be continually meeting and choking up each other's way, until at last the Tabernacle would become the centre of a mass of 600,000 persons. The point to which they tended would be the door; but the convergence of so vast a multitude from all parts would cause the whole—the *Tabernacle*, and not the part,—*the door* to become the centre of the mass, or the centre of a circle about 1800 feet in diameter, which would more than contain the 600,000 persons, according to the computation of less than two square feet to each (sect. 36). The most distant person, instead of being *four* or *twenty* miles away, would be only about 900 feet, the radius of such circle; a distance not nearly twice the length of many of the foreign cathedrals, and consequently not nearly twice the distance, at which the Roman Catholic worshippers are in the daily

practice of performing their devotions before their high altar.

To obviate the objection to the inability of the people to witness the ceremony of the consecration, it may be imagined that on such high occasions the curtains, by which the court of the Tabernacle was enclosed, would be drawn up, and thus all obstructions of view removed between it and the multitudes.

The next objection (chap. v.), grounded on Deut. i. 1, v. 1, which seem to refer to the same event, and Josh. viii. 34, 35, the inability of Moses and Joshua to enable their voices to reach the ears of the whole assembled multitude of two and a half millions, who might be collected on a space of three thousand feet square, instead of being an *objection*, seems rather an *elucidation* of Scripture; for it is said, and with reason (sect. 41), that *no human voice, unless strengthened by a miracle, would have reached the ears of such a mass*. The objection to the admission of the miracle seems simply grounded on the fact, that it is not expressly stated, that this effect was produced by means of a miracle. But may it not be asked, Is this a sound reason to reject the record of a miracle, because the text does not say in as many words that it was one? For such a reason, we must reject half those of the Old and New Testaments. Take, for instance, the defeat of Amalek (Ex. xvii.), which must be considered miraculous, because dependent on the lifting up of Moses' hands: yet it is not specially named as such. So in Matt. viii. we have the relation of four separate miracles of our Lord, and yet they are not there specially named as such. It would seem in the narration of miraculous events, when not particularly declared to be so, that the Almighty would have us exercise our faith and judgment; and therefore I cannot help feeling, that

the whole Christian Church has the greatest reason to thank his Lordship for calling its attention to the existence of these two acts of Moses and Joshua, which may perhaps have escaped notice, *as being miracles*. Surely objections cannot be raised to the idea that a miracle might be wrought in behalf of so important a purpose as the renewal of the Law of God, at the death of the great Lawgiver, and the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan; and this at a period when the support of life by ordinary means had only just ceased to be the exception, and miraculous preservation the rule of man's existence. Exceptions cannot well be taken to this miracle on the ground of its magnitude, being only an extension of human powers, not a suspension of nature's laws; but in its typical character it takes rank with the mightiest on record, as forming another link in that vast chain, which binds together the two dispensations. St. Paul (1 Cor. x. 2) makes the passage of the Red Sea the type of Holy Baptism. May we not see in the miracle of speech by Joshua, addressed to one nation, and for the high object, the promulgation of the knowledge of salvation to that nation at its settlement in Canaan, a type of this same miracle of speech, wrought for the same object by the Apostles at Pentecost on the establishment of the Christian Church; differing only in method, and by the contrast of such method proclaiming, by the symbol of the many voices and the divers tongues, as well as by the express word, that the fulness of the Gentiles was now to be received within the pale of the Church of Christ, and the blessed Gospel to be preached by every voice and in every tongue, and no longer to be confined to one chosen people? I think it must be admitted that these passages, far from being objections, offer an elucidation to Scripture.

The next objection (chap. vi.) raised at *the extent of the camp, when compared with the Priests' duties*, seems to arise from the apparently erroneous idea that there were only *three priests* (page 123). Now the history gives us the names of Aaron's sons, and the account of their consecration; but it seems only the passages, Exod. xxviii. 1, Num. iii. 2—4, which can be truly said to bear the appearance of containing a *sense restrictive* of their numbers; and the restriction even there seems only to refer to that consecration. When, therefore, the charge of *absurdity* in the Sacred Narrative on this head is alleged to exist, would it not seem that the less doubtful of two cases should be preferred: in other words, would it not be better to assume that no certainty of restriction of numbers, by the specific mention of *four sons*, is intended, rather than to believe the narrative to be untrue, because the birth and consecration of no other son is named? I can find no words, which *expressly limit* the consecration to those four sons, and hence I think we may safely infer that, where the duties of the priesthood are related to have been so onerous, as to render them incapable of being performed by those specially named, other sons of Aaron may be supposed to have existed and to have been consecrated; as in the case of the history of Cain's family (Gen. iv. 17), the name of only one son in the first five generations is recorded, and yet we cannot imagine that these were all his posterity. Therefore, as there seems no express restriction to the number of the sons of Aaron, it would be well to inquire whether there does exist any probable reason, why those named should be recorded; and then we find that all of the four are remarkable for some singular events of their after history. Thus Nadab, the first-born, and Abihu, for their rebellion (Lev. x.); Ithamar, for being placed



