

Answers to Christian Questions.

From The Truth Seeker.

STONE, Pa., Sept. 4, 1883.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TRUTH SEEKER, Sir: Several copies of your paper have been purposely thrown in my way by one of our subscribers, and as I hope I am not altogether invulnerable to truth through my early training, I come to you for a little light on a few subjects that are dark to me. I append a few questions which I hope merit an answer.

1. If the Christian religion is true, what advantages will you derive from destroying our belief in it?

2. If your work was already accomplished, would you not av despoiled man of all those virtues which make life worth living?

3. If the world is bad with religion, can Liberalism make it better, and how?

4. Do the Liberals suppose that scientific lectures delivered every Sunday will turn men from their unlawful lusts, make them better men, and exalt their natures?

5. What has Infidelity done for the world, and what does it propose to do, that we should place any confidence in it?

Respectfully yours,

W. M. WHITEHEAD.

REPLY.—It affords us decided pleasure to give what light we are able, to any person in search of truth. We do not claim to have more truth than many others of our fellow-beings, but what we possess we are quite willing to impart. We will at once proceed to answer our correspondent's questions.

1. If the Christian religion is true, there is no advantage to be derived from destroying belief in it. Reason and justice forbid that truth should be de-

stroyed. But that little word *if* is terribly in the way, and at that very point hinges all the argument between Christianity and a non-belief in it. It is just because we believe that Christianity is *not* true that we oppose it. Believing it is as false as the older myths and absurd systems upon which it is founded, we disbelieve it as we do them, and we oppose it as we would oppose them were they as persistently pressed upon us.

We conceive Christianity, like the most of the religions of the world, to be founded upon a radical and fundamental error, and that is supernaturalism. Equal with the ancient religions of India, of China, of Persia, of Assyria, of Egypt, of Phœnicia, of Greece, of Rome, of Germania, of Scandinavia, and other countries, Christianity is founded upon the belief in a power superior to nature—a power that created nature and the entire universe from nothing; and this supernatural being is held to be the author and first cause of everything that exists. This, as remarked, we regard as the great fundamental error upon which nearly all religions are founded.

We conceive it to be one of the axioms of truth that something was never made from nothing. It is utterly impossible for a man or a god, or a million of men or gods, to create one ounce of something from absolute nothing. The thing is utterly unthinkable. What then, exists to-day always did exist in some form. The changing of matter from one form to another is not creation; it is evolution, and this constant evolution is taking place in obedience to forces and law inherent in matter. The only thing that can truthfully be termed creation is making a part of world, a whole world, or thousands of worlds from

nothing, which, to repeat, is an utter impossibility. It is more unreasonable to hold that the universe came from nothing than that God came from nothing. If the universe must necessarily have had a beginning, so must the creator. If it is reasonable to say the creator always existed, it is still more so to say the universe always existed.

It is clear that the supernatural theory of Christianity is just as absurd and just as untrue as the theory of all the other religions based upon supernaturalism. Every event that has ever taken place was natural—produced by a natural cause. No event has ever taken place that did not have a natural cause to produce it. All causes are natural causes. All results are natural results. There is nothing above nature, nothing below it, nothing beyond. All existence belongs to nature, and is but a part of it. The most absurd idea that ignorant man has indulged in is that there is a power or a being superior to nature. The god idea is the great central error which man has conceived. The belief in gods and devils is the central superstition around which all other blinding superstitions have clustered. Because man, in his ignorance, but slightly understood nature, he foolishly decided that nature is limited, and must have had a maker. Nature is too great, so grand, too universal, to ever have had a beginning, or to have been brought from nothing. To imagine a creator of nature, then, has been the great error of man. Nature, we know, exists—there are millions of proofs of it. We have no proof that any god exists. It is wiser, then, to accept what is, rather than to spend our lives in imagining what *not*.

Christianity probably rests upon a more slender and insecure foundation than any other religion in the world, or at all events it may be truthfully said there is no more unfounded religion known to man. It simply rests upon a fable and a dream. Primarily it is an outgrowth of Judaism, and that religion rests solely upon the fable of the creation of the world (less than six thousand years ago) in six days; of the forming of man from the dust of the earth, and of woman from the man's rib; of their being placed in a fine garden, where knowledge and eternal life grew upon trees, where a learned snake spoke human language fluently and persuaded the woman to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, by which the pair were not only cursed, but by this simple act countless millions of their unborn children and descendants were also cursed. We may well know the story to be a fable, for in all cases where animals are said to speak the language of men the story is a fable. Æsop did a good deal of this sort of fable-telling, making all kinds of animals to talk the language of men, but he did not suppose any sensible person would believe that the animals really spoke human language, but he simply used that mode to teach moral lessons. He told fables, knowing everybody would understand they were only fables, and the world was not deceived. Of all animal snakes are the least able to approximate talking for they have no organs for making any sound save a hiss.

According to this Jewish and Christian fable, the world, including man, has existed less than six thousand years, the earth is older than the sun, and trees, shrubs, grasses, and plants of all kinds grew

and produced flowers, fruits, and seeds before the sun came into existence. There is nothing now much better understood than that this fable possesses not the slightest truth. There is abundance of proof that the earth is not only tens of thousands of years old, but it is highly probable that it has existed hundreds of millions of years—yea, that in some form it has existed forever. The strata of rocks forming the crust of the earth positively prove that the earth has existed through prolonged eras, upon which no limit can be placed. No scientist now believes that the sun is younger than the earth.

Nothing, again, is better demonstrated than that man has lived on this earth for more than six thousand years. The shortest era of man upon the earth is set down by scientific men at fifty thousand or a hundred thousand years. Human fossils imbedded in the rocks of the earth's surface, human bones found in England, Wales, and other countries, in caves, side by side with the bones of animals which for thousands of years have been unknown in those localities and which only live in the torrid zone; the great periods of time necessary for the poles of the earth to so change as to place England in the torrid zone must have begun very, very long ago. The implements of the stone age, found in various localities, all afford incontestable proofs of man's great age upon the earth. Other proofs of the same fact are far too numerous to be mentioned in this connection. But the great age of the earth and the age of man upon it were wholly unknown to the writer of the book of Genesis, and the rational and truthful conclusion is that that story is merely a

fable, and therefore untrue, especially as it all rests upon the simple assertion of an unknown person.

This is the foundation upon which Judaism and Christianity rest, and it is a foundation of untruth. If the foundation of a system of religion is false, the system itself must be false. Nothing can be truer than this. Much of error appertaining to Christianity has arisen from the dogma that the Jewish scriptures are infallible and were written or dictated by God. The book is simply a collection of the writings of unknown authors, of whose truthfulness nothing is known, whose statements are entitled to very limited credit, who had no means of knowing that the statements they made were true, and who never even claimed that they wrote by divine dictation. While it is wholly unknown by whom the most parts of the Bible were written, it is most positive that very few of them were written by the persons to whom they are attributed.

The dream, which is the twin pillar of Christianity, is all the authority which the world has that Jesus was the son of divinity and that he was begotten upon the person of a young virgin. This dream was told by a person said to be Matthew, in a sort of narrativ attributed to him. The earliest period which is claimed to be the time when Matthew wrote that story is fifty years after the advent of Jesus, and fully half a century after the old man Joseph had gone to his grave, for he was an old man when the dreaming was done. What is the real value of a dream, whether by an old man, a young man, or a woman of any age? Has a dream any real value? If a person dreams that he finds sacks of gold, that he is made a great king, or that

he is elected president of the United States, does it for one moment make it true? No; dreams are wholly without value; and if they are regarded as of any consequence the regarader is sure to be misled. They are often the result of unsound sleep, of an overloaded stomach, or of a diseased and impaired condition of the body, and are the most valueless of all the vain imaginings which flit across the human brain. No person of sound mind attaches importance to dreams. But this dream which the old man Joseph is said to hav dreamed is the only foundation on which to base the claim that Jesus was divinely begotten and that his mother was a virgin—a most frivolous foundation indeed upon which to establish such an unlikely event and upon which to build up the only system of religion capable of saving the world. But if the dogma that Jesus was virtually the son of God, or of the Holy Ghost is taken away, the entire system is destroyed. If he was *not* the begotten son of God, and if he was *not* sent into the world by his divine father to save it and make it possible for a portion of the earth's inhabitants to escape eternal flames, then the divinity and the truth of the Christian system tumbles to the ground. Yes, if that dream is a fallacy, then Christianity is a fallacy.

But if there was any truth in that dream, and if it is of any consequence to the world what Joseph dreamed, it would seem a little more reliable could Joseph hav told it himself. There is not, however, the slightest intimation that the old man ever said a word about his having dreamed such a dream, or that anybody ever heard him relate it. Matthew appears to be the only person who ever knew any-

thing about it. The writers of the three other gospels seem not to have known anything about what Joseph dreamed, or if they knew of it, they deemed it of not sufficient consequence to say a word about it.

What chance, pray, had Matthew to know what Joseph had dreamed fifty years before? If any person now were to undertake to tell what Jack Downing or Sam Slick dreamed fifty years ago, would the recital be worth a single straw? Of course not, unless the invention might serve to amuse the reader for the moment. It would certainly be a weak foundation upon which to build a system of religion. But when the fact is understood that it was not Matthew who told the dream, nor wrote the story bearing his name, that the writer palmed off as Matthew, was not Matthew at all, the whole affair appears in its true light—a bald fabrication. Few facts are now better established than that the four narratives named after Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were unknown in the world and had no existence until the latter part of the second century, a hundred and fifty years after Jesus was dead and buried. This fact is fully and unmistakably proved in the great English work called "Supernatural Religion" and in the "History of the Christian Religion to the year 200," by Judge Waite. There is not a particle of proof that those four "gospels" were known previous to the year 180. With this truth in view, the dream story, attributed to Matthew, but which was not told till a hundred years after Matthew was dead, falls utterly to the ground, possessing no more historical value than the story of "Old Mother Hubbard," or of "Jack and his Bean Stalk"—a frivolous basis, indeed, for a system

of belief which the world is commanded to accept as divine truth.

So much for the fable and the dream which form the foundation of the Christian religion. They are wholly valueless and false. They merit not the slightest respect from any sensible person who is really in search of the truth. They are the inventions and vagaries of designing but ignorant men, and should no longer be gulped down as divine truth by an unthinking world. As no fountain can rise above its source, so no religious system can be truer than the foundation it rests upon. In this light, then, Christianity is unfounded and false. No belief among men is more so.

Space will not be taken to enlarge here upon the fact that the doctrine of a demi-god, or of a son begotten by God, of a virgin's conceiving without the services of a man, was not first held by Christians. These dogmas were common in several of the older pagan religions. Christna of India is a striking instance of this kind, and he was believed in a thousand years before the time of Jesus. In the mythological tales of ancient oriental countries there are as many as twenty personages claimed to have been divinely begotten, the mothers in many cases being virgins. The myth of virgin and child is more than a thousand years older than Christianity.

The second question is, "If your work was already accomplished, would you not have despoiled man of all those virtues which make life worth living?" To this the answer is emphatically and forever "No." There is no virtue in man's believing senseless fables and dreams to be divine truth. There is no virtue in believing falsehood. There is no merit in accepting

vagaries and inventions as truth and reality. A sham is a sham, and though repeated millions of times it is still a sham, and can never be anything else. Virtue consists in truth and in disseminating it among men. Real truth is in nature or the universe, not in idle fables and dreams, the inventions of a designing, wily class of men, who live by playing upon the fears of credulous dupes. Man is never filled with virtue by believing a lie, and is never despoiled of virtue by being taught the truth. The great mistake of all the religions based upon supernaturalism is their falseness. The foundation being false, they cannot be otherwise than false. Let it be repeated, then, there is no virtue in a falsehood, though a thousand times repeated; there is no virtue in believing a falsehood.

It is the greatest mistake to say that Jesus taught the best morals in the world, and that Christianity has a monopoly of good morals. Waving entirely for the present the unhistorical character of the story of Jesus and of his divine parentage, which, unfortunately, is wholly unsupported, it must be admitted that good morals were taught in the world long before he lived. Menu taught good morals; Zoroaster taught good morals; Buddha taught most excellent morals—in many respects superior to those of Jesus; Confucius taught very good and practical morals; Thales taught good morals; Pythagoras taught excellent morals; so did Socrates, Plato, Bias, Zeno, Aristotle, Epicurus, Cicero, Seneca, Philo, Hillel, and very many others. It is also a very false claim to set up that Christianity possesses all the virtue in the world. No greater mistake could be made. From a recent trip around

the world, and a visit to all the principal countries of the earth, we have arrived at the conclusion that Christian nations are guilty of ten times as much cheating, lying, robbing, drunkenness, prostitution, and crime generally, in proportion to numbers, as is the pagan world.

In Asia alone there are five hundred millions of believers in the teachings of Buddha—about twice the number of all the believers in the teachings of Jesus; and it is a great truth borne out by observation and the statistics of the various countries that there is fully ten times as much immorality among the nations which have embraced Christianity as among the followers of Buddha. This statement can be thoroughly sustained by proof of the most reliable character.

Another truth is that, the doctrines of Christianity are not calculated to make the believer in them happy or tranquil in mind. On the contrary, the promulgation of Christian dogmas has produced more unhappiness among men than all other religions combined. Christianity possesses nothing new nor original in its creed, being made up of the old patches and rag-ends of the systems of religion which existed a thousand years before it; but still it has a more malicious and cruel God, a more powerful devil, a hotter and more perpetual hell than any other religion. All this can be fully demonstrated. Let now a single case be alluded to.

The last issue of the *Sunday Mercury* contains a full account of John C. Paulison, a prominent lawyer of Paterson, N. J., becoming hopelessly insane from listening to preaching in a Methodist camp-meeting near that city, where the burning and lurid

flames of hell were so vividly described as to make a painful and fatal impression. So affected was this lawyer with the description of hell which he listened to that his mind became wholly unbalanced, and he thought he had died and was taken to the place of terrible torment of which he had heard. Yes, even while this infernal talk was being indulged in, Mr. Paulison suddenly threw up his arms and rushed for the woods, yelling at the top of his voice, "I am dead; I am in hell." He raved on until he fell with exhaustion, when he called upon those who had come to his aid to cover him with dust and ashes, again declaring that he was dead and his soul in hell. He grew worse until it took six persons to manage him. He was taken in a carriage to the railway train, and then home, where his raving continued, he still insisting that he was dead and must be buried. He recognized his wife, and insisted that she was in hell with him. In a few hours he became much worse and had to be conveyed to an insane asylum, and it is now thought he can live but a few days.

This is one of the legitimate results of believing the Christian religion. In fact, it is difficult to understand how any person can keep his senses for fifteen minutes who really believes in the hell which Christianity teaches—a hell prepared by the creator of the world, in which to burn, and that to all eternity, more than nine-tenths of all his offspring. If a man believes that his father, his mother, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and himself, too, have but one chance in ten of escaping that horrible fate, insanity is the most natural result. By believing this harrowing doctrine thousands and millions of

men, women, and children have been rendered utterly wretched; and, this belief has caused more unhappiness to those who have accepted it than all other religions in the world. It is for this reason, and others akin to it, that THE TRUTH SEEKER so earnestly opposes the Christian religion. Well would it be could a religion which causes such unhappiness and such insanity become obsolete in the world.

The third question is, "If the world is bad with religion, can Liberalism make it better, and how?" The answer to this is, Truth is more conducive to goodness and happiness than is falsehood, and therefore Liberalism is more productive of happiness than Christianity, which, by its devotees, is held to be the only true religion.

Liberalism is founded upon the truths of nature, and accepts fully the teachings of science. These are the basis of man's good and happiness, as well as the basis of all truth. Christianity, it is claimed, supersedes nature, nature's laws, science and its teachings as well, and sets up in place of these a belief in supernaturalism, opposing the highest sources of truth known to man. Liberalism wants many teachers of nature, science, and true morality, but no priests of supernaturalism; Christianity wants few teachers of nature and science, and employs hundreds of thousands of pedlars of supernaturalism.

Liberalism proposes to benefit the world by educating the human race in the truths of nature and reason, and to show up the falsity of ecclesiastical shams and absurdities. Christianity seeks to fasten these shams and absurdities upon the race, and to discourage confidence in nature and her infallible laws. Liberalism teaches naturalism and truth,

while Christianity teaches supernaturalism and falsehood. To repeat, inasmuch as truth and nature are more conducive to man's good and happiness than falsehood and superstition, so Liberalism is superior to Christianity.

To the fourth question—"Do the Liberals suppose that scientific lectures delivered every Sunday will turn men from their unlawful lusts, make them better men, and exalt their natures?"—the answer is unequivocally, *Yes!* True lectures are always better than false lectures; naturalism than supernaturalism. The teachings of true knowledge, which is only another term for science, is infinitely better than any form of supernatural falsehood. Liberalism teaches that man is responsible for every act that he performs, whether good or bad; that he must himself abide the consequences, without the slightest regard to his belief in another, or the merits of that other person's conduct. Liberalism teaches that man should perform good deeds because they are right and are more productive of happiness than evil or unwise deeds. Christianity teaches that though a man may commit all the wrongs and all the sins in the calendar, if he will only believe in the merits of the blood of a person who died over eighteen hundred years ago, his evil deeds and his sins will all be wiped away, and he will become happy by the merits of that person. It is unnatural, it is untrue, that simple belief or the confession of belief can undo the effects of the vilest crimes. If a man slay his fellowman the deed cannot be undone by forgiveness, nor can the guilt be removed by the merits of another person. The effects of a good or a bad deed

are necessarily unchangeable. An increase or loss of faith cannot effect it.

The term "unlawful lusts" is not very definite. Man's lusts and passions are a part of his being, and without them he would not amount to much. The true object of life is to keep these in abeyance to reason which far outranks passion. This is done by cultivating the intellect and increasing love of truth. The teachings of supernaturalism do not destroy men's lusts and passions. As a proof of this it may be stated that Christian nations have shown as much lust, passion, and cruelty as any others in the world; they have shed more blood and taken far more life in the name of religion than the believers in all other religions; and even the teachers of supernaturalism themselves often indulge in the lowest forms of passion and lust. A recent publication, termed "Crimes of Preachers," gives over seven hundred well-authenticated cases of lustful indulgences on the part of clergymen within the past six years; and it is probable that not one case in ten comes to light. Christians have no stones to throw at Liberals on the score of "unlawful lusts," or of leading immoral lives.

The fifth question is, "What has Infidelity done for the world and what does it propose to do that we should place any confidence in it?" Infidelity, rationalism, and scientific investigation, which may all be ranked together, have done very much to show the errors in the teachings of supernatural religions and the fallacies of the theological theories of creation, the era of man on the earth, the superiority of nature's laws and truths, of the facts of science over the blind and deluding character of supernaturalism

—of mythical beings and their absurd revelations. They have furnished to the world such men as Copernicus, Galileo, Bruno, Servetus, Spinoza, D'Holbach, Voltaire, Volney, Paine, Hume, Combe, Darwin, Huxley, Haeckel, Draper, and many others who have brought the truths of science and reason to the knowledge of man, thereby doing a thousand times more real good to the world than all the priests of supernatural religions who have lived in the last five thousand years.

The advocates of science and truth propose to continue in the search of nature's truths, to learn more and more of her deep mysteries and hidden lessons, and to make these known to the world. They believe that truth is the greatest treasure which man can possess, and that the investigation of truth is infinitely better than embracing falsehood and error. They feel positively that truth, as it exists in nature, is a thousand times more elevating and useful to mankind than all the myths about gods and devils and hells that ignorance and priestcraft have ever devised. This investigation of truth, this search of this real, and the study of nature, are well calculated to inspire and strengthen the confidence of reasoning, thoughtful people.

It is to be hoped that the questions of friend Whitehead are satisfactorily answered and in accordance with the truth revered by all good men. Should he wish to ask any other questions, let him not be diffident. We will endeavor to reply to them as well as we know how, and to give him the truth as we understand it.

MORE CHRISTIAN QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

(From The Truth Seeker of Sept. 23, 1882.)

Few things afford us more pleasure than answering the honest questions of Christian friends, believing it to be always a worthy object to dispense the blessings of light and truth, especially to those sitting in darkness, and to whom the light of nature has not been revealed. It is always well to be charitable and generous to those less favored than ourselves.

The following questions are from the Rev. John Smith. This somewhat numerous personage has often been heard from in various parts of the world, and in various situations. He was first known as Captain John Smith, whose life was saved by Pocahontas, the beautiful daughter of Powhatan, in Virginia; since that time he has turned up in numerous places. A short time ago it was given out that John Smith had sailed for Australia; a little later it was announced that John Smith had been engaged in a fist-fight in Alabama, and had got badly whipped; and later still, just a few weeks ago, the papers stated that John Smith had committed suicide, somewhere in Pennsylvania, near Harrisburg. But these accounts must have been mistakes of the printers, for now it appears that John Smith has become a reverend, and is preaching the gospel out in Oregon. We will, however, answer his questions all the same, and hope he will receive light enough so as after awhile to understand nature and

her laws better than he does at present, and become a sensible, earnest Liberal. Here is his letter:

HILLSBORO, OREGON, Aug. 30, 1882.

D. M. BENNETT, *Dear Sir:* About one year ago, while you were abroad, I wrote and sent an article to E. Macdonald for publication in *THE TRUTH SEEKER*; the article was in refutation of Infidel arguments against the flood and Noah's ark. The article was printed, and brought forth what purported to be a reply from Macdonald. Soon after I submitted to him a series of questions, with the request that he would answer them; but I failed to bring forth a response, hence I arrived at the conclusion that Macdonald either did not favor a discussion, and chose to avoid it, or that it was a forbidden topic. I believe in discussion, and believe it is the proper method to arrive at the truth, and if you are of the same opinion, and willing to discuss, I would like to submit for your consideration a series of questions which I would like you to answer in a fair and square manner. I am willing for you to submit the same number of questions to myself, to which I will give fair answers and an honest examination. If my proposition meets with your favor, we may all learn some truth by so doing. The following questions and answers are relative to Jesus as a historical character, and to his divinity:

1. Is it not a self-evident fact that Jesus Christ once existed, and was a notable character superior to man, from the very fact that his birth, life, and death were the cause of a chronological era being inaugurated, styled A.D., or the year of our Lord Jesus Christ?

2. Is it not a fact that millions of Christians exist to-day as a monument to Christ's memory sufficient evidence to prove that he must have had an existence, and also that he must have figured very conspicuously among people of his time to have made so many followers as early as the year 40 A.D.?

3. If Christ never had an existence, and was only a myth, how did a sect of people become possessed of the name Christian? For an illustration, the Mohammedans derived their name from Mohammed; Christians, from Christ.

4. Can you cite a parallel case where a sect of people ever assumed the name of a myth?

5. Did not Buddha, Mohammed, and other notable men have followers who assumed the name of Buddhists, Mohammedans, etc.? The sect of Mohammedans to-day proves that Mohammed once existed by their name and other proofs, as do Christians prove the existence of Jesus.

6. Infidelity not only claims that Bible personages are mythical, but claims that personages of quite modern history are myths, as I see claims that William Tell of Switzerland is a myth. I find by history that William Tell was a real historical character. It would be interesting to me, and probably to some of your readers, if you would give some authority on that William Tell myth idea. To me it is as amusing as your claim that Jesus is a myth. Hoping you will give my questions an honest examination, and answer them in a fair spirit,

Yours in Christ,

REV. JOHN SMITH.

It is, perhaps, to be regretted that the Rev. John Smith's previous questions were not duly published and answered, but Eugene avers that he was overcrowded, and also that he did not regard the inquiries as of much importance. However, to make amends for his lack of space and appreciation, we will endeavor to answer Bro. Smith's foregoing questions the best we know how.

1. Our reply to the first question must be, No. It is not a self-evident fact that Jesus Christ once existed and was a notable character, superior to man. The assertion that any person existed is not a "self-evident fact" that he did exist unless there is some proof to verify the claim. The existence of the sun's rays is a self-evident fact on a bright day in July, to one who is compelled to stand bareheaded and uncovered for a few hours in its scorching light. Cold is a self-evident fact to one who has to ride a few hours insufficiently clothed, facing a northwest wind, when the mercury stands at twenty-five degrees below zero. But the simple assertion that

Jesus Christ once lived is not a self-evident fact any more than is the assertion that such characters once lived as Aladdin and his wonderful lamp, Sindbad the Sailor, the Old Man of the Sea, or Robinson Crusoe and his Man Friday. Millions of people have existed whose names never came down to our times, and thousands of names have been repeated to us of imaginary persons who never had an existence.

There might have been a humble individual named Jesus, and it is quite possible he may have been put to death for claiming a right to assume the rulership of the country where he lived, or for some other cause, but there is no historical proof that such a character ever lived. If he did live, he was not superior to man, for he was a man; the claims that he was begotten by God, that his mother was a virgin, that he performed miracles, that he rose from the dead and ascended bodily up into the upper atmosphere, are claims mythical and unproved. There is no history to sustain such claims, and the most of them were not even set up until the latter part of the second century. The matter of connecting remarkable events and wonderful powers with an individual a long time after his death has been very common in all ages of the world. In scores of instances noted characters have been credited with exploits which they never performed. The tendency toward hero-worship, and the deification of rulers, generals, and other distinguished persons, has been very great. The simple claim of miracle-working set up for any one is not in itself worth a cent unless substantiated by the strongest proof.

The belief in Christ is no more a proof that such a person had an existence than the belief in Santa

Claus, or Saint Nicholas, proves that this latter personage has an existence. There are millions of children who have the fullest confidence that their favorite Santa Claus is a veritable character, for see, what tangible proofs they have of it; every Christmas eve they hang up their stockings, and lo and behold! the same are filled with toys, sweets, goodies, and various other interesting trinkets so prized by the little folks. They are clearly convinced that he not only exists, but calls upon them personally once a year and bestows his blessings upon them. It may be regarded as childish in these little people to so easily believe in a myth, but there is just as much proof that their god has an existence as the god or Christ of the older children, who in the matter of proof have no advantage of them.

The matter of a chronological era being founded on the story of Jesus proves nothing, except that it was adopted on account of the popularity his story attained. The application of A. D., *Anno Domini*—the year of our Lord—was not made till the sixth century. It was first made use of by Dionysius the Little, a Roman abbot, and began to be used in Gaul in the eighth century, though it was not generally adopted in that country till a hundred years later. It was adopted in England toward the close of the same century. The fact that a system of chronology was adopted eight hundred years after the supposed birth of Christ has not the slightest bearing upon the question of his real existence, for the Romish abbot who first started it knew nothing about whether Christ had existed more than is known to-day, nor did those who adopted the same style of counting years two or three centuries later know anything

more about it than he did. All of them together knew just nothing at all. The thing was indefinite and uncertain at best, for there is a diversity of opinion, even among Christian authorities, as to which year it was in which Jesus was born—a difference of four years according to some, of seven years according to others, and much more than seven years still according to others. The year of the birth of Jesus is no more settled than the month in which he was born. Nearly every month in the year has been claimed by various Christian writers as the month in which he was born. It is extremely difficult to establish myths with any kind of certainty.

The 25th of December was finally settled upon by the Christian church as the birth-day of their God, because that day had long been kept as a festival by many pagan nations, from the Persians down to the Romans and the Druids, as the birth-day of their gods, particularly the sun, which on that day may be said to be born, or to begin to rise from the state of night or death into which for six months it had been sinking. The church showed its usual shrewdness in appropriating this great pagan festival and making it its own, especially as it was just as easy to say its God was born on that day as any other. From the story in the four gospels there is no indication as to which of the days of the year was his birth-day. There is a wide range for choice, one having as much authority as another.

There have been many eras or systems of counting years among men in different nations and in different periods of time. Thus, we have what is called the era of the creation of the world, the Chinese

chronology, the Indian chronology, the Egyptian era, the era of Yezdegird, or Persian era, the Jewish era, era of Nabonassar, era of the Seleucidæ, or Macedonian era, era of Alexander, era of Antioch, era of Tyre, era of Constantinople, era of Actium, the Julian period, era of Augustus, era of the Armenians, the Mohammedan era, or era of the Hegira, etc. Last of all came the adoption of the Christian era, which proves nothing more than that by the consent of the nations who believed in the system it was adopted. It is both vague and without importance as a matter of proof. The adoption of the Christian era was not because it was known that such a person as Jesus had actually lived, but because a belief in him had prevailed in several countries.

2. The answer to the next question must also be no. The existence of Christians to-day is not sufficient proof that Jesus once lived any more than the belief of millions of India in Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, and Christna is a proof that those myths once had a real existence, or than the belief of the Greeks and Romans in Jupiter and Apollo was proof that those myths ever existed. If the two hundred and fifty millions who profess to be believers in Christianity prove its truth, then the five hundred millions who believe in Buddhism must necessarily prove it to be twice as true as Christianity.

It is a great mistake to suppose that Jesus figured conspicuously among the people of his time, neither did he hav a great number of followers about the year 40, nor for a hundred years afterward. There is no proof to that effect. If he lived, he was simply a sort of tramp, roving around from place to

place, followed by some obscure fishermen and other idlers; no historian of the time knowing anything about him or saying anything about him. There is no claim that he ever committed a word of his teachings to writing, or that he organized a church, or established a society. Those who believed in him did not become very numerous nor powerful till the fourth century, when Constantine, for political and selfish reasons, embraced the so-called religion of Christ. Buddhism and Mohammedanism, and even Mormonism, spread far more rapidly than did Christianity.

3. The reply to the third question may be this: On the basis that Christ never had an existence it is no more strange that a sect grew out of a belief in him than that sects in India called Vishnuites, Siva-ites, believers in Christna, etc., grew out of belief in those divinitie. The world has greatly abounded in sects and religions who claimed to believe in characters and gods that never had a real existence. The presence of Buddhism and Mohammedanism would not be sufficient to prove the existence of Buddha and Mohammed were there not corroborating proof, which is lamentably deficient in the Christian story.

4. To the fourth question—"Can you cite a parallel case when a sect of people ever assumed the name of a myth?"—the answer is, Yes, hundreds of them. For thousands of years sects have existed which assumed the names of myths. It is necessary to mention but a few of them. Among the most prominent, however, of the myths of the past in which numerous sects have believed may be named Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Rama, Christna, Changti,

Pak-Tai, Kwan-Tai, Kwan-Non, Osiris, Isis, Horus, Neph, Amun, Ra, Ptah, Khem, Sati, Naith, Maut, Seb, Serapis, Thoth, Anubis, Anouke, Athor, Khunsa, Pecht, Anu, Anata, Bel, Baal, Hea, Ninip, Merodach, Nergal, Ishtar, or Ashtoreth, Nebo, Beltis, Ashur, Adad, Anab, Melkart, Acherah, Moladah, Chemosh, El, Molock, Jupiter, Juno, Saturn, Neptune, Apollo, Mercury, Minerva, Diana, Venus, Pan, Bacchus, Hercules, Esculapius, Prometheus, Jason, Theseus, Castor, Pollox, Perseus, Odin, Thor, Balder, Frey, Frigga, Morino, Anyamber, Taaroa, Oro, Allah, Mumbo Jumbo, and any quantity of others. These were all myths. They have been believed in by hundreds of millions, and there is just as much proof of the existence of these as of Jesus, or his reputed father, Jehovah, Yahweh, Adonai, El Shaddai, or whatever else he may be called.