as head of the Gershonites and Merarites (Num. iv. 28. 33); Eleazar, for having charge of the Levites (Num. iii. 32), and for succeeding Aaron as high priest (Num. xx. 28). A special reason, therefore, seems to exist why the consecration of these four sons should be named, to the omission of that of the other sons of Aaron. But besides this, in Eleazar's case, the express command to consecrate him as priest was required to be laid down, inasmuch as his consecration involved a breach of the rule that no Levite should enter into his service before the age of *twenty-five* (Num. viii. 24). From Josh. xxiv. 33, we find that Eleazar died in Canaan, and he must therefore have been under the age of twenty at the time of the sin at Kadesh. The mention of his consecration seems intended to point out that he was specially excepted, as regards the canonical age of Levitical service, rather than to contain the idea (p. 110) that the Levites were not involved in the punishment, which is contradictory to Num. xiv. 29. Such being the apparent reasons for the *express* mention of these *four* sons, we have to inquire whether it is *possible* that a number of sons could have been born to Aaron sufficient for the service of the Tabernacle, as mentioned in the Pentateuch. By calculating his marriage to Elisheba, at the age of fourteen, and as regards the question before us, reckoning only the sons that might have been born to him before he was *fifty-five years* old, so that he being about eighty at the time of the Exodus, they might be of sufficient age, according to the Levitical rule, to enter the Tabernacle service at the period of its erection, we shall arrive at the conclusion, that such sons and their posterity (allowing each to marry at the age of *fourteen*, and to have annually a son) might amount to between 600 or 700 persons; a number fully suffi-

cient for the offering of the sacrifices and the portage of the offal, even at the highest computation, that this latter had to be carried a distance of six miles to reach the limit of the camp. However such computation of the number of priests may appear improbable, yet such improbability can hardly be said to be so great as the idea, that the narrative on this head involves an “*absurdity*” (page 40).

The other branch of the objection (chap. vi.) to *the extent of the camp, compared with the daily necessities of the people*, seems open to yet greater exceptions; for it is said that, in Deut. xxiii. 12—14, it is commanded that ALL should go out of the camp for the necessities of nature; a “*command*” that really I can find no trace of. The objection seems capable of solution, by connecting the 12th verse with the 10th verse, and disconnecting it with the 13th verse. It would seem then that the 10th verse orders, that in case of ceremonial uncleanness the person so affected should go out of the camp;—that verses 11, 12 are merely supplemental orders; the one referring to the mode of purification of the unclean person, the other appointing a place of quarantine during such uncleanness. Ver. 13 is simply another supplemental order, that in case the necessities of nature required it, while in quarantine, provision should be made to preserve there such attention to cleanliness and sanitary measures, which, without such provision, was likely to be infringed. Ver. 14 again refers to ver. 10, which gives the cause, why no person ceremonially unclean should remain within the camp. By placing verses 11, 12, 13 in parentheses, and a full stop at verses 10. 12, 13, I think all the objections on this score, as to the size of the camp, may be cast aside. This solution is merely grounded on the possibility that it may be consistent with the punctuation

of the Hebrew text: if not so, it must of course be rejected, and a better sought. On this head I can say nothing, from my ignorance of Hebrew. All my attempt has been to solve these alleged difficulties by the English text; but if, as I believe is the case, the ancient Hebrew is not punctuated, the solution itself may yet hold good.

The objection (chap. vii.) on account of the *similarity of the numbers at the collection of the poll-tax*, with *that of the first muster*, ought only to be considered a *singular coincidence*. But a *coincidence* can be said to be neither *improbable* nor *impossible*, when it is the result of the will of ONE, by whom the subjects of such coincidence are made. To introduce this, as an objection to the sacred narrative, seems very like a denial to the Almighty of the power of creation by birth, and removal by death over those of whom it is related. It seems strange to say we are to reject a Biblical record, because it appears "*surprising*." The coincidence of the decree of the taxing with the birth of the Saviour (Luke ii.), by which that birth occurred at Bethlehem, and thus fulfilled the prophecy of Micah (v. 2), is no less surprising.