5. To the fifth question the answer, yes, should be given to a part of it. The followers of Buddha and Mohammed were named after the leaders they believed in, so were the Vishnuites, the Sivaites, the Christnaites, and the Ramaites, named after the personages they believed in, though these latter ones were absolute myths, and no unduped person believes they ever had a real existence. The fact that the believers in Christ are called Christians does not prove that he existed any more than the believers in Siva and Christina prove that those myths existed as persons, or the existence of the Mormons proves that Mormon was a real person. There is no question but there have been more inventions, more myths, and more falsehoods gotten up in the domain of religion than in all the other forms of thought or belief.

6. Now as to the case of William Tell. While it

is not improbable that there might have been a Swiss man by the name of Tell who opposed the tyranny of the Austrians, represented by Gessler, the story about shooting an apple from the head of his son was simply a repetition of an old sun myth not less than five thousand years old, handed down to us from the ancient Aryans, the early inhabitants of Central Asia, from whom we largely obtained our modern languages, our religions and worshipful notions, the basis of our literature, and many of the nursery tales which for thousands of years have been recited to the children of succeeding generations, and by the mothers and nurses of our generation transmitted to another, just as the story of "Cinderella and the Glass Slipper," "Jack the Giant-killer," "Beauty and the Beast," and many other similar beautiful tales, used even in our day, are traceable back to the ancient Aryans. When they emigrated into the Western countries, which were afterward called Europe, they took their favorite tales and legends with them, and that is the way in which many of those charming stories became so general in Europe, and were still later brought to this continent and became the folk-lore of our own beloved land. We owe very much to those ancient Aryans. Our nursery stories, our adoration of the grand and beautiful in nature, our myths, our religious sentiments and superstitions, the foundation of our language and literature, we naturally inherited from them as any inheritance descends from parents to children. Let me quote what Prof. Edward Clodd, F.R.A.S., a learned English writer, says of the story of William Tell in his "Childhood of Religions:"

"The story is well known how in the 1307th year after Christ the cruel Gessler set a hat upon a pole as a symbol of the ruling power and ordered every one who passed by to bow before it. A mountain-eer named Tell refused to obey the order and was at once brought before Gessler. As Tell was known to be an expert archer, he was sentenced by way of punishment to shoot an apple off the head of his own son. The apple was placed on the boy's head, and the father bent his bow; the arrow sped and went through the apple. Gessler saw that Tell before shooting had stuck another arrow in his belt and asked the reason. Tell replied, 'To shoot you, tyrant, had I slain my child.' Now although the crossbow which Tell is said to have used is shown at Zurich, the event never took place. One poor man was condemned to be burnt alive for daring to question the story, but the poor man was right.

"The story is told not only in Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Russia, Persia, and perhaps India, but is common to the Turks and Mongolians, while a legend of the wild Samoyedes, who never heard of Tell or saw a book in their lives, relates it, chapter and verse, of one of their marksmen. In its English form it occurs in the ballad William of Cloudesly. The bold archer says:

' I hav a sonne seven years old ;
Hee is to me full deere ;
I will tye him to a stake—
All shall see him that bee here—
And lay an apple upon his head,
And goe six paces him free,
And I myself, with a broad arrowe,
Shall cleave the apple in towe.'

"The story is an old Aryan myth. Tell is the sun-god whose arrow (light-rays) never miss their mark, and likewise kill their foes."

The same author then continues to give the same source for the touching nursery story of the faithful dog Gellert killing the wolf which came to destroy Llewellyn's child, and how when the prince came home and found the cradle empty, and the dog's mouth smeared with blood, he quickly slew the brave creature, and then found the child safe and the wolf dead beside it. He says, "At Baddgelert in North Wales you may see the dog's grave neatly railed round." He then continues: "Now this story occurs in all sorts of forms in the folk-lore of nearly every Aryan people, and is found in China and Egypt. In India a black snake takes the place of the wolf, the ichneumon that of the dog, while in Egypt the story says that the cook nearly killed a wali for smashing a potfull of herbs, and then discovered among the herbs there lurked a poisonous snake. *It is safe to conclude that marvelous things which are said to have happened in so many places never happened any where.*"

He then goes on to show that the beautiful Greek story of Cupid and Psyche, of Cinderella, Samson and Delilah, and other old stories of a similar kind, are simply ancient Aryan sun-myths that have been repeated millions upon millions of times in the thousands of years that have passed since their origin.

To return to Tell, a quotation upon the subject from Johnson's Cyclopaedia will be in order:

According to Swiss legends Tell was a celebrated marksman with the bow, living as a hunter at Burgelen, in the canton of Uri, and a member of the conspiracy which was formed

against Austria at Gruthi, November 7, 1307, by Walter Furst, of Uri, his father-in-law, Werner Stauffacher, of Schwytz, and Arnold von Melchthal, of Unterwalden, and which finally succeeded in freeing the country from the foreign yoke.

The story of the pole with the hat on it, of Tell's refusing to bow to it, of his being compelled, as a punishment, to shoot an apple from his son's head, is related, and this high authority concludes thus:

Of this story about Gessler, Tell, Stauffacher, etc., the oldest Swiss chroniclers, Johannes, of Winterthur, Justinger, of Berne, and Hemmerlin, of Zurich, know nothing. The first mention of these names and incidents is made in the latter part of the fifteenth century by *Das weisse Buch*, and a complete narrative does not occur until the middle of the sixteenth century in the *Chronicon Helveticum*, by Hieronymus Tschudi. The monuments erected in various places in honor of Tell are of a much later date. These circumstances early made the story of Tell somewhat suspected, though as a general rule it was considered as real history; even Johannes von Müller accepted it. Later critics, however, have proved that the whole story is nothing but a legend common among the nations of the Aryan race, found, with all its principal features, in the Persian poet Ferid ed-Din Attar, the Icelandic "Vilkinsaga," the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus, the English popular song on William of Cloudestly, and only modified to suit Swiss circumstances.

Here, then, is the whole thing in a nutshell. There might have been in Switzerland between five and six hundred years ago a man by the name of Tell, who, perhaps, was a brave and valorous defender of liberty, or at all events there was a legend of such a character, and nearly two hundred years from the date of his birth the Aryan sun-myth about the apple was vaguely added to the story, and some two centuries later it was fixed up more definitely and was accepted, by those who did not know to the

contrary, as absolute history, when, in fact, there was not a word of truth in the matter. That is the way in which legends have been accepted as history in hundreds of cases.

So, in all reasonable probability, it was with the mythical story of Jesus. There might or might not, to begin with, have been such a person as Jesus, and he might have been put to death for political or other reasons, as thousands upon thousands of others have been, both before and since, and within two hundred years from the time of his birth, when all the world had with reference to him were vague legends, these were dressed up and changed to suit the popular Christian demand; and the miraculous conception, his mother being a virgin, the visit of the Jew-God to see her, his wonderful miracles, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension to heaven were added to the legend, and in the course of centuries such men as the Rev. John Smith have accepted it as history, when, in reality, it is not history at all; it is not corroborated in the slightest degree by contemporaneous history, or writers of the time.

It is agreed by all reliable authorities that the writings of Paul are much older than any other parts of the New Testament—at least a hundred years older than the four gospels; but while his whole hobby and song was "Jesus and him crucified," he has not a word to say about Jesus being begotten in a miraculous manner by the Jewish deity; not a word about Jesus being the son of a virgin; not a word about his miraculous ascension; not a word about the wonderful miracles he performed. Neither does Peter in his Epistle (and one of them is considered genuine) set up any such claim. These facts,

together with the additional one that these miraculous claims were not set up till the latter part of the second century, go very far to convince the candid thinker that the Tell tactics were employed in the case of Jesus. If he did exist, his story was greatly changed by the imaginativ and false writers of the second century, as was done in the case of Tell and the apple story. It is a matter of history that the myth of virgin and child—Isis and Horus—was believed in in Egypt nearly two thousand years before Christianity existed, and that in India the myth of a god overshadowing a virgin, of her conceiving and bringing forth an infant god, of his being sought by an arch enemy and large numbers of infants being slain, of his growing up and leading a wandering life, followed by disciples to whom he taught excellent morals, of his performing wonderful miracles, of his finally being put to death by his enemies upon a tree, and for the good of mankind, was believed nearly a thousand years before Christianity was known. It is known, too, that with different nations such demigods—divinely begotten—as Crite, Taut, Fobi, Zalla, Devatat, Prometheus, Esculapins, Adonis, Hercules, and several others were believed in and worshiped, all of them not less than five hundred years before the time of Jesus, and several of them were claimed to hav been crucified by their enemies. There was thus no more difficulty in finding material to finish out the legend of Jesus in the second century than there was with William Tell two hundred years after his time. And judging from the characters of the early fathers and leaders of the church, it is very easy to understand that they were the very persons capable of borrowing the mirac-

ulous features from the older nations and systems. That such appropriations were made there is the very best reasons for believing.

It is to be hoped that the Rev. John Smith's questions are answered to his satisfaction, to the enlightenment of himself and the readers of *THE TRUTH SEEKER*, and that the same is done in a "fair and square manner." If we hav failed to do this we will try again. We believe in discussion as much as himself. If the reverend gentleman has other questions upon which he wishes us to throw some of our strong light, he has only to apply; we will do the best by him we can. The same offer holds good to all others, whether Christian or otherwise. Whoever wants some of the light which we hav, or whoever wishes to know the reasons for the faith we hav within us, shall receive respectful attention by applying at our shop.

Since the Rev. John Smith was so kind as to say we might propound the same number of questions to him that he has to us, we will cheerfully avail ourselves of his generous offer. Here they are:

1. Is there any reliable history in the world about Jesus save what is contained in the four narratives attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? If yes, please name it.

2. Is there any contemporaneous writer who can be relied upon as genuin and truthful who ever does so much as mention the name of Jesus Christ? If yes, please name him.

3. Is there the slightest proof that the four gospels attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were written by them?

4. Is there any proof whatever that those four

ospels were known by the early fathers, by any of the bishops, by any of the earlier churches, or by anybody else before the year 181?

5. Is there a single dogma, rite, or sacrament in the Christian creed that was not hundreds of years earlier held by the pagan religions of Asia and Egypt?

6. Is there any more proof that the legend of Jesus—his divine parentage, his miracles, his teachings, his death on a tree—is any more authentic or trustworthy than the story of Christna in India, or the sun-myth legend of William Tell and the apple shooting from Aryan folk-lore?

If our friend will reply to these inquiries the same shall appear in these columns.

MR. WHITEHEAD AGAIN.

(From *The Truth Seeker* of Sept. 30, 1882.)

Two weeks ago we published five questions propounded by W. M. Whitehead, and made what we hoped would be satisfactory replies, but it seems they did not quite answer the purpose, and that the person who asked the questions is not pleased with our responses. He has written us again, and here is what he says:

STONE, PA., Sept. 20, 1882.

MR. BENNETT, *Dear Sir*: A short time ago I asked you a few questions, and in answering them you labored hard to show that the religion of Christ was false and unworthy of belief, and that it was founded on a fable and a dream.

The account of creation, as given in the Bible, you regard as a fable; we regard it as veritable history. You make the Bible say the earth was created six thousand years ago, and

you expect us to gulp it down without questioning the assertion. We have searched for the place in the Bible where it is definitely stated when it was created, but we have failed to find it. The first passage in the book says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and that affirmation stands to-day unchallenged by science. There is not a fact or principle that is established in science that is inconsistent with it. It is not a fable; it is history.

Of course, you will claim that the Mosaic cosmogony is utterly inconsistent with the demonstrated truths of geology. We hope you will show wherein they differ. Both records show that the ocean gives birth to the dry land and gives inhabitants to the sea first. Allow me to call your attention to the consistency and the harmony of the Bible and the teachings of science on this point. Turn to the 104th psalm and we read: "Who laid the foundations of the earth? Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a mantle" (the original chaos.) In the 24th psalm, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, for he hath founded it upon the seas and established upon the floods." Solomon, in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, says, "When there was no depth I was brought forth." You may find lots of objection to revelation if you are so disposed. Every page of the Bible, as well as every appearance of nature, will furnish plenty of food for your skepticism. We do not, however, feel disposed to esteem a few unwarranted assertions as unanswerable arguments against the truth of revelation. We feel disposed to cling to our religion until we understand thoroughly what we are embracing in its stead.

Another objection (and you are not alone in urging it) is the eternality of matter. But however well you know that matter is eternal, I do not know any such thing. I know it cannot be annihilated by any process we can subject it to. But because we cannot destroy it does not prove it to be eternal. It would have been as consistent for you, while in Egypt, to have butted the pyramids, and when you had discovered that it was useless to try to destroy them in that manner, to have said they are eternal. "In the presence of eternity the mountains are as transient as the clouds." But what is matter? It certainly is not a philosophical abstraction known by that name, nor is it

single substance, but a great variety of them. We have hydrogen, oxygen, sulphur, carbon, iodine, and many others, all of which resist the efforts of chemists to reduce them to anything simpler. Which is the eternal matter you speak of? Is it iron or clay? If it is any particular one, where did the others come from? If it is all of them, have we between sixty and seventy kinds of matter that are eternal? and are they eternal in their present combinations? or is it the simpler elements that are eternal? But should we grant that matter is eternal, how would that account for the formation of the world and the origin of life? The world is governed by law. Who or what first opposed a rule of action upon inert matter? Where did the first life-germ come from? and how did it assimilate to itself a material body?

"We may speculate about questions of this character; we may examine the lowest manifestation of life as it connects itself with the lowest organized being, still the nature of life and the manner of its union with materiality no one may know. To know where the inertia of matter ends and the motion of life begins is and will be forever beyond the limit prescribed to the human intellect." Where inertia ends and life begins is a mystery inconceivable, unthinkable, and impossible according to our theory of things.

We believe the Mosaic account is about right in the time even of the existence of man on earth. We regard the small multiplication of human species as a demonstration of truthfulness on the part of Moses. But that the earth was created when man was first placed upon it I do not believe.

Geology is a broken reed upon which no dependence can be placed. One new discovered fact sometimes upsets a whole theory. Every new theory is the epitaph on the tombstone of the old. It would be difficult to find two geologists who agree in their facts or theories. Their facts are generally as contrary as their theories. Mr. Barnes says, "On the one subject geology, so early as 1806, the French Institution counted more than eighty theories hostile to scripture history, not one of which has stood to the present day."

It will hardly do to say that the New Testament is "founded on a dream." The vision was given to quiet the jealous fears

of the "old man" Joseph respecting the condition of the girl to whom he was engaged. This circumstance is established by the fact that he sought to put her away privately.

To say that the gospels are inventions of "ignorant and designing" men is rather absurd. The invention of such a character as Christ by any man, wise or simple, would be a greater miracle than the fact. When Jesus was presented as the Lord of life to the Romans and Jews, so far from admiring him as a hero, they crucified him as an impostor. The authors of this "ignorant" invention suffered too much persecution for any man to believe for an instant that they would thus suffer in order to palm off on the world a lie of their own manufacture. Such a thing is "utterly unthinkable."