Again, the objection (chap. viii.) grounded on the possession of *tents by the Israelites* (Exod. xvi. 16), seems to arise from forgetting their pastoral and hence nomadic character (Gen. xlvi. 34), one similar to that of the Arabs, though for the time confined within the limits of the land of Goshen. Their everyday abodes would probably be tents; and though a very large portion of them might be scattered through the cities of Egypt, yet the nucleus would still remain in Goshen, carrying on their trade of shepherds, one contemned by the Egyptians, and therefore well fitted to suit the despised state, in which, as slaves, they were held. A body of tents may, therefore, naturally be

imagined to have been ever in preparation for a move. Besides, the mass of the people, who as slaves were employed in the building of the "treasure cities," cannot be supposed to have only lodged in houses. The bulk most probably resided in huts of the poorest description, possibly in tents, which would, again, have supplied this want. In addition to this, we must not forget that the Exodus was no hasty movement. Prior to appearing before Pharaoh, Moses had collected the elders of Israel, and informed them of the Almighty's intended deliverance. (Exod. iv. 29, 30.) Does not this instruction presuppose a certain amount of preparation for the event? It is generally thought that the period, during which the plagues were poured on the land of Egypt, extended over a year or more. With the certainty of deliverance, are we therefore asking too much, that it should be believed, that this portion of time was employed, as far as their "tasks" would admit, in perfecting their arrangements? When the signal to march was given, though the moment itself was one of haste, yet in one sense they were *partially* prepared for it: just as death, come when it will, is to nearly all a sudden event, though the entire life may have been a preparation for it. The mention of the tents seems to be a proof, by which it was shown, that they had believed the promise of deliverance, inasmuch as they had provided abodes suitable for a sojourn in the wilderness. Neither do I see why objections are to be taken to the carriage of these tents, on the score of the difficulty of providing *trained oxen*. The existence of camels, of which we read herds are kept by the Arabs now, as of old in Jacob's time (Gen. xxxii. 15; xxxvii. 25), would supply the required means of carriage, besides being animals well suited to the nature of the way; add to this the use of waggons, of which we read in Gen. xlv. 19. The

mention of tents, instead of being an objection, seems to supply a *want* in the sacred narrative, which contains no allusion to a preparation for an event, which from the very nature of the message, attested also by miracles, we cannot well believe was not made. It seems a great stretch to confine the Jewish habitations in Egypt to the simple idea of a house, because such term is used in the directions relative to the institution of the Passover (Exod. xii. 7. 22),—directions intended for their guidance in future years, not confined only to the present instance, and from this to deduce the charge that the narrative is historically untrue.

The objection (chap. ix.) drawn from Exod. xiii. 18, again, seems rather an elucidation of Scripture. For by the interpretation advanced of "*harnessed*" as "*armed*," a solution (however much it may be repudiated, p. 49) is provided for the difficulty arising from their possession of arms at Rephidim, far more probable than the idea, that they were obtained by rifling the dead bodies of the Egyptians on the shores of the Red Sea. Being no Hebrew scholar, I can say nothing of the true meaning; but that adduced, "*armed*," which is apparently supported by the parallel passages stated in p. 48, seems most clearly to suit the context; for the first part of the verse (Exod. xiii. 18) relates the *road* of the migration, and by the addition of the fact of their being "*ARMED*," the apparent tautology of a second record of the departure is avoided. The obtaining of "*arms*" appears objected to on the ground, that they had no time to procure them on the night of the Exodus; but this idea seems to arise from confining the spoliation of the Egyptians to this one night. True it is the two verses (Exod. xii. 35, 36), which contain the record of their "*borrowing*," follow the account of their being sent out of Egypt. But when we consider how great

was the belief of the Israelites in their coming deliverance (witnessed by their continued trust in Moses, though his efforts only increased their burdens, Exod. iv. 31 ; v.), an expectation seemingly shared in by some of the Egyptians (Exod. ix. 20), may we not imagine that the giving and taking of "*such things as they required*" (in which I can see nothing "*extravagant*" to include "*arms*") took place or commenced even earlier than the last night of the captivity, especially when we read Exod. xi. 3? for Exod. xi. 1—3 does not appear necessarily connected with the rest of the chapter, or to have been spoken on the same day. Surely there is nothing "*extravagant*" in this idea, when we further consider the long-existing anxiety of the Egyptians to get rid of the Israelites (Exod. x. 7), and that their retention was due to the will of the king, and not of his people. Arms would surely be the first thing sought for, before undertaking so long a journey. Neither does the panic at Pi-hahiroth appear to militate against this view. Every-day experience shows us the inefficiency and terror of even an armed rabble against a regularly organized force; and this supposition is yet further supported by the remembrance of their late abject condition as slaves. This idea seems also borne out by Ps. lxxviii. 9, where we read, at the very onset of the history, of an act of cowardice of the children of Ephraim,—an act not resolvable of any recorded instance applicable to that particular tribe: and therefore this passage, where the whole people is designated by the name of the chosen son of Jacob's chosen son Joseph, once ruler of Egypt, seems naturally to refer to some period of the nation's history, when closely connected with Egypt, and to point to this last panic at the Red Sea, which occurred just before the time, when they were for ever freed from their old masters.

The next objection (chap. x.), relative to the institution of the Passover (Exod. xii. 21—28), seems grounded on the idea that the Israelites were instructed “*on one single day*” how to keep, and *on that same day that they actually did keep* the Passover. The whole force of this objection seems to arise from the use of the word “*this*” in verses 12 and 14, which is considered to refer *necessarily* to the day, on which these instructions were given by God to Moses. In support of such idea a comparison is drawn with the expression used in Exod. xiii. 8, where the word “*that*” is used; and it is thence inferred it ought to have been used also here. But the two cases do not seem similar. In the latter case, from the 5th verse of that chapter we learn that Moses was speaking of what the Israelites were to do at a *distant day*, when settled in Canaan, and therefore the use of the word “*that*” seems more appropriate. The second supporting reference (Exod. xi. 4), “*about midnight,*” seems entirely without weight, as it must first be proved that these instructions were given by God to Moses on the day that he last visited Pharaoh, an assumption of which the narrative says nothing. In fact, it is left entirely uncertain when they were given; all that is stated is, “that the Lord spake to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt.” (Exod. xii. 1.) By referring to Ezek. xxxix. 8 we shall find a similar expression, “This is the day whereof I have spoken.” Here it cannot possibly refer to the day on which the prophet spoke, but only to that on which the judgment on Magog was to take place. Similar instances of an indefinite use of the word “*this*” occur Jonah iv. 2; 1 Sam. xviii. 21. And even in this same chapter (xii. 17) we find the use of the word in reference to a future event, which is recorded as past (a mode of expression common in prophetic style, Isa. liii.), “In

*this* selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt.” It seems strange to find an objection on *one* word, which is often used indefinitely, when by applying it to the antecedent, to which the sense would seem naturally to refer it, all would be harmonious and clear. That antecedent seems to be the “*fourteenth day*” mentioned in verse 6. Then the whole chapter would seem to teach as follows: ver. 1 states, without defining the exact period, that the subjoined instructions were given by God to Moses, while in Egypt prior to the Exodus, and as a record to posterity of the object of the Passover. From the instructions themselves we clearly gather, that they were given before the tenth day of the month (ver. 3), and, under this idea, all the difficulties of the vast multitude keeping this solemn rite are done away. Time is allowed for the choosing of the lambs on the *tenth* day; for the Israelites to be instructed in the rite in all its minuteness; its primary object declared, as a protection from the destruction about to fall on the first-born; its prophetic character displayed, as being announced as the day, on which their deliverance should take place (ver. 17); and the object of its perpetuity pointed out, as a record of these great events. These instructions from God to Moses end with the 20th verse; what follows leads us to conclude that they were promulgated to the people prior to the further charge of Moses to the elders (ver. 21—27), which from its nature appears to be the actual command, issued on the “*fourteenth*” day, for the immediate slaughter of the lambs, which the words, “Draw out now,” seem to infer had already been prepared. The mention of the sprinkling of the blood may have been reiterated on account of the important issue of life and death dependent on obedience to the command; while all the preparatory orders for the choice



of the lambs had been given long before. Under such an idea, that every family had been provided with a lamb on the "tenth," it does not require any great stretch of the imagination to conclude, that necessary steps had been taken, by which the final order for their being slain might be sent from Moses, through the elders, to all the people of Israel. The whole account is analogous to the giving of orders by a government to its general to carry out, with all his troops on some certain day, some special duty requiring a certain amount of preparation. It is his duty to give the first necessary orders, and to take fit precautions for their promulgation throughout the whole of his army, however widely dispersed, so that when the day of action shall arrive, there may be no delay in either the publication or execution of the final command.

The difficulty (chap. xi.), relative to the march out of Egypt, seems to arise from the idea that the command was given at a "*moment's notice*," without any prior preparation. I have already endeavoured to show, that such idea of extreme haste is not contained in the sacred record, but that the immediate order to march was the only sudden part of it; that general preparations for it seem implied; that the very day, on which it should occur, was foretold (Exod. xii. 17), though for some wise reason, not recorded, God had not given any special orders for the providing of victuals (Exod. xii. 39), perhaps in order to test their faith in His providence (Deut. viii. 2); and that there seem no sufficient grounds for confining the spoliation of the Egyptians to the last night of the sojourn in Egypt. The idea that all the Israelites assembled at Rameses from all parts of Egypt and Goshen, with their flocks and herds, does not appear to be recorded in Scripture.