It certainly does look strange that the gospels were not known until the year 180, and stranger still is the fact that Celsus had written a book before that time refuting the doctrines contained in the gospels which did not exist. Is it not self-evident that if Celsus wrote a reply to the gospels they were then in circulation and commanded some belief?

But there was another heretic, the celebrated Marcion, who lived in the beginning of the second century, and had every opportunity of discovering forgeries if any then existed, but no one word does he say. It will not do, friend Bennett, to tell us that the gospels were not known until the year 180. The gospels are as well authenticated as any other books in existence. They were so acknowledged in the apostolic age. They were quoted "word for word by the immediate scholars of both Paul and John, viz., by Barnabas of Cyprus, the patron and companion of Paul in his first apostolic tour (Acts ix, 27, etc.), by Clemens Romanus, bishop of Rome, A. D. 91, 92, and the disciple of Paul (Phil. iv, 3); and by the following disciples: John: Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, who died A. D. 106 or 110; Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who died A. D. 169; and Papias, bishop of Hieropolis, in Syria, who lived about that time, and according to some, was a fellow-disciple of Polycarp under the apostle John" (Wheeler's Summary of N. T. History, p. 24).

"The teachers of the church in general recognized the apostolic writings, and especially the gospels. Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, who went into Gaul and became bishop of Lyons

in A.D. 177, expressly declares that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote the gospels; Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, who died A.D. 184, wrote a commentary on the gospels; and Clemens of Alexandria (between 211 and 218) repeatedly cites passages out of the gospels and epistles. In the same way Tertullian (220) and Origen (254) and the ecclesiastical historian Eusebius (340) speak of the books contained in our New Testament, which at this time were almost universally spread and acknowledged'' (Wheeler's Summary of N. T. History, p. 28).

I think enough has been said to show that Christianity is not founded on a fable and a dream, and that the New Testament is not the invention of "designing" men, but what it pretends to be, the word of God. Respectfully yours,
W. M. WHITEHEAD.

It is quite possible that we may not be able to induce Mr. Whitehead to accept the correctness of our opinions, but we can do no better than to defend them with such ability as we possess, and show such good reasons as are at hand.

Our friend will not consent that Christianity is founded upon a fable and a dream, but it does not appear that he has rebutted the proofs adduced by us to show the fact. Mr. Whitehead being a Christian, it is not to be expected that he will easily relinquish the ground upon which his system rests. A religion in which \$600,000,000 are invested, with 250,000 priests living upon those who accept it can not be expected to be relinquished without a very earnest struggle. The main hope we can indulge in is that our correspondent, and others like him, will accept the truth when they see it. We cannot expect them to do so before.

Our friend's first effort seems to be to claim that the "beginning" spoken of in Genesis was far more than six thousand years ago, and that consequently

the earth is much older than that. But how can he deny the record? The first chapter in Genesis in which the beginning is spoken of, the entire creation, of the earth, all it contains, and all other suns and worlds, is given as being performed in six days.

On the first day the heavens and earth were created; light was made and divided from darkness (whether darkness was made at that time we are not told), and day and night were named.

The second day was occupied in creating heaven over again, and naming it the firmament and the office of this uncertain something was to divide the waters under it from those above it, and hold the upper lot from falling down and mixing with the lower lot—mythical proceeding altogether.

The third day's work consisted in teaching the water to run down hill, so that the mountains and elevated lands could appear. After naming the dry land earth, and the water seas, he caused the earth to bring forth grass, herbs, fruit, trees, perfecting their seed and fruit the same day. This was a remarkable rapid growth of vegetation, and no day since has begun to compare with it.

The fourth day was occupied in making the sun and moon, and apparently for good measure, the stars were made also. When it is borne in mind that the sun is a million times as large as the earth, that some of the planets are several thousand times larger than the earth, that including the asteroids and satellites there are over two hundred of them in the solar system, that some of the stars are more than a thousand times larger than the sun, some of them hundreds and even thousands of billions of miles away, and that there are millions of them,

some slight idea may be formed of the fourth day's work, compared with the other five. Inasmuch as light had already been created, and as vegetation was so perfect that grasses, herbs, and trees could perfect themselves and produce seeds and fruits in a single day, it would almost seem that that hard fourth day's work was unnecessary, and the question naturally rises, Why that great effort? This is answered by the information that the sun and moon were created to mark and govern time, the sun, the the day, and the moon the night. What the stars were for we are not informed.

The fifth day was a tolerably busy one, though not a millionth part so much as the day before. On the fifth day the tens of thousands of fishes, from the minnow up to the whale, that inhabit the waters were made; also the birds of the air. No one ought to complain of that day's work; but

The sixth day was still a busier one, for on that day all the creeping things, all the amphibious animals, all the reptiles, all the worms, bugs, and insects were made long before sundown, for there was still ample time to make man and woman, as we are told in the next chapter, of the dust of the ground, at least the man was made of dust, and the woman of one of his ribs. The last job of all is thought to be the best of the lot.

The six day's work thus described seem to have been quite fatiguing, for on the seventh God found it necessary to rest, thus finishing up the week. For this reason the Jewish Sabbath was founded, and every seventh day has been kept as a day of rest by both Jews and Christians.

Thus we have an account of the first seven days

that existed. If time existed before that it is supposed that nobody knew it, or knew how to divide it. Whether God went to work on the eighth day, and what he did on the ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, and subsequent days, we have no information.

It is, however, one of the simplest things in the world, according to the record, to calculate how long ago "the beginning" was. It was but a short time after seven days before Adam and Eve became acquainted, and after that they raised Cain, and after a subsequent acquaintance Abel came along. An unpleasantness, however, arose between the two brothers, and Abel ceased to exist, when Cain emigrated to the land of Nod and married a wife.

But when Adam was one hundred and thirty years old he begat Seth; when Seth was a hundred and five years old he begat Enos; when Enos was ninety years old he begat Cainan; at the age of seventy Cainan begat Mahalaleel, who at sixty-five begat Jared, who at one hundred and sixty-two years begat Enoch, who at sixty five begat Methuselah, who, having a good long time before him, led a quiet bachelor life, and at one hundred and eighty-seven years begat Lamech, who at a hundred and eighty-two years begat Noah, who after leading a celibate life for five hundred years begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth. When they had become men the flood took place, and they all took the remarkable cruise described in the eighth chapter of Genesis.

This damp affair, according to Bible chronology, took place 2,349 years before the Christian era, so by adding to the sum the 1,556 between the time Adam was created till the time of Noah's sons, adding thirty years for them to grow up, and seven years

for the necessary periods of gestation of the nine generations between Adam and Shem, and these, added to the 1,882 years of the Christian era, and we have the sum total of 5,824 years, and seven days, since the beginning. If Bible language has any meaning at all that is the period since the creation, and it is hard to see how Mr. Whitehead is to escape from it. If a day means a day, and a year means a year, no other conclusion can be arrived at.

If, then, proofs are found that the earth is older than the 5,824 years which the Bible calls for, the claims of that book are entirely at fault, and are of no value. It so turns out that these proofs are abundant. There are the strongest proofs that the earth is millions of years old, and that man has lived not less than fifty thousand years. These proofs were alluded to in our former replies, and as they have not been set aside by our friend, it is not necessary to repeat them. In the state in which Mr. Whitehead lives (Pennsylvania) there are thousands of proofs that the earth has existed far more than six thousand years. Her immense strata of coal, the result of a rank vegetable growth, which must have taken place long before man appeared in the world, and these strata in many places being covered hundreds of feet in depth, showing that immense changes in the earth's surface took place long ago; this, with the fossils in the strata of rock, the effects of the glacial period, which was before the era of man, are conclusiv as to the vast antiquity. There are millions of proofs of the earth's great age, but they need not be enumerated.

It will not answer for believers in the Bible story to claim that by the days mentioned in Genesis eras

of millions of years were meant, for the language will admit of no such construction. The person who wrote that account meant a day, with a morning and evening—a day of twenty-four hours, and nothing more was meant. If it meant millions of years, then the first Sabbath must have lasted millions of years, for that day was of the same length with the other six, and Adam must have been millions of years older than Eve, for in the second chapter of Genesis Adam is said to have been created before the animal kingdom was created. God made the garden, and Adam named the animals as they passed in review before him before Eve was created. Thus it is seen if the days of creation are claimed to mean millions of years the extremely awkward predicament arises that God must not only have remained idle in a state of rest for millions of years, but Adam must have lived the same great length of time before his rib was taken out and a woman made of it. So which ever horn of the dilemma is taken, the result is disastrous to Christian claims. But so great is the credulity of some people that they can believe it was either way, or both ways if necessary.

Our friend says some very disparaging things of geology, and quotes a defender of theology to show that the former is a failure and that its advocates are greatly at variance. This appears unjust. In the earlier days of geology, when its teachings first attracted attention, it is not strange if different theories were held as to the age of the world, its former state, the condition of the interior of the globe, the era of man, etc., but it is beyond all dispute one of the most grand, instructive, and

reliable of sciences, and of a thousand times more value than all the theological claims of supernaturalism that priests and Bible writers have set up.

Our friend asks what geology teaches that the Bible story does not teach. The reply is easy: Geology teaches that the earth was once a fused fluid mass of rocks and minerals, and that upon the cooling, congealing, and crystallizing of the surface, various strata of rocks have been formed; that these strata are divided into four general divisions, and again subdivided into lesser, and divisions that between the formation of the different strata immense periods of time must have elapsed. The Bible has not a word of this.

Geology teaches that great numbers of volcanoes have existed in many countries of the globe. All Europe was once volcanic, and living volcanoes still exist in Iceland in the north, and in Italy and Sicily in the south, Asia was also largely volcanic. Java has forty-five volcanoes, many of which are still active. Sumatra and many other islands of the Indian Archipelago have had almost countless volcanoes, and many still exist. Japan has a score or two, some extinct and some alive, one of them forming an independent mountain thirteen thousand feet in height, disconnected with mountain ranges and rising like a pyramid, or cone, from the surrounding plains. Our own continent has greatly abounded in volcanoes. From the southern part of South America to the northern part of North America a range of volcanoes once existed, some of them, like Teneriffe, forming mountains twelve thousand feet in length. West of the Rocky Mountains are abundant proofs of extinct volcanoes—4,000 square miles of trap rock once

in a melted state are found there. The Sandwich Islands and the islands of the Pacific have had many volcanoes. Volcanoes have burst up far below the deep waters of the ocean, and in time have formed high mountains. In our own part of America are many proofs of former volcanoes and melted rocks. Geology teaches all this, while the Bible is as mum as the grave upon the entire subject.

Geology thus teaches that the earth must once have been a fused mass of molten rocks and minerals. The numerous volcanoes, only a few of which have been named, and which once existed in nearly all parts of the earth, the great number of hot springs in various portions of the earth, the fact that as we descend in mines and excavations the heat increases one degree of Fahrenheit every fifty feet descended, all prove that the interior of the earth must still be highly heated; and the same is made more than certain by the rivers of lava which still, at intervals, are poured out from the bowels of the earth. But the Bible has not a word of all these important and incontestable truths.

Geology teaches that the rocks forming the crust of the earth are of two classes—the igneous and the aqueous; the first are brought to the condition in which they are found by the action of fire; the second by water. A very large portion of the rocks of the earth, including trap, basalt (cooled lava), etc., are of the former class, while perhaps a larger portion of the earth's rocks were formed by deposits made in water, the same being formed in layers or strata not found in the igneous rocks, and which, in process of long epochs, became hard rock. That these rocks were once in a soft, plastic state, is

proved by the thousands of impressions found in the same made by the feet of animals, and also great numbers of fossils of animals, reptils, insects, worms, limbs, leaves, etc., are found in these rocks, great numbers of which forms of life have not existed on the earth for thousands of years. All this geology emphatically and unmistakably teaches, but the Bible story has not the first word upon the subject.

Geology teaches that very long periods of time must have elapsed between the formations of the different strata of rocks from the lower to the higher; that in the lower rocks of earlier periods, called the Eozoic, are found very few forms of life, and hence is called "The Period of the Dawn of Life." The next division or formation, called the Paleozoic, divided into the Cambrian, or Primordial, the Siluro-Cambrian, the Silurian, Devonian, Carboniferous, and Permian periods, is called "The Period of Ancient Life." The next ascending division, the Mesozoic, subdivided into the Triassic, the Jurassic, and the Cretaceous periods, is called "The Middle Period of Life." The Upper grand division, the Neozoic, subdivided again into the Eocene, the Miocene, the Pliocene, and Post-Pliocene, is called "The Recent Period of Life." Geology teaches that these four grand divisions of time in the earth's existence must have been incalculable ages apart; but the Bible has nothing at all of it.

Geology teaches how small marine insects called polyps, and which exist in countless numbers in tropical seas, by the secretion of carbonate of lime, build up vast masses of what is termed coral, the same often being found upon volcanic cones beneath the waters of the ocean, and covering areas of many

square miles in extent and rising a few feet above the surface of the ocean. Hundreds of these coral islands are known to exist, besides large reefs which utterly preclude the passage of vessels. There is an almost endless variety of these formations, many being as beautiful as the most intricate vegetable growths, including elaborate flowers; but the Bible says nothing of this, simply because the writers knew nothing of it.

Geology teaches of the carboniferous era, when in a vastly distant age of the world the great and extensive strata of coal found in many countries was produced by a wonderful growth of the coal plant, and which, by the action of water and other forces of nature, was gathered into strata and covered with earth and rock. But the Bible has not a word to say about coal, nor petroleum, nor any of its products.

Geology, in its teachings of the order in which animal life came into existence, differs materially from the Bible account. The latter says the aquatic animals were created on the fifth day, and of course did not exist before that time, that the birds of the air were created on the same day, and these before the reptils and creeping things of the earth. Geology teaches very differently; that the remains of marine animals are found in the lowest strata of rocks, and long before birds had an existence. It also teaches that reptils and creeping things on the earth existed much earlier than birds. Here the Bible and geology decidedly clash. The discrepancy in the order of creation, given in the first and second chapters of Genesis—the first chapter stating that all forms of animal life were created before man, while in the second chapter it was directly the re-

verse, man being created first, and the beasts of the field before the birds of air—shows how incorrect the Bible story is. One statement must surely be wrong. Animals were either created before or after man. It could not well have been both ways.

Geology teaches that there was a time when the granite and metamorphic rocks covered the whole globe; on them the water rested, and of them the land-surface was everywhere composed; though at the present but little of this primitive surface remains. It has been covered by sediment, carried down or worn down by the waters, and only those portions which have not been worn away or under water, and so have never been covered by sediment. But the Bible has nothing upon this subject.

Geology teaches that the pebbles and the gravel found in such almost endless quantity on and near the surface of the earth are disintegrated portions of rock, and in the course of ages have been worn round and smooth by the action of water. The Bible has nothing to say of this.

Geology teaches of the glacial period, which must have been long before the era of man, when large portions of the earth's surface were covered with vast bodies of ice, which moved somewhat as glaciers do now on the elevated mountains of Switzerland, in Greenland, and other cold countries, and carried immense bodies of rock, cutting and plowing into the surface rocks of the earth, cutting grooves and furrows, and making the rocks thus carried smooth and roundish in form. In thousands of cases these large transported boulders are found at a distance of hundreds of miles from where kindred rocks exist and from where they must

hav been taken. In this way, by rock-grinding and wearing away for great periods of time, together with the oxydization of rocks, soils were produced. But the Bible tells us nothing of all this.