The record (Exod. xii. 37) is simply, "*that they journeyed from Rameses to Succoth.*" These words would seem to imply that Succoth, about the interpretation of which a doubt is admitted (p. 46), and which is distinct from the other Succoth of Scripture, was a name to express not a "*place,*" but the "*encampment,*" or "*point of assemblage,*" on the day after the Exodus, to which the whole multitude of the people would culminate from all parts, without necessarily going to Rameses at all, the mention of the journey from Rameses referring only to that portion of the Israelites, who dwelt there. In p. 63, this is admitted to be *the capital of the province,* and *somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood of the king's palace.* We may, therefore, safely infer that it was the head-quarters of Moses, and of the chief officers of the Israelites, and therefore their departure would naturally be used as an expression to denote that of the collective body of the whole people. The idea then seems to be, that the whole multitude of the Israelites was summoned at midnight, for which summons they had been partially prepared, to set forward on their march; that the point, to which they advanced, was an encampment, thence called "*Succoth;*" but that the place of their departure was said to be Rameses, as being the head-quarters of the people. The carriage of the sick and infirm may easily be explained by the use of waggons, of which we read in Gen. xlvi. 5, to say nothing of the power of the Almighty to have caused by a miracle, that none should be so affected at such a time, as to be incapable of obeying His command; not an improbable position, when we remember, that the ground of all faithful obedience to God is based on the certainty, that He never gives a command, for which He does not also provide

a mode of accomplishment. The idea of this multitude, marching as a regular army "*fifty abreast*" (sect. 77), seems only introducing unnecessary difficulties by insisting on what appears to be a rejected interpretation of the word "*harnessed*." (Exod. xiii. 18.) Their mode of progression, instead of necessitating the idea of a "*column, twenty-two miles long*" (sect. 77), would at the first, before the regular arrangement, organized at Mount Sinai (Num. ii. x.), naturally assume the character of an Arab migration, where the men are also generally armed, and united with their families in the march. By a calculation we shall find that the whole two and a half millions of persons, added to the computed flock of two millions of sheep (p. 58), could easily be contained within the space of a couple of square miles. This space may be doubled for the addition of the herds of camels, oxen, &c., and waggons; and even then I can see no reason, why exceptions should be taken to the Scripture account of such a caravan, especially when we consider the unconfined nature of the road through which they had to pass. The passage in Deut. viii. 4 will, I think, give the natural solution of the difficulty as to the power of the multitude to travel the distance to the Red Sea by three journeys. The idea that these were without intermission (sect. 78), does not appear to be recorded in Scripture. In either case the same God, that afterwards fed them, could at the very onset have strengthened them for the journey.

The objection (chap. xii.), arising from the alleged impossibility of supporting the flocks and herds in the desert without a miracle, appears again to be the denial of the record of a transaction, simply because the mode by which it was effected is not related. Is it *improbable*, it certainly is not *impossible*, that,

as the people were fed by the miraculous manna, so their flocks should be sustained by a miraculously increased growth of desert herbage? This seems naturally to be inferred from Deut. viii. 4, where two things, clearly miraculous, attendant on the journey through the wilderness, are only related incidentally. But in another light this objection seems raised on a deduction, whose premises seem insufficient, that the wilderness has undergone no change since that period,—a singular presumption on which to charge the Bible narrative with historical untruthfulness, when the changes around Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre, &c., are taken into consideration, where fertile regions are now comparatively desert wastes. In Exod. iii. 1, we find that part at least of the desert, through which they passed, was adapted for pasturage, and actually so used by Moses for the flocks of Jethro. The texts (Deut. xxxii. 10; viii. 15. Num. xx. 4, 5. Jer. ii. 6), adduced in support of this alleged sterile character of the wilderness, all bear the appearance of being not definite, but general descriptions of this district, as compared with the fertility of the promised land and Egypt, and this description is yet farther coloured with the warm phrasology of the East. The text Deut. viii. 15 cannot possibly disprove the idea of the stream of miraculous water following the Israelites on their journey, as seemingly taught by St. Paul (1 Cor. x. 4); for immediately after the expression, “where there was no water,” we find it added, “who brought forth water out of the rock of flint.” So as regards Num. xx. 4, 5, I cannot help thinking (however it may seem opposed to the general idea, that the water was at two separate periods produced from the rock), that the account here given (verses 2—13) is only a recapitulation of the same miracle recorded in Exod. xvii.,—an opinion I would

ground on the similarity of the name used in both places, "Meribah," and also on the seeming inappropriateness of the words of Moses, "Must we fetch water from the rock?" (Num. xx. 10,) if it be insisted that they were spoken after a first performance of such miracle,—words implying doubt, not anger, as shown in verse 12, where God says, "Ye believed Me not," for we cannot imagine Moses would have doubted, had he before produced water from a rock. The situation of the account seems no argument against this reasoning, as Moses often introduces passages without immediate reference to that, about which he is then writing. The greatest objection to this view seems based on the name, given to the place, where the reputed repetition of the miracle is mentioned, "Meribah-Kadesh," Deut. xxxii. 51. But may not the adjunct Kadesh refer, not to a specific place, but to a district, in which Meribah was situated? In Ps. xxix. 8, we read of the "wilderness of Kadesh," which seems to be the same as that of Sin, where Rephidim was situated and which appears to have been the abode of the Amalekites (Exod. xvii.), who also (in Gen. xiv. 7) are said to have dwelt in Kadesh. If this be allowed, no argument against the water accompanying the Israelites on their journeys can be grounded thereon. But I cannot help thinking that the word "wilderness" is not necessarily intended to imply a sandy waste; for we find the term applied to the "wilderness of Judæa" (Matt. iii. 1), yet this was not considered incapable of supporting flocks; just as the American prairies, the Tartaric steppes are wildernesses, yet provide food for countless herds of animals.

The objection in chap. xiii., grounded on the comparison of the number of the Israelites with the

size of the country, as offering no sound reason for the gradual extinction of the original inhabitants, "*lest the beast of the field multiply against thee*" (Exod. xxiii. 29), seems capable of solution by a reference to Gen. xv. 18, where we find that the extent of the land, promised to Abram and his seed, was "from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates." This was to be the inheritance of the Israelites, forfeited by their misconduct, in not driving out the inhabitants, and their other sins, and only approximated to in the reigns of David and Solomon. I cannot help thinking, that had it pleased the Almighty to have depopulated this vast region, and then to have placed therein the two and a half millions of the people, they would have found no little difficulty in preserving the land from desolation. The objection seems to arise from confining the thoughts to the "*actual,*" instead of the "*promised,*" extent of the land. In the computation (p. 82) there is allowed but one person to three acres; while in Belgium, (according to Murray's Handbook,) the population is nine times greater, or three persons to an acre; and in the woodland regions of the Ardennes I believe that wolves and boars are in severe winters not unfrequently met with.

The objection (chap. xiv.) relative to the fewness of the first-born, compared with the numbers of males, seems to arise from grounding the view of the size of the families (p. 102) on merely the *recorded* numbers of such families, without considering that the *omission* of the names of other members does not actually necessitate their non-existence. This seems supported by the brief record of Cain's family (Gen. iv.); by the examination of the small number of generations between the Deluge and

the call of Abraham (Gen. xi.); from which we must conclude, that, without the admission of the idea of enormous families, the world could not have been peopled, as it was at the time referred to. This idea seems yet further supported by some recorded instances of vast families; as the seventy sons of Jerubbaal (Judges ix. 24); the thirty sons and thirty daughters of Ibzan (Judges xii. 9); the forty sons of Abdon (Judges xii. 14). The computation, therefore, of forty-two sons to a family (p. 84) seems no high one, at a period and in a country, when they married at the age of about fourteen, and died at about a hundred and thirty. Besides, as regards the present objection, this excessive number need not be insisted on, if proper allowance be made for the decrease of the first-born by natural causes, and the slaughter in Egypt (Exod. i. 22), to which apparently in the support of such objection too little weight has been given (sect. 95).

The objection (chap. xv.) regarding the sojourn in Egypt may be passed over as hardly involving an objection, but only a difficulty; the solution of which is familiar to every Biblical student.

That in chap. xvi., drawn from the words (Gen. xv. 16), "In the fourth generation they shall come hither again," seems to be the one that presents the greatest difficulty, as grounded on that preceding it, the extent of the sojourn in Egypt (chap. xv.). But may they not be taken to mean, that in the lifetime of some members of the fourth generation they should return to Canaan? a prophecy actually fulfilled; for, dating the 400 years' sojourn from the birth of Isaac, we find then that Jacob, Levi, Jochebed, and Moses, represent respectively the first, second, third, and fourth generations. During Moses' lifetime and that of his cotemporaries, the children of

Israel left Egypt, and returned to Canaan. Not that they entered the confines within Jordan on account of the sin at Kadesh, but Moses did certainly enter the limits of the land, promised to Abram, concerning which this prophecy (Gen. xv. 18) was uttered; inasmuch as, while Moses was alive, the Amorites and Moabites, whose countries were comprised within the limits of the prophecy, were conquered.