Geology teaches that great changes hav taken place on the earth's surface. Where large bodies of dry land once existed is now covered by waters of the ocean, while in numerous other cases land, and even mountain, hav been thrown up from the sea. On some of the spurs of the Himalaya Mountains marine fossils, coral remains, sea-shells, etc., are found, which prove that those mountains were once forced up from the level of the ocean. The same proofs are found high up on other mountains, and we hav the same in our own country. Certain portions of the earth's surface hav been depressed, while other portions hav been greatly elevated. But the Bible teaches nothing of this kind.

There are many other lessons taught by geology which are not alluded to in the Bible, and which were wholly unknown to those who wrote the fragmentary books of which the Bible is composed. It is the same in still grander portions of the universe. Astronomy teaches that the sun is a million times larger than our earth, that some of our sister planets are thousands of times larger than the earth, that many of the fixed stars are immense suns and centers of other systems, and that they are vastly larger than our sun, and many of them so far away that light, which travels nearly 200,000 miles per second, requires millions of years to travel from them to us. This is additional proof that the universe has existed for inconceivable periods of time. But the writer of Genesis knew nothing of all this. He clearly did not

know that the earth is round, turns daily on its axis and revolves annually round the sun. He did not even know of the Western hemisphere on which we live. His knowledge was far less than that of a schoolboy of our time, ten years of age.

Still Mr. Whitehead insists that the very crude and imperfect story of the Bible must be taken not only as veritable history, but as the word of God. Before even the credit of history is accorded to it we should know when it was written, by whom it was written, what facilities were possessed for obtaining information, whether the writers were reliable and worthy of credit. But unfortunately we have none of this information. We have no knowledge as to when the book of Genesis was written nor by whom. Whoever wrote it could not have lived till millions of years from the time of the creation he attempts to describe, but of which he clearly knew nothing. His story is not entitled to credit, and falls far, far below the dignity of "history." It is merely fable.

It is commonly ascribed to Moses as author, as are the first five books in the Bible, called the Pentateuch, but there is not an iota of proof that the claim is correct, for it is nowhere stated in the books, nor in any part of the Bible, that Moses wrote them. But there is positive proof that he could not have written them because they refer to events that did not occur till long after his death—for instance, of the city of Dan, and the kings of Judah. It is asking quite too much that we must believe he could write correctly of what took place thousands of years before he was born, and hundreds of years after his death, as well of his own death and burial. The greater portion of the Bible is of the same

anonymous character. Nobody knows who wrote it nor when it was written, and the writers do not claim they wrote by divine aid. Yes, theology makes far too heavy demands upon our credulity. As there is no merit in believing that of which there is no proof, it is absurd to accept groundless statements as truth.

The soundest and most reliable students and critics of the Bible are of the opinion that Genesis was not written till a few centuries before our era, and that the Pentateuch is the work of different individuals. It is believed that the cosmogony of Genesis was borrowed from the Babylonians when the Jews returned from their captivity in that country. It is clearly proved by the earthen tablets found in Nineveh and Babylon, and which are now in the British Museum, that the people of those cities had such a theory of cosmogony nearly four thousand years ago. That the Jews borrowed this theory seems highly probable, and there is certainly no proof to the contrary.

The aid of inspiration in the writing of Genesis or the Pentateuch is not even claimed in those books, and there is not the slightest reason for thinking that Moses or God had anything to do with the writing of them. The story of creation and the Garden of Eden is clearly allegorical or fabulous, and was written by one who knew less about the origin of things than is known to-day. Mr. Whitehead is clearly too intelligent a man to think for a moment that they are "veritable history," or should receive any more credence than any other ancient fable, written by those who knew nothing of what they wrote.

Our friend objects to the term *fable* as applied to Genesis, but any story that tells of a garden spot where four rivers have their source, about knowledge and long life growing upon trees, about men being made of clay, and woman, with her nerves, tissues, flesh, and blood, being drawn out from a small rib-bone, about a snake, which has no organs of speech, conversing in human language, about water descending upon the earth for forty days at the rate of seven hundred and fifty feet per day, about all forms of animal life, amounting to millions, being got together and kept in a big box for thirteen months, is only worthy the term of *fable*. It cannot be true. It is absurd to call it "history." And, what is cheering, the lessons of geology, of astronomy, and other sciences are being more and more accepted by the thinking among men; and the silly stories about the creation, about the formation of man and woman, about the talented snake ruining them and defeating his maker at the same time, about that impossible flood, are being less and less believed. It certainly seems that Mr. Whitehead has intelligence enough not to longer give in his adherence to such groundless, unsupported, and senseless stories. He would do well to read Col. Ingersoll's "Some Mistakes of Moses," Prof. Westbrook's "The Bible, Whence and What," or Bronson Keeler's "Short History of the Bible." He should not revere falsehood because it has antiquity, and should not believe as true that of which there is not the slightest proof.

As Mr. Whitehead objects to being made to "gulp down" the statement that, according to the Bible, the creation of the earth and of man took place less than six thousand years ago, we also decidedly ob-

ject to "gulping down" the absurd claim that the writings of wholly unknown persons, written in an unknown period, and afterward massed into one volume, as both reliable history and the word of God, when neither is so much as claimed by the writers themselves. It seems very easy for our friend to "gulp down" the latter, whether the former will "gulp" or not. The ease with which our Christian friends accept the claim that these unknown writers wrote by the help of God, and that they know what took place hundreds and thousands of years before they were born, shows the remarkable facilities possessed for "gulping down." If the Christians do not "gulp" fable for truth, no people ever did.

The following facts with reference to the older part of the Bible may be stated. It is equally unknown when and by whom they were written. It is not even known when and by whom they were compiled and made into a book or canon. It has been thought it was done by Ezra after he had led a portion of the Jews back to Palestine from Babylon. It is far more probable that he and his scribes wrote them than that they were written by the persons whose names they bear. The canon was probably fixed up long after he was dead. But all is uncertainty and doubt. It was not at first thought that the books were written or inspired by God; that was wholly an afterthought. It was a claim set up by priests long after the writers were dead.

We have not the books now in the form in which they were written; parts were left out and parts added, according to the whim of the compilers. Nothing prevented their making such changes as they pleased. The crudeness and carelessness with which

they performed the work is exemplified in the facts that the last two verses of 2 Chronicles and the first of Ezra are the same; that nearly half the books attributed to Isaiah were not written by Isaiah at all, but by an unknown person in Babylon, and some two hundred and fifty years after the time of Isaiah; still later pieces were also added to the collection attributed to Isaiah; that the book of Daniel, which has been looked upon as a wonderful mass of prophecy, was not written by Daniel at all, and not till the Maccabean period, about 165 B. C.—four hundred years after Daniel was dead, and long after the events had taken place referred to by the pretended prophecy. To this forgery ascribed to Daniel were added the Prayer of Azarias, the Song of the Three Children, the History of Susannah, and Bel and the Dragon, and these are to-day by half the Christian world—the Catholics—regarded as divine as the other portions of the Bible. All these things show how easily the “gulping” process is performed by those who are compelled to “gulp down” fables and unknown writings as “history” divinely inspired. The credulous believers, like our friend, are ready to “gulp” whatever is stated in that collection of unknown authors; such accounts as the waters of Noah’s flood reaching five miles high; of the forms of animal life existing together in a close vessel over a year; of the river Nile being turned to blood, and other equally impossible plagues of Egypt; of the Red Sea parting its waters and walling up on each side, making a dry roadway through it, for one set of human beings to be saved and another set drowned; of two or three million of people with all their cattle living in an arid desert for forty years, all their food

for that period being sent from heaven in the form of manna; of stones being thrown down from heaven to kill human beings, and, upon their giving out, of Joshua's stopping the sun and moon that he might have daylight for committing more slaughter; of Samson killing a lion with his hands; of his catching three hundred foxes and tying their tails together, and setting corn fields on fire; of his slaying a thousand men with the jaw-bone of an ass; of his carrying off the heavy gates of Gaza and overthrowing the pillars of a temple with his hands and killing three thousand people; of three young men being cast into a highly-heated furnace without the slightest injury; about Daniel being thrown into a den of lions; about Jonah being swallowed by a fish, retained three days under water without air, and then vomited safely on dry land, and much more of a similar character needless to mention. Our friend has to accept all these as "history" and the inspired word of God. We are compelled to regard it as *fable*, and of not the slightest reliability or truth.

In treating the subject of the authenticity of Bible books, no less a Bible scholar than Prof. Samuel Davidson admits the truth of much set forth in the foregoing. In speaking of the changes and modifications which have been made by collectors and compilers of the unknown writers, he says:

Men of prophetic gifts wrote in the name of distinguished prophets, and put their productions with those of the latter, or adapted and wrote them over after their own fashion. The fortieth and fifty-first chapters of Jeremiah show such overwriting. To Zechariah's authentic oracles were attached chapters ix and xiv, themselves made up of two parts (ix-xi; xii-xiv) belonging to different times and authors prior to the destruction of the Jewish state by the Babylonians.

The soferim, as the successors of the prophets, must have corrected and revised the sacred books to some extent. We need not hesitate to allow that they sometimes arranged parts and *even added matter of their own*. In the time of the canon's entire preparation they and the other priests, with writers and scholars generally, redacted the national literature, excluding or sanctioning such portions of it as they saw fit.

From Ezra's treatment of the oldest law books we infer that he did not look upon them as inviolate. Venerable they were, and so far sacred; but neither perfect nor complete for all time. . . . The redaction to which he submitted them shows no superstitious reverence. With him *canonical* and *holy* were not identical. Nor does the idea of an *immediate divine* authority appear to have dominated the mind of Nehemiah and his scholars in the selection of books.

The scribes who followed Ezra, "Seeing what he did, would naturally follow his example, *and would not scruple, if it seemed best, to revise the text in substance as well as form. They did not refrain from changing what had been written, or inserting fresh matter.*"

The differences between them (the Palestinian and Alexandrian versions of the prophets and the Hagiographa), often remarkable, *prove that those who had most to do with the books did not guard them as they would have done had they thought them infallibly inspired.*

Thus, as this ablest of Bible scholars admits that the various books composing the Bible were freely changed by those who took upon themselves their compilation and consolidation; as he confesses they subtracted and added according to their own desires; as it is unknown who were the authors of the Pentateuch, of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the two books of Samuel, the two books of Kings, the two books of Chronicles, of Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, and others; as these books were not for a long time thought to be the product of the divine mind, it is somewhat amusing

to see how readily the whole—the claims of divinity, infallibility, and all—is “gulped down” without a question by those who hold that believing without proof is a virtue. As gulpers, the world can show no superiors. With such credulous people, if the claim were set up by the fathers of the church that the moon is composed of green cheese, or that the sun is but little larger than a cartwheel, it is highly probable they would easily accept it.

The two vague quotations given by our friend from the poetry of the Bible amount to little more than as though he had quoted from Shakspeare or Milton. They show no knowledge of the early state of matter, nor of the composition of the world. That they do not absolutely contradict the teachings of science amounts to very little. He may think Moses and the other supposed Bible writers are “about right,” but we think the proof is that they are about wrong. Those who accept them as “the infallible word of God” do so on the most slender proof in the world. The stories are fable far more than history.

As to the eternality of matter, so long as it is impossible to increase matter in the slightest degree, or decrease it in the slightest degree; so long as it cannot be created nor destroyed; so long as it is impossible to comprehend how something can come from nothing, it is more reasonable to look upon matter as eternal than to think it an evolution of nothing. It is surely a no greater stretch of the imagination than to imagin a creator and that he is eternal. While our friend insists that he does not know that matter is eternal, it may be as truthfully insisted that he does not know that it is not eternal.

When he can show how it is possible for matter to come from nothing it will be time enough to believe it had a beginning. His analogy of butting against the pyramids of Egypt, and then concluding they are eternal, seems not to possess special force. The matter of which the pyramids are composed is, of course, eternal, but the form in which they now are had a beginning. The forms and combination of matter are always changing, more or less rapidly, but matter itself never comes into existence and never goes out.

Our friend brings no new fact to light when he asserts that matter is not a simple element, but comprises over sixty distinct elements, including oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, chlorine, carbon, sulphur, potassium, sodium, iron, gold, silver, copper, etc. No person will dispute this. But when he asks which of these is eternal, and whence the others come, the rational answer is, they are all eternal; one can neither be converted into another, nor can one of them come from nothing. They are capable of combining endlessly with each other in new combinations and organizations, but none of them comes into existence—none goes out. The fact of the ever-varying combinations that may be formed of these elements is the only rational explanation of the origin of the world. There is clearly a possibility for the elements to unite in the form they now are, and the conditions must have been favorable to the result or it would not have taken place. There was a natural cause for every result that has taken place. Causes, forces, and material may be regarded as eternal, but results, combinations, and conditions come and pass away.

The "inertia of matter" is another mistake.

Strictly speaking, matter is not inert, but is eternally charged with life, or the possibility of entering into new combinations, producing new forms, and developing new life. There is inorganic life as well as organic, and without the one the other would not be possible. The inherent powers of matter are equal to all the results which have been produced by the myriads of combinations that have taken place. If matter is really inert no form of life could be possible. Where inorganic forms of matter end, and organic forms begin, is a deep and intricate subject, and not yet fully understood; but it is not difficult to comprehend that the gradation of the coarser forms of matter to the higher forms of life is a regular and natural one. Matter in the inorganic domain exists in numerous degrees, and it is the same in the organic world—almost endless forms are found to exist. The connecting link between the inorganic and the organic is as natural and simple as the rest if as well understood. It is known that certain combinations and qualities of inorganic matter are essential to organic life, that the subtle forces of nature (the concomitants of matter) have an important office in the premises, and that the lower forms of organic life are but a slight remove above protoplasmic, or properly combined organic matter. Without these conditions organic life would not be possible; but every step from the lowest form of inorganic matter to the highest form of organic life is perfectly natural, for nothing strictly unnatural ever took place. Let it be reiterated, all causes are natural causes, all laws are natural laws, all processes are natural processes, and all results are natural results. Nature does everything and super-nature

nothing. Nature is the highest; nature is the lowest; nature is all.

Now for the *dream* part of Christianity. If our friend will notice what we said he will see that we did not say that "the New Testament is founded on a dream," as he has it in his last, but that Christianity is founded upon a dream. This proposition is certainly easy of demonstration. The fundamental claim of Christianity is that Jesus was miraculously begotten by God, that he is absolutely and to all intents and purposes the son of God, that he had not a natural father, that he was sent into the world to die as a propitiation or atonement for the sins of the world, and that all who believe this are to enjoy the beatitudes of heaven forever, while all who do not or can not believe must suffer the torments of hell to all eternity. If, then, Jesus was not the son of God, if he was not miraculously begotten, if his mother was not a virgin even after her conception and bringing forth, then the foundation of Christianity is taken away, and all the dodging, sophistry, and special pleading in the world cannot prevent it.