The assertion at the end of chap. xvi. of *the impossibility of the nation thus multiplying from seventy persons to six hundred thousand warriors, representing two millions of persons at least*, seems utterly groundless, if allowance be only made for the effect of early marriages and long lives, in the production of large families. For if it be possible, that Aaron's family, in the space of about forty years, could have increased to six hundred or seven hundred persons,—a calculation by no means *impossible*,—by a similar calculation it would follow that a far greater number than two millions could be derived from the original seventy, who came into Egypt with Jacob, during the space of the 215 years' sojourn. And this extraordinary fecundity seems yet further supported by Exod i. 7. 12. 20. This reasoning would also seem to do away with the objections in chaps. xvii. xviii., as to the numbers of Israelites, Danites, and Levites, at the time of the Exodus: objections that are grounded on the apparently erroneous idea, that, because certain members of a family are mentioned, none others existed; and that therefore all the families were small, instead of being extraordinarily large: an idea which the whole Bible history seems to imply, in order to account for the population of the world, and which in some instances, as before laid down, it directly asserts to have been the case. Even in the extreme case of Dan, of whom only one son is recorded in any Scripture



genealogy, it cannot be said that none other was born to him, any more than the same cannot be said of Cain, whose only recorded son was Enoch. All that would seem to be implied from such record is, that a certain pre-eminence was granted to those thus named, which was not given to the other sons not expressly mentioned, just as is shown by the words of Jacob to Joseph, with regard to Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. xlviii. 5, 6), taken in connexion with any other progeny of Joseph, who, together with their offspring, would be merged in the family of one or other of these two.

The same mode of solution seems to apply to the objection (chaps. xx. xxi.), touching the insufficiency of the number of the priests for the performance of the general duties, as well as those particular services expected from them at the time of the celebration of the Passover. There seem no sufficient grounds for confining their numbers to only those recorded to have been consecrated; and on this supposition we cannot imagine the provisions for their maintenance were unreasonably large.

We now come to the last objection (chap. xxii.) under the head of the War in Midian: where it is stated (sect. 173) that "*the narrative, as it now stands, is unhistorical,*" from the apparently alleged reason, that the multitude of events recorded are too numerous to be crowded within the space between the *first day of the fifth month* of the *fortieth* year of the wanderings, and the *first day of the eleventh month*; an objection that seems entirely without foundation, because based on purely supposititious allotments of time for such events. The only recorded allotment of time seems to be that of the mourning for Aaron; which in Num. xx. 29 is fixed at *thirty days*. Then, in sect. 173, follows the "*sup-*

*position,*" that "*after this*" the campaign with Arad took place; a specification of time, not apparently recorded in either Num. xxi. 1—3, or Num. xxxiii. 40. All that seems recorded is, that such campaign took place during the sojourn at Mount Hor; and hence I think it may be safely inferred, that it occurred either before Aaron's death, or during the mourning for him. Another month is therefore free for the other events. The next allotment of six weeks for the plague of the serpents, and the other *nine* encampments, seems also to be purely supposititious. The proper number of such encampments, from Num. xxxiii. 41—49, appears to be only *eight*:—Zalmonah, Punon, Oboth, Ijebarim, Dibon-Gad, Almon-diblathaim, the mountains of Abarim, and the plains of Moab. There seems no reason, why greater latitude should be required for the marches between these, than was asked in sect. 78 for the journey to the Red Sea, where for those three marches only three days were allowed. To do away then with unnecessary difficulties, may not a space of fourteen days be considered sufficient, which leaves a margin of six days for the plague of the serpents? Under this idea, there remains a space of four and a half months for the conquest of Sihon, of the Amorites at Jaazer, of Og, and of the Midianites. Taking the *presumed* period of two months and a half (sect. 173, v. vi. vii.) for the three first, there still remains a yet further space of two months for the sin at Shittim and its consequent punishment, the census, and the war with Midian, a period more than is claimed for the latter (sect. 174, 6). From the tenor of Num. xxv. 3—9, the event of the plague at Shittim seems confined to one day; a space, also, which may be considered amply sufficient for the numbering of so well organized a host as that of Israel, when we further consider that the last cen-

sus of our own country was completed in the same time, though the amount of the population of England is nearly fifteen times that of the Israelites. Nothing recorded seems to militate against the idea, that the two messages from Balak and Balaam could have been sent immediately after the defeat of the Amorites (Num. xxii. 2), and during the war with Og.

It cannot be expected we should disbelieve the Biblical record of the slaughters at various times of the Israelites (p. 141), without some further proof of its incredibility than the mere comparison between them and the loss at Waterloo.