It is but simply stating the truth that all the grounds there are in the world that such an unnatural thing ever took place is the dream which a pretender falsely wrote that Matthew narrated over fifty years after the dream was dreamed. If Mr. Whitehead can show any other authority on which to base the divinity of Jesus, or his heavenly parentage, he is requested to produce it. In the story accorded to Luke he mentions a vision that Mary had of a call from the angel Gabriel, on which occasion the angel is said to have told the young girl of a visit his master, or the Holy Ghost would make her, when

a little overshadowing would be performed; but all this was in the future, and the story does not say that the visit and the overshadowing ever took place. All the authority the Christian church has, then, that Jesus is the begotten son of God is that dream narrated by the [pseudo-Matthew, nearly two hundred years after the dreamer ceased to exist. If, then, we are not justified in saying that Christianity rests upon a fable and a dream, let it be clearly shown. The claim that "the vision was given to quiet the jealous fears of the old man Joseph respecting the condition of the girl to whom he was engaged" is begging the question. That is all the proof there is that Jesus was begotten by a ghost or spirit, and had the story not been told to incite the faith of the Christian world in the divinity of Jesus, it might better have not been told. If the dream satisfied Joseph, and that was all the object to be produced, there was no necessity for repeating the dream. Joseph was already pacified, and that was all that was necessary. The dream-gossiper had better hold his peace.

Our friend vain would make it appear that the four gospels in the New Testament were known to Barnabas, Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papais, etc. Although he quotes Wheeler to boost up the claim, it positively cannot stand. Not one of these persons knew of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, neither did Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Hegesippus, Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion, Tatian, Dionysius of Corinth, Melito of Sardis, Claudius Apollonaris, Athenagoras, Ptolemus, Heracleon, nor any others of the early fathers and authorities up to the time of Irenæus after the year 180. This latter, as before observed, was the first to mention

the four gospels, in the New Testament. It is most clear that up to his time they were unknown, and the reasons that Irenæus gives why there were four gospels, and could be no more and no less, are of the most frivolous character—because there are four quarters of the world, because there are four general winds, and because cherubims have four faces. More sophistical reasons and props to sustain four unauthentic gospels could not be devised; and it must be insisted upon that a person, whether bishop or not, capable of advancing such arguments in favor of unsupported pretensions is unworthy of credit.

It is not strange after an examination into the character of the fourth gospel that the learned author of "Supernatural Religion" should use such language as this: "We have seen that whilst there is not one particle of evidence during a century and a half after the events recorded in the fourth gospel that it was composed by the son of Z-bedee, there is, on the contrary, the strongest reason for believing that he did not write it." It is not strange that when speaking of the authenticity of the gospels and of the period when the claim for them was set up Dr. Westcott should call it "the dark age of Christian literature." There is most undeniably a great want of proof of the authenticity of the gospels, and the whole story of Jesus, and of the immaculate conception, of the miracles performed by Jesus, of his rising from the dead, and of his physical ascension up into the ethereal regions. These things were clearly untaught and unknown in the first century, and were not taught by the apostles nor their immediate disciples in the first century. They were wholly the inventions of the more unscrupulous

fathers and writers of the second century when a necessity, in order to satisfy the prevalent love of the supernatural and wonderful, was thought to exist.

In his able work, the "History of the Christian Religion to the Year 200," Judge Charles B. Waite, A.M., after years spent in examination of all the early authorities upon the Christian religion lays down these propositions which cannot be successfully disputed :

1. No one of the four gospels is mentioned in any other part of the New Testament. [This assuredly would not have been the case had they been the oldest, and the foundation upon which the whole was built.]

2. No work of art of any kind has ever been discovered, no painting or engraving, no sculpture or other relic of antiquity which may be looked upon as furnishing additional evidence of the existence of those gospels, and which was executed earlier than the latter part of the second century. Even the explorations of the Christian catacombs failed to bring to light any evidence of that character.

3. The four gospels were written in Greek, and there was no translation of them into other languages earlier than the third century.

4. No manuscript of the gospels are in existence dating farther back than the fourth century. Of that century, or the next, there are three or four, and some twenty or thirty, more than a thousand years old.

5. No autograph manuscript of any of the gospels has ever been known, so far as there is any authentic record, nor has any credible witness ever claimed to have seen such a manuscript. No one has ever claimed to have seen such a manuscript of either of the four gospels in the hand-writing of Luke, Mark, Matthew, or John. If the autograph manuscripts had ever existed they would have been preserved among the most sacred relics of the church.

6. During the first two centuries tradition was esteemed of

more value, and better evidence of the gospel history, than any written books or manuscripts.

7. The dialect in which the New Testament books were written, a sort of Hebraistic Greek, has been considered evidence of their antiquity. But this dialect prevailed three centuries after Christ, and was in full use during the second century. The same or similar Hebraisms abound in the apochryphal gospels of that age.

8. The canonical gospels were selected by the bishops from a large number then in circulation.

In the conclusion of his exhaustiv and careful work of 450 pages this author says:

In taking a general review of the first hundred and seventy years of the Christian religion the first thing that strikes the mind is the dearth of material from which to construct a reliable history. It is seen at once how much must rest upon probability in its different degrees—how much must be relegated to the province of speculation. The works of the only church historian who wrote during that period, lost or destroyed, the few fragments that are left being of comparatively no value—the writings of Porphyry and others who wrote against Christianity, and those of the heretic Christians, all destroyed—there remain only the works of some of the orthodox fathers, and the text of those in a mutilated and corrupted condition.

Such is the material at the hands of the historian. Of course he cannot rely implicitly upon the unsupported assertion of any such writer for the truth of any historical fact whatever. In every instance he is obliged to scrutinize carefully, and endeavor to ascertain whether any ulterior motive may have prompted whatever statement may be under consideration. If he can find none, and the fact stands uncontradicted by other writers, it is cautiously accepted. Under such circumstances progress is slow and uncertain. The most that any writer can hope to accomplish is to place in proper shape what is already known, and to establish here and there a landmark for the benefit of subsequent historians.

In conclusion, as the result of this investigation, it may be repeated that no evidence is found of the existence in the first

century of either of the following doctrines: the immaculate conception—the miracles of Christ—his material resurrection. No one of these gospels is to be found in the epistles of the New Testament, nor have we been able to find them in other writings of the first century.

As to the four gospels, in coming to the conclusion that they were not written in the first century, we have but recorded the conviction of the most advanced scholars of the present day, irrespective of their religious views in other respects; with whom the question as now presented is "How early in the second century were they composed?"

Discarding as inventions of the second century, having no historical foundation, the three doctrines above named, and much else which must necessarily stand or fall with them, what remains of the Christian religion?

Mr. Whitehead speaks of quotations that were made from what were called *gospels*, by some of the fathers of the second century. Right enough; that is quite possible. The first few centuries of the church were full of "gospels" and "epistles" some of which have been preserved to the present time and many of which have been lost. We have what is called the Apocryphal New Testament in which are the gospel of the Birth of Mary, the Protevangelion, the First Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ, Thomas's Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ, the Gospel of Nicodemus or the Acts of Pontius Pilate, the same followed by numerous epistles of an apocryphal character. Among the lost gospels are the Gospel of Paul, the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of the Egyptians, the Gospel of Perfection, the Gospel of Philip, the Gospel of Andrew, the Syriac Gospel, the Gospel of Matthias, Gospel of Judas Iscariot, Gospel of Apelles, Gospel of Barnabas, Gospel of Basilides, the Clementine Gospel, Gospel of Bartholomew, Gospel of Eve, Gospel of Cerinthus,

Gospel of Encratites, the Eternal Gospel, Gospel of the Gnostics, Gospels of Hesychius, Gospel of Justin, Gospel of James the Less, Gospel of Jude, Gospel of the Lord, Gospel of Lucius, Gospels of Lucianus, Gospel of Life, Gospel of Longinus, Gospel of Manes, Gospel of Marcion, Gospel of Merinthus, Gospel of Scythianus, Gospel of Simonides, Gospel of Thaddeus, Gospel of Tatian, Gospel of Truth, and almost as many more as may be desired. It is claimed that within the first three centuries of the Christian era, there were two or three hundred gospels and epistles named after some apostle, disciple, father, or bishop. It is not claimed they were written by the men whose names they bore, nor that they were written by inspiration, but there seems to have been a mania for writing gospels. Many of the young priests and zealous believers conceived it their privilege to write a gospel and give it the name of such distinguished disciple, saint or teacher as they fancied. The same right was exercised to write a gospel as is now used by many in writing an account of Garfield's death, or Guiteau's execution.

Admitting the correctness of our friend's claim that Barnabas, Clement, Ignatius, Papias, and others quoted from gospels, they must have been some of the foregoing or others, and not the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which most positively were not known to one of the persons named. The gospels which were read in the early churches previous to the year 180 were not either of our present four gospels of the New Testament, but those decided to be apocryphal. In the contentious and quarrelsome councils of bishops which assembled to decide which gospels and epistles should be accepted

as genuin it is well known that in some councils books were discarded which are now considered genuin, and some were accepted which have been since discarded. The whole affair seems to have been a medley of confusion and uncertainty. There is nothing to show that the finally accepted books are any more genuin than those discarded. But let it be remembered by Mr. Whitehead, and every person seeking after the truth, that the four gospels were not mentioned until Bishop Irenæus called attention to them when he gave his absurd reason for just those and none others. The gospels that had been alluded to before and quoted from were the other gospels since discarded as not being truthful nor inspired.

There is great probability that there was more or less similarity between many of the gospels—some borrowing from others and all borrowing from the legends and traditions in existence. That many of them are strictly unreliable is clear to be seen; that one of them was penned by divine aid there is not the first particle of proof. There is claimed to have been a gospel of Matthew, and that it had also been called the gospel of the Hebrews, but it clearly was not the gospel which we call the gospel of Matthew. That was written in Hebrew, while this never was in Hebrew, and was written in Greek.

Our friend gets the gospels somewhat confused when he intimates that Celsus wrote against the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There is considerable diversity of opinion as to the time when Celsus lived; and it is said there were two persons by the name. It is claimed by some that the Celsus against whom Origen wrote flourished about

the year 160, while others insist that he was a contemporary of Origen, who lived in the fore part of the third century. Whatever time Celsus lived, however, very little is known of what he wrote, for his Christian adversaries took very good care to destroy his writings, as they did the writings of Porphyry and others who were opposed to them. All that is known of what he wrote is what Origen was rather compelled to hand down to us in the paragraphs which he quoted to refute. One thing is certain, that Celsus did not so much write against any particular gospels, out of the two hundred which existed, as against the general claims of Christianity, according to the legends that had been preached for a hundred years or more. It must be seen that Celsus is a weak prop to hold up the four canonical gospels.

The same may be said of Marcion. He, though a heretic, had a gospel of his own, from which it is believed that the gospel of Luke was partially composed, but he assuredly had nothing to say, pro or con, of the four gospels, now declared to be the inspired word, but which were unknown till after his time.

When Mr. Whitehead makes the assertion that the gospels are as "well authenticated as any other books in existence" he certainly makes a very extravagant statement, and one that is not at all borne out by the facts. If he means all of the two hundred gospels alluded to it is only necessary to say that all but four of them have been discarded by the various councils that have been held to act upon them, and by the common consent of the church, while the four that have been retained are shown to have been unknown till after the year 180, and consequently

spurious forgeries or frauds, not written by the pretended authors of them. If this most damaging character means "well authenticated," it must be that language has obtained new meaning. If there are any books in the world less authenticated we would like to know which they are.

The fact adduced that Christians were persecuted, and from that the argument urged that their doctrines are true, will hardly work, or, what is equally unfortunate, it proves too much. If being persecuted proves a belief to be true, then as Christians have persecuted others a thousand times more than they have been persecuted themselves they have proved the belief of their victims a thousand times truer than their own.

As to the fathers being designing and ignorant, a few words may be said. The charge of "ignorant" may be qualified to this extent, that while they were so ignorant as not to be acquainted with many of the simplest facts and laws of nature, they were not so ignorant as not to know their right hands from their left or to go in the house when it rained. We propose, however, to let a few excellent witnesses bear testimony as to their ignorance and superstitions, as well as to the correctness and moral qualities of some of them. First let Prof. Davidson say a few words:

The infancy of the canon was cradled in an uncritical age, and rocked with traditional ease. Conscientious care was not directed from the first to the well-authenticated testimony of eye-witnesses. Of the three fathers who contributed most to its early growth, Irenæus was credulous and blundering; Tertullian passionate and one-sided; and Clement, of Alexandria, imbued with the treasures of Greek wisdom, was mainly occupied with ecclesiastical ethics.

Irenæus agrees that the gospels should be four in number,

neither more or less, because there are four universal winds and four quarters of the world. The Word or Architect of all things gave the gospel in a four-fold shape. According to this father the apostles were fully informed concerning all things, and had a perfect knowledge after their Lord's ascension.

He says, "Matthew wrote his gospels while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome, and founding the church." Such assertions show both ignorance and exaggeration.

Tertullian affirms that the tradition of the apostolic churches guarantees the four gospels, and refers his readers to the churches of Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus, etc., for the authentic epistles of Paul. What is this but the rhetoric of an enthusiast?

Clement contradicts himself in making Peter authorize Mark's gospel to be read in the churches, while in another place he says the apostle "neither forbade nor encouraged it."

The three fathers of whom we are speaking had neither the ability nor inclination to examine the genesis of documents surrounded with an apostolic halo. No analysis of their authenticity and genuineness was seriously attempted. In its absence, custom, accident, taste, practical needs, directed the tendency of tradition. All the rhetoric employed to throw the value of their testimony as far back as possible, even up to or very near the apostle John, is of the vaguest sort. Appeals to the continuity of tradition and of church doctrine, to the exceptional veneration of these fathers for the gospels, to their opinions being formed earlier than the composition of the works in which they are expressed, possess no force.

The ends which the fathers in question had in view, their polemic motives, their uncritical, inconsistent assertions, their want of sure data, detract from their testimony. Their decisions were much more the result of pious feeling, biased by the theological speculations of the times, than the conclusions of a sound judgment. *The very arguments they use to establish certain conclusions show weakness of perception.* What are the manifestations of spiritual feeling compared with the result of logical reasoning? (Davidson on the Canon, pp. 123, 124).

Thus we have the testimony of one of the ablest

and clearest minds that has ever written upon the canon that the fathers most depended upon to establish the authenticity of the small books forming it were "ignorant," "credulous," "blundering," "passionate," "one-sided," "uncritical," "inconsistent," "possessed undue enthusiasm, with contradictions," "exaggerations," "not possessing ability or inclination to examine," "attempting no analysis of genuineness," "an unreasonable apostolic reverence," "custom, accident, taste, and the tendency of tradition taking the place of careful examination," "a disposition to misrepresent," "exceptional veneration of the fathers for the gospels older than the composition," "want of data," "their decisions the result of pious feeling," "based upon [incorrect] theological speculations," "unsound judgment," "weakness of perception," "lack of logical reasoning." These are the characteristics of the fathers depended upon to establish the authenticity of a gospel story which has no solid foundation to rest upon, and which is clearly of an apocryphal character. The charge of *ignorance* is thus most clearly established.

The opinion that the early supporters of the gospel story were incapable, uncritical, and dishonest, and that many fraudulent productions were foisted into notice, is supported by other testimony. Mosheim, the great ecclesiastical historian, gives the following evidence:

There were a number of commentaries filled with impositions and fables on our Savior's life and sentiments, composed soon after his ascent into heaven [an unauthentic and improbable event] by men who, without being bad, perhaps were superstitious, simple, and piously deceitful. To these were

afterward added other writings, *falsely ascribed to the most holy apostles by fraudulent individuals.*

He adds the very damaging testimony that the early Christian fathers and others fell into the pernicious error of deeming it not only lawful but commendable to deceive and lie for the sake of creed and piety. He continues in this way:

This vice early spread among the Christians. Of this no one will doubt who calls to mind the numerous forgeries of books under the names of eminent men, the Sibylline verses, and I know not what besides, a large mass of which appeared in this age (the second century) and subsequently. I would not say that the orthodox Christians forged all the books of this character; on the contrary, it is probable that the greater part of them originated from the founders of the Gnostic sects. Yet that the Christians who were free from heterodox views were not wholly free from this fault *is too clear to be denied.*

The ignorance and superstition of the early fathers are made clear by what they taught. Clement of Rome, at the end of the first century, taught as true the fable of the phenix, which was said to renew its life every five hundred years, rising from its dead ashes. He believed this mythical bird had a real existence, and quoted what he supposed to be a fact to prove the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Tertullian believed the same absurdity, and after Celsus had shown the fallacy, Origen defended the fable, also believing in its truth.

Barnabas, or the person who wrote the epistle bearing his name, ignorantly believed that the hyena changed its sex every year, being alternately male and female; that a hare bears as many young as it is years old; that a weasel is impregnated in the mouth; that the reason why men should eat only animals with a cloven hoof was because the right-

eous people lived in this world, but had expectations of the next.

Justin Martyr believed in demons, and that they were a hybrid between angels and the daughters of men; that insane people were possessed by devils or demons. He said the food of angels consisted of manna. Athenagoras also believed in demons; that angels were distributed over the universe to keep it regular, and that they cohabited with the daughters of men and produced giants and demons. Theophilus argued that the pains of women in child-birth and the fact that snakes crawl upon their bellies were proofs that the fable of creation and the Garden of Eden is true. Tertullian held that the hyena annually changes its sex, and that the stag renews its youth by eating poisonous snakes. He also taught that eclipses and comets were indications of God's anger and forerunners of great calamities. He held that volcanoes were the chimneys of hell, and that the volcanic condition is a punishment inflicted upon mountains as a warning to wicked men; that demons are the cause of diseases and that they send them upon human beings to torment and annoy them; that they cause blight to grain, and are the source of all the accidents and misfortunes that befall people in this world. He taught the monstrous absurdity that a corpse once moved along of itself in a cemetery to make room for another corpse to lie beside it. He recommended magistrates to summon before them persons possessed with a devil, and said if the devil did not acknowledge himself to be a devil he would falsely claim to be a god, and then must be killed.

Clement of Alexandria taught that hail storms, tempests, and plagues are caused by demons; that

"credulity is necessary to render faith easy;" that events in the life of Abraham were typical and prophetic of arithmetic and astronomy. He was so generous as to teach that the Jews and Gentiles would have the gospel preached to them in hell. He was also lascivious. It has truly been said that "his chapter on the immorality of pagan women in the bath betrays the hatred of the *casaille* for the upper classes, and shows if the bishop of the church could use such language, that the early Christians of Alexandria must have been from the very lowest grades of society." His book was so unseemly that his translators were forced to omit the most indecent parts.

Origen taught that the sun and moon are living beings endowed with reason and free will, and that they occasionally committed sin. He was not quite sure whether their souls were created at the same time with their bodies or existed before. He was also rather uncertain whether their souls would be released at the time of the destruction of their bodies at the end of the world. He claimed that their light was the knowledge and wisdom reflected from the eternal light surrounding God's throne. That they had free will he proved by a quotation from Job (xxv, 4-5): "How, then, can man be justified with God? Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold, even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight!" That the stars are rational creatures he inferred from the fact that they move. He said, "As the stars move with so much order and method that under no circumstances whatever does their course seem to be disturbed, is it not the extreme of absurdity to suppose that so

which are not in the slightest degree such, and they would look directly into the face of evidence which established theories they did not indorse and still would be unable to say it was evidence. Now, if the fathers were great scholars, they should not have been so persistently in the wrong. They should have seen the truth, at least as others did. What has become of the names and memories of the men who stood up for the truth? Are they even yet called great? The Christian church has been honoring the wrong persons.

The ignorance of the fathers not only pertained to nature but embraced literature as well. Very few of them understood Hebrew. Justin Martyr quoted from Jeremiah and called it Isaiah. Clement of Alexandria quoted as scripture passages found in no book of the Bible. He also quoted from Paul words which Paul did not use. In quoting from other writers he often put in words and sentences not in the writings of the persons quoted. Tertullian quoted as in Leviticus a passage not to be found in that book. He also misquoted history. He pretended to quote from Isaiah a passage not found in that book, but to be found in Revelation. He committed many similar inaccuracies. The gospel writers made like errors. The person who wrote the gospel of Matthew attributes to Jeremiah a passage found only in Zechariah; and the writer of Mark credits to Isaiah a passage which is in Malachi. The fathers quoted from apocryphal books the same as though they were genuine; and they also quoted from heathen poets and writers, and often called the same scripture. When Paul, even, uses the maxim, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and attributes it to Jesus, he uses a passage not found in the four gospels, and his quotation "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv, 33) was

taken from the "Thais" of Menander, one of the seven wise men of Greece. The familiar quotation "For in him we liv and move and hav our being" (Acts xvii, 28) is from the Greek poet Aratus, and from the "Hymn to Jupiter" of Cleanthes. The passage "The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies" (1 Titus i, 12) is taken from the Greek poet Epimenides, who is called a prophet. Paul quoted as scripture passages not to be found in the Old Testament. The writer of Matthew made the same mistake. He pretended to quote as the words of a prophet "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which hav been kept secret." There is no such prophecy, no such language in the Old Testament.

By way of repetition it may be said that in the early churches such apocryphal writings as "The Revelation of Peter," "The Revelation of Paul," "The Epistle of Clement," "The Shepherd of Hermas," "The Gospel of Barnabas," "The Gospel of Nicodemus," "The Gospel of the Hebrews," and many other similar apocryphal and unauthentic productions were read and accepted by the fathers as scripture divinely inspired, but there is not a thing to show that the four books *according to*, not *by*, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were ever read or known till late in the second century. We hav here the strongest proof that what was then regarded as the word of God was afterwards rejected by the councils which subsequently convened to decide which is the word of God, and such writings as early had not been accepted and were wholly unknown afterwards, were accepted as the only genuine article.

That the charge of *ignorance* justly attaches to many of the fathers of the church, and that of *dishonesty* as well, there is abundant evidence, but a small portion of this can be given here. Mosheim, in part ii, chap. 3, of his "Ecclesiastical History," says:

The interest of virtue and true religion suffered yet more grievously by the monstrous errors that were universally adopted in this century, and became a source of innumerable calamities and mischiefs of succeeding ages. The first of these maxims was *that it was an act of virtue to deceive and lie* when by that means the interest of the church might be promoted; and the second, equally horrible, though in another point of view, was "that errors in religion, when maintained and adhered to after proper admonition were punishable with civil penalties and corporal tortures." The former of these erroneous maxims was now of long standing. It had been adopted for long ages past, and had produced an incredible number of ridiculous fables, fictitious prodigies, and pious frauds to the remarkable detriment to that glorious cause in which they were employed. And it must be frankly confessed that the greatest men and the most eminent saints of this century [the fourth] were more or less tainted with the infection of this corrupt principle, as will appear evident to such as look with an attentive eye to their writings and actions. We would willingly except from this charge Ambrose and Hilary, Augustin, Gregory Nazianzen, and Jerome; but truth, which is more respectable than these venerable fathers, obliges us to involve them in the general accusation.

At another time he says, as translated by Vidal:

At the time when he [Hermas] wrote, it was an established maxim with many of the Christians to avail themselves of fraud and deception, if it was likely they would conduce toward the attainment of any considerable good.

He again says:

It was considered that they who made it their business to deceive, with a view of promoting the cause of truth, were deserving rather of commendation than censure.

The French Protestant writer, Casaubon, talks in a similar way, thus:

It mightily affects me to see how many there were in the earliest times of the church who considered it a capital exploit to lend to heavenly truth the help of their own inventions in order that the new doctrine might be received by the wise among the gentiles. These officious lies, they said, were devised for a good end.

Le Clerc, corroborating these opinions, says:

Dissemblers of truth are nowhere to be met with in such abundance as among the writers of church history.

M. Daille, another learned and impartial French writer, in his celebrated work, the "Use of the Fathers," says:

We find them saying things which they did not themselves believe. They are mutually witnesses against each other, that they are not to be believed absolutely on their bare word.

In book 1, chap. 6, he states, upon the authority of St. Jerome, that:

Origen, Methodius, Eusebius, Apollonaris, have written largely against Celsus and Porphyry. Do but observe their manner of arguing, and what slippery problems they used. They alleged against the Gentiles, not what they believed, but what they thought necessary.

Jerome himself adds:

I forbear mentioning the Latin writers, as Tertullian, Cyprian, Minutius, Victorinus, Lactantius, Hilary, lest I should rather seem to accuse others than defend myself.

Daille adds of the fathers:

They made no scruple to forge whole books.

An able writer in the *Eclectic Review* of 1814, page 179, speaks of the fathers in this way:

When we consider the number of gospels, acts, epistles, revelations, traditions, and constitutions which were put in circulation during the first three centuries, and which are unquestionably spurious, we find sufficient reason for examining

with care and receiving with extreme caution productions attributed to eminent men in the primitive church. Some of the early Christians do not appear to have possessed, in some points, a nice sense of moral obligation. The writing of books under false names, and the circulating of fables, were not accounted violations of duty; or, if the impropriety of such conduct was felt, the end proposed—the promotion of the Christian cause—was thought to justify the means employed for the accomplishment.

Let us glance a little further at the characters of these fathers, upon whom we depend for the sacred writings of the New Testament. It is to Origen more than to any other that we are indebted for the collection of the books called the canon; for it is principally upon his authority that these books were selected out from the others and regarded as inspired. It was upon his *ipse dixit* that the council of Laodicea adopted his collection as the inspired word of God. It is well to see what kind of a man he was. Bishop Horsely, in his reply to Priestly, states:

Origen was not incapable of asserting in argument what he believed not, and that a strict regard to truth in disputation was not one of the virtues of his character.

The bishop further remarks:

Time was when the practice of using unjustifiable means to serve a good cause was openly avowed, and Origen himself was among its defenders.

It is, however, sad for the memory of this greatest of the Christian fathers that there are strong grounds for believing that late in life he renounced the system of Christianity he had labored so hard to establish. That this was the case, Robert Taylor says:

It is to be found, however, in Origen's own writings, and is confirmed in his life in the Greek of Suidas. His dolorous lamentations and repentance after this outrageous apostasy present us with the most authentic and, at the same time, the

most demonstrative view of the interior characters of the most primitive Christianity; and must satisfy those who dream of a state of Christianity at any time before the Protestant reformation, when what are called the principles of the reformation were the principles of Christianity, how grossly their Protestant teachers have deceived them.

Eusebius, bishop of Cesarea, was another of the most important Christian fathers. In fact, he is about the only authority for the early history of the church. It has been said by able minds, that "without Eusebius we should scarce have had any knowledge of the history of the first ages of Christianity, or of the authors who wrote at that time." All other writers of church history begin where Eusebius left off. It is of no slight importance that we should know, then, what manner of man he was. Truth, then, requires it to be said that he was not a man who had an exalted estimate of truth. In the twelfth book of his "Evangelical Preparation" he devotes a whole chapter to proving that falsehood ought to be used whenever it is required, and he heads the thirty-first chapter with this question "how far it may be proper to use falsehood for a medicine, and for the benefit of those who require to be deceived." In another place he says, "I have related whatever might redound to the glory, and I have suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace, of our religion." Baronius, a sincere advocate of the Christian faith, calls Eusebius "the great falsifier of ecclesiastical history, a wily sycophant, a consummate hypocrite, a time-serving persecutor, who had nothing in his known life or writings to support the belief that he himself believed in the Christian system." This man is confessedly a hypocrite and falsifier, and it is

greatly to be regretted that all we have of the early history of the church, and the apocryphal writings which compose its scriptures, is from him.

It is little better with the truthfulness of the other fathers, but these points must be briefly stated. Of Irenæus and Papias Dr. Whitby wrote, and with undoubted truth, "as having scandalously deluded the world with fables and lying narrations."

Of Justin Martyr, Mosheim, in an emphatic manner, says, "Much of what Justin says is wholly undeserving of credit."

Of the fathers Clement of Alexandria and Lactantius the Rev. Mr. Jones, in his "New Full Method of Settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament," page 34, part ii, says "it was the practice with them to make use of testimonials out of forgeries and spurious books to prove the very foundation of Christian revelation."

St. Jerome, author of the Vulgate or Latin translation of the Bible, and esteemed as one of the first dignitaries of the early church, says quite enough to convict himself, and in these words: "I do not find fault with an error which proceeds from a hatred toward the Jews, and a pious zeal for the Christian faith."

Gregory Nazianzen, bishop of Constantinople, and surnamed "the divine," admitted to Father Jerome that "a little jargon is all that is necessary to impose upon the people. The less they comprehend the more they admire. Our forefathers and doctors of the church have often said not what they thought, but what circumstances and necessity dictated to them."

Bishop Heliodorus, in his "Romance of Theaganes

and Chericles," modestly says, "A falsehood is a good thing when it aids the speaker and does no injury to the hearers." St. Synesius farther declares that the "people were desirous of being deceived. We can not do otherwise respecting them." The same saint further says, "For my own part I shall always be a philosopher, but in dealing with the mass of mankind I shall be a priest."

As specimens of the kind of truth St. Augustine dealt in, it is enough to say that he stated as a positive fact, and "as true as the gospel," that "while he was bishop of Hippo Regius he preached the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to a whole nation of men and women who had no heads, but had their eyes in their bosoms;" and in countries still more southerly he preached to a nation "amongst whom each individual had but one eye, and that situated in the middle of the forehead."

The apostolic father St. Hermas confesses to a truly bad character of himself. In his gospel, as quoted by Cooper, he wrote, "O Lord, I never spake a true word in my life; but I have always lived in dissimulation and affirmed a lie for truth to all men, and no man contradicted me, but all gave credit to my words!" And as the same gospel sets forth, the angel who heard the above admission made answer in this way, "As the lie was up now he had better keep it up; as in time it would come to be believed it would answer as well as the truth."

It hardly can be denied that we have shown conclusively that the fathers were not only ignorant of many of the simple truths of nature, but that they substituted for the same the most arrant, pretentious frauds, and falsehoods. Possibly Mr. Whitehead

may not be able to see these things in the light we do, but candid minds must certainly admit that we have adduced strong and reliable testimony on these two important points.

As vague as it is who wrote the books of the New Testament, as uncertain as it is when the most of them were written, it is nearly as uncertain at what particular time they were first formed into a canon and were accepted by the church as the inspired word of God. True, Origen was the first to make a list of the books composing the New Testament, and his list was afterwards adopted by some of the subsequent councils; but still there was a great amount of wrangling between conflicting fathers and contentious councils as to which books should be admitted into the canon and which should be rejected. For the first two centuries there was no canon—no New Testament, as such. Hundreds of gospels, epistles, etc., were in existence, presenting about equal claims for credit and divine origin, and it was a long time before the vexatious question was allowed to rest. The selection of the books and the agreement as to the list were slow and unsatisfactory in process, and, as Westcott says, it is "impossible to point to any period as marking the date at which our present canon was determined." The same competent writer further says:

This result (the formation of the canon) was obtained gradually, spontaneously, silently. There is no evidence to show that at any time the claims of the apostolic writings to be placed on an equal footing with the Old Testament, which formed the first Christian Bible, were deliberately discussed and admitted. . . . Step by step the books which were stamped with apostolic authority were separated from the mass

of other works which contained the traditions of less authoritative teachers.

It is not at all strange that the bishops and priests of the early Catholic church, deeming it advisable to sift over the numerous gospels, epistles, and revelations claiming recognition, should select out the few which they chose to dub the "word of God," and throw the rest away. But we have seen that they did not select the oldest gospels, nor those whose authors were known. They seemed to choose those of comparatively late origin, and whose writers were wholly unknown and possessed very weak claims to divine aid or dictation. The way in which the matter was quarreled over, and even fought over, is worthy of note; and the modes by which it was decided which books to use in forming the canon should not be lost sight of. If some of the gospels and apostles were genuine, and some were spurious, there is very slight grounds for telling that the genuine were accepted and the spurious discarded.

As we have seen, it was in the third century that Origen made a selection of the many books in various hands and formed his list. The council of Laodicea, which sat in 363, ratified Origen's selection. So it follows that in all probability we are indebted to the choice of this tricky priest for the compilation comprising the New Testament. Had he from freak made a different choice, our so-called word of God to-day would doubtless be very different from what it is. How the priest Origen and the bishops and priests who met at Laodicea were able to select those inspired and separate them from those not inspired bids fair to remain a mystery. William Penn had a

just conception of the difficulties in these premises when he thus wrote:

I demand of our adversaries if they are well assured of those men who first collected, embodied, and declared them (the scriptures) authentic by a public canon, which we read was in the council of Laodicea, three hundred and sixty-three years after Christ. I say how do they know that these men rightly discerned true from spurious? Now, sure it is, that some of the scriptures taken in by one council were rejected by another for apocryphal, and that which was left out by the former for apocryphal was taken in by the latter for canonical. Now, visible it is, that they contradict each other, and as true that they have erred respecting the present belief.

The means sometimes taken to tell which books were genuine and which not is thus described by Pappius, in his "Synodicum of the Council of Nice," in these words: "By placing all the books under a communion table, and, upon the prayers of the council, the inspired books jumped upon the table, while the false ones remained under."

Several councils were held at different periods during the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, and they were generally noisy and very inharmonious. A few quotations will suffice to show the character of them, even in the eyes of zealous Christian writers. Tindal, in the 195th page of his work entitled "Rights of the Christian Church," quotes St. Gregory Nazianzen, who, in his letter to Procopius, gives his opinion of the councils in this language: "That he fled all assemblies of bishops, because he never saw a good and happy end of any council, but that they did rather increase than lessen the evil; that the love of contention and ambition always overcomes their reason." The pious Nazianzen again gives his reasons for not attending further

councils, thus: "Because nothing is to be heard there but geese and cranes."

Tindal, in speaking of the first council convened by Constantine in 325, writes thus:

If these accusations and libels which the bishops of the Council of Nice give in of one another to the emperor were now extant, in all probability we should have such calls for scandal that few would have much reason to boast of the first Ecumenical Council, where, with such heat, passion, and fury, the bishops fell foul of one another, inasmuch, that had not the emperor by a trick burnt their church memorials, probably they must have broke up in confusion. After that council was over the bishops made so great a disturbance and were so unruly that the good emperor was forced to tell them that "if they would not be more quiet and peaceable for the future, he would no longer continue his expedition against the Infidels, but must return to keep them in order." Indeed, says the same Christian writer, "the confusion and disorder were so great amongst them, especially in the synods, that it sometimes came to blows; as for instance, Dioscorus, bishop of Alexandria, cuffed and kicked Flavianus, patriarch of Constantinople (at the second synod of Ephesus) with that fury that within three days after he died."

St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, expressed himself in this way about the councils and synods:

Since the Nicene synod we do nothing but write creeds; we fight about words; we raise questions about novelties; we quarrel about things doubtful and about authors; while we contend in parties, there is almost none that is Christ's. We decree every year of the Lord a new creed concerning God; nay, every change of the moon our faith is altered.

Such were the men and such the councils which took it upon themselves to decide for the world which anonymous writings of their time were inspired by God, and what the creed of the church must be. Such are the men to whom we are indebted for Christianity. It will be seen at once how poor the authority upon

which the New Testament and the Christian religion rests, and what a large swallowing capacity a credulous soul must have who can "gulp" it all down and swear it is *divine*.

Much more can be said in the same direction, but these remarks must be brought to a close. We have endeavored to establish the following propositions:

1. That the foundation of Judaism and Christianity is a fable.

2. That the fable is anonymous and was not written by Moses.

3. That the chronology of the Bible regarding the age of the world is wholly wrong.

4. That the narrative of the fable is utterly at variance with truth and science.

5. That there is no valid authority for the Old Testament canon, that there is no reason for believing it inspired, or that it was written by the persons and at the periods claimed.

6. That matter in all its forms is eternal, and never was made from nothing, and hence that the story of creation is absurd and all supernaturalism entirely false.

7. That nature is grander, truer, and more to be adored than all the gods and devils superstitious and ignorant man has devised.

8. That the New Testament is as unauthentic and unreliable as the Old, and that there is no historical confirmation that such a person as Jesus lived, especially the Jesus of the gospels. If he did live, he was no diviner than other folks.

9. That the principal dogma of the Christian religion has only a dream to rest upon, and that dream

told by a forger who knew not the first thing about the dream nor the dreamer.

10. That the four gospels of the New Testament were unknown till the latter part of the second century, and that their authors were likewise unknown.

11. That the authors of Acts, six of the epistles ascribed to Paul, two to Peter, one each to James and Jude, as well as of Revelation, are unknown.

12. That the fathers who decided upon the merits of the New Testament books, and the doctrine of the church, were ignorant, superstitious, and dishonest, and clearly unfit to found a religion of truth.

13. That the claims of divinity for man to believe in as regards the New Testament and Christianity fall prostrate to the earth.

14. That the truths of Liberalism and science are infinitely superior for the human family to the sophistries, pretensions, superstitions, inaccuracies, and falsehoods of Christianity.

15. The final conclusion is that sensible men and women should discard all books and wily priests who teach absurdities and lies, and turn for knowledge to the great volume of nature, which never uses hypocrisy, never lies.

Shall we hear further from Mr. Whitehead?

CLOSING WORD FROM MR. WHITEHEAD.

(From *The Truth Seeker*, Oct. 21, 1882.)

STONE, PA., Oct. 20, 1882.

MR. BENNETT, *Dear Sir* : When I asked the questions which appeared in *THE TRUTH SEEKER* of September 16th I had no intention of entering upon a discussion relative to the merits of the Christian religion and the credibility of the Bible. I have no such intention now. You and I entertain opinions that are almost diametrically opposit. Both of us cannot be right ;

both may be equally wrong. Nothing that either might say on the questions at issue between us can in any way affect the real truth. My real object was to gain light on what I considered to be some of the difficulties of Liberalism. You cannot deny but that it is attended with many difficulties. But, as before stated, I am not after a discussion, and will not stop to enumerate the difficulties of Infidelity nor say anything of your reply to my last letter, although a great deal might be said in opposition. I thank you for answering the questions propounded, and subscribe myself, Your friend,

W. M. WHITEHEAD.

REPLY.—It seems our friend gracefully throws up the sponge and declines longer to discuss the merits of Christianity. Perhaps he has chosen the wiser course. There is really not much to be said in defense of the mythical and unauthentic character of Christianity in the early centuries. There is a weakness—a lack of connection—in the proof, that must be painful to the thinking and investigating Christian devotee. There is really no history worthy of the name that gives assurance that such a person as Jesus had an actual existence, especially the Jesus of the gospels. If there was an obscure man by the name of Jesus, who itinerated and wandered about the country, followed by some illiterate fishermen, and was finally executed for setting up some claims to the throne, there is no earthly probability that such a character as Jesus of the gospel ever lived; who was begotten by a ghost upon the body of a little virgin Jew girl, who performed miracles, raised people from the dead, raised himself from the dead and then ascended bodily up above the atmosphere surrounding the earth. There is no history testifying that such a person existed; there is nothing upon which to base such a claim, save what are called

the four gospels, and we have plainly shown that those had no existence, or were not known till the closing part of the second century. There is nothing to show that Peter or Paul, or any of the disciples who are claimed to have lived at the time Jesus did and to know him, ever said a word about Jesus having no natural father, about his mother being a virgin, about his performing wonderful miracles, like raising people from the dead, about raising himself from the dead, about his ascending, physically and bodily, up and away from the earth. No claim was set up for any of these impossible things until the second century, when the wily "fathers" deemed that the new system of religion needed those supernatural qualities to make it popular with the superstitious masses who demanded those marvelous and most extraordinary features. This is, no doubt, the reason why the miracles and supernatural parts of the story were invented and handed out to the credulous masses as the revealed word of Heaven. There is certainly no proof nor probability to the contrary. This is a vital point to the claims of Christianity. Here is where the system is fearfully weak, and here is where proof is needed which is wholly unable to be furnished. If Christians can furnish such proof they assuredly would do so without urging from us; and that they do not do so is sure proof that they cannot. If they cannot furnish this important proof they ought, like honest men, to acknowledge their inability and confess that their system of religion is without historic reliability, and that myth and falsehood are all it has to rely upon.

Mr. Whitehead certainly appears to be a man of sufficient intelligence to see this, and he ought to

hav honesty enough to confess this patent truth. Why should he or any other man still hold on to that as divine which has nothing to sustain it save the erroneous assertions of unknown persons, who, if they lived, are not known to possess truth, candor, and reliability.

He is clearly correct when he says that he and we entertain different opinions, almost diametrically opposed; that both of us cannot be right. There is no chance for an argument between us on these propositions. One of us must be in the wrong. The claims of Christianity are true or they are false. We feel positiv that our friend is in the wrong and that the claims of Christianity are false. We claim that we hav established this by the strongest kind of proofs, and we think too highly of Mr. Whitehead's intelligence to believe for a moment that he cannot clearly perceive it. The trouble is, he was reared in the belief that Christianity is what it pretends to be. Perhaps his livelihood depends upon sustaining the defectiv system (we imagin he is a preacher), and it is a herculean task to throw away at once the teachings and dogmas instilled into our minds in the days of our childhood, and it is not a pleasant thing for a man to separate himself from long-sustained associations; to be ostracized by those who hav for years yielded love and respect, but this is the sacrifice and homage which truth demands, and no honest person, whether clergyman or otherwise, ought to evade this duty.

Mr. Whitehead seems still to find some difficulties and obstacles on the part of Liberalism, though he fails to giv the slightest indication what the difficulties are. It is to be regretted he did not state

what they are, for possibly they are more imaginary than real, and such as can easily be dispelled. There is perhaps nothing in the world but what has more or less difficulties connected with it. For instance, the simple matter of breathing air and drinking water, as essential as they are to our health and existence, are not wholly free from difficulties. The lungs are often compelled to take in noxious vapors, injurious gases, deleterious and poisonous air, and the water we drink is often charged with impurities, with earthy and mineral substances in solution, which are not unfrequently detrimental to health. So, perhaps, there is no function connected with our organization, no feature of our existence or the phenomena of nature, that has not some difficulties connected with it. But because such is the case it does not follow that we should discontinue breathing the atmosphere nor drinking the purest water we can obtain; that we should hesitate to use any of the functions of our being, or that we should not use any of the provisions of nature. Though we may often find difficulties in our path, we should not sink before them, but rather rise superior to them, and valiantly overcome them.

So far as we are concerned, we see no difficulties in Liberalism, or at least nothing to deter a brave and candid spirit. Liberalism is only another name for naturalism, and everything pertaining to nature is freer from difficulties than anything else in existence. Liberalism is easy to believe because it is so natural, so easy, and so true. It is the claims of supernaturalism, of ecclesiasticism, of myths, of superstitions—monstrous demands about gods and devils—that are so replete with difficulties. To accept them a man

has to throw away his reason, stifle the spirit of investigation, close his eyes to the light of truth, and swallow like a young robin whatever is given, without a question or any clear perception. Here is where the principal difficulties are to be found. If these are only bravely cast aside, the light of truth will be sure to shine out clearly, and all difficulties and doubts will flee away.

We thank Mr. Whitehead for his courtesy and gentlemanly conduct, and we hope he will continue in the search of truth, and that he will have the honesty and candor to accept it when found. May he become an intelligent and clear-sighted Liberal.

REPLIES TO MORE CHRISTIAN ARGUMENTS.

(From The Truth Seeker of Oct. 21, 1882.)

The following two letters have been sent us for publication. They readily explain themselves:

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN., Sept. 22, 1882.

MR. EDITOR: I inclose you a letter received some two years since, which I never answered because it entered into a field too broad for me, so much so that I did not feel competent to do so. Since reading the last number of THE TRUTH SEEKER and your answers to W. M. Whitehead's questions, I concluded to send you Mr. Breed's letter, thinking an answer to it would be of value to your numerous readers. I have followed you around the world, and read you otherwise to great profit, and I will read your answer to Mr. Breed with great interest should you think it worthy of publishing, which I hope you may, for he is a very popular divine at St. Paul, our neighboring city.

Yours respectfully, B. M. SMITH.

MR. BREED'S LETTER.

ST. PAUL, Dec. 30, 1880.

B. M. SMITH, Sir: Your very frank and courteous letter should have been answered before this, except that the time has been lacking. It is evidence not only of an honest mind, but of a friendly spirit that you do not deal at all in sarcasm or scorn. And I do not mean to indicate that such characteristics belong exclusively to unbelievers. But no matter to which side the man may belong who calls his opponent hard names or "throws mud," as we say, the practice is contemptible, and ministers only to hard feeling and further strife.

There are several things in your letter to which you will permit me to refer.

It is very evident that your mind is not at rest, because you

use the language not of conviction but of doubt. You are "more than half convinced," etc. You speak of those who are "hungering and thirsting for something better," as though you included yourself in the number. Such is always the characteristic of the mind which rejects Jesus; it cannot settle on anything but a negativ. And what is a negativ? Nothing. You doom yourself to unrest! You say that the only evidence for the life of Jesus is found in the New Testament. Have you forgotten the writings of the apostolic fathers—men who lived and wrote in the very same age as Josephus, and some of whom had conversed with the apostles themselves? Have you forgotten that the writings of the very enemies of Christianity—such as Celsus and Porphyry, who lived in the second century, and whose knowledge of Christ's life was as complete as our knowledge of the war of 1812, and that of Celsus, removed no further from it—that their writings demonstrate the facts of Christianity which you doubt?

But considering only the writings of the four evangelists, they have been examined by Simon Greenleaf, D.D., the ablest of all authorities on "Evidence," in a large book, by the very rules of evidence which obtain in law courts, and the conclusion reached that their testimony is reliable and to be accepted. Yet when you rule out these four witnesses and their four histories, you do just as I should do were I to rule out the published histories of the Revolution and of George Washington, and then deny their existence because other historians did not speak of them. Moreover, if your rule is to challenge all histories of men and nations written by their friends and admirers, how many histories of any sort will you have left? Who will receive the testimony of any enemy, anyway?

You reach the conclusion that the character of Christ is a fabrication, which grew up little by little—perhaps founded upon that of Judas of Galilee. Have you ever compared it with other fabrications? Do they possess its symmetry or unity? Suppose it is an intellectual creation (whether by growth or otherwise), then you are forced to the conclusion that such men as the followers of Judas created an ideal not only much more grand than their own characters, but holier, more loving, more lofty intellectually than anything earth has ever seen. Is

that reasonable? Can the stream rise so high above its source?

You say that people to-day are disposed to attach importance not to what a man believes, but to what he does. Let me ask if it is possible for a man to act without any reference to religious belief? or if our belief does not always control our action?

Finally, you wish me to direct my talents to the elevation of mankind