So, also, the horror that apparently arises from the comparing the slaughter of the Midianites with the tragedy at Cawnpore (p. 144), seems the result of forgetting that the one was commanded by the express order of the Almighty (Num. xxv. 17), the other was the product of the mere will of man. This destruction of mankind by the will of God is a work of daily occurrence, as witnessed by their removal by death. The shudder seems only to be caused from the contemplation of the *instrument*. An epidemic spares neither young nor old, women nor children. Had Moses acted on his own impulse such feelings might have been intelligible, but acting under the specific command of the Creator they seem groundless. As well might we feel incredulity at the record of the death of a quarter of a million by cholera at Jeddo<sup>1</sup>. The destruction in either case occurred from the express will of God, the instruments only being different. The character of a general, by whose orders numbers are slain in battle, excites no such degree of abhorrence as to cause the account to be rejected as unhistorical. I believe the Taepings in China are

<sup>1</sup> "The Times," December 16th.

stated in the last Quarterly, to have slain 20,000 persons in one city; the account of such slaughter does not render the statement incredible. It seems strange to assert, therefore, that the sacred narrative is not to be believed because Moses, acting as the commander of God's army, carried out the Almighty's order to "vex and smite the Midianites," and only in the manner agreeable to the spirit of those commands, as appears from Num. xxxi. 7.

It would be well, also, to consider one of the reasons why (p. xi) "*the ground on which we have been so long standing, with reference to the subject of the inspiration of Scripture, is felt to be so hollow.*" This ground seems to be the passage in Josh. x. 13, "*The sun stood still, and the moon stayed;*" words which, since the time of Galileo, have been considered as supporting the idea, that in some instances the Scripture narrative is to be interpreted according to the phraseology of the day, rather than according to the literal sense of the words. But may it not be asked, with special reference to this particular text, whether the advance of science has not overthrown this view? We learn that it is the opinion of astronomers that the sun has a motion in space, supposed to be orbital, and calculated at 154,000,000 miles annually. Since reading this, I cannot help thinking, that the usual mode of interpreting this passage is a second time incorrect: that we must again revert to the old opinion, modified only in degree, that the sun and moon were actually arrested in their orbits; and that not only was there a suspension in the rotatory motion of the earth, but also that this was further communicated to that infinite celestial orrery, of which the sun itself, with its attendant planetary system, would seem to form a part. Proof must, I think, now be produced that the sun is *fixed*, before even the literal interpretation of the

words of Joshua is to be rejected; and thus, on this head, the grounds for supposing the Bible narrative unhistorical seem again weakened.

Lastly, the idea of imperfection in our Lord's human knowledge (p. xxxi), deduced from the words of St. Luke ii. 52, "Jesus increased in wisdom," as a ground on which to do away with the necessity of believing Moses to be the author of the Pentateuch (p. xxx), seems utterly contradictory to other parts of the Gospels. However such idea may be true of the early portion of our Lord's life, before He commenced His public ministry, and to which we need not refer, as the only words, *recorded* to have been spoken by Him during that period, are found in Luke ii. 49, words not referring to the writings of Moses at all; yet as regards the latter part of His life, the three years of the public ministry, it seems utterly inconsistent with many expressions uttered by Him, all declaring His perfect omniscience, such as John i. 48, when speaking to Nathanael, He said, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee;" and again, John ii. 24, "He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man;" and John iv. 18, which declares His prescience of the woman of Samaria's former life, and other passages too numerous to be added. When, therefore, He speaks of Moses and says (John v. 46), "*He wrote of Me,*" does it not bear the appearance of charging the Lord with the utterance of a falsehood, to say, that He used this expression in the sense of an accommodation to the current opinion of the people, that Moses was the *reputed* author of the Pentateuch? To imagine this involves the necessity of believing, that our Lord was in error, when He claimed and asserted His knowledge of the fact of the erection of the brazen serpent by Moses (John iii.

14). But here and elsewhere, as John x. 15. 38, our Lord claims omniscience, and therefore it seems strange to deny to Him, with regard to the *authorship of the Pentateuch*, no “*fuller or more accurate information* than that possessed by any other devout or learned Jew” (p. xxxi).

Thus have I endeavoured, however weakly, to point out how utterly untenable the proposition appears, that there exist “*contradictions*” and “*impossibilities*” in the sacred narrative, so as to render it “*historically untrue.*” The first perusal of his Lordship’s work was somewhat appalling, as it was not to be expected that such lines could emanate from the pen of an English Bishop, unless supported by incontrovertible proofs; so that even when *possible* solutions presented themselves, I hesitated before accepting them. But when I found that, as I advanced, each objection seemed to pass away, and to appear grounded on such sandy foundations, I could not help feeling, that every trial only more powerfully proves the Divine origin of the “*Written Word of God.*” My attempted solutions may appear in some cases *improbable*; but however that may be, I cannot help feeling that such improbability is infinitely to be preferred to the incredible idea that the sacred narrative is *historically untrue.*

THE END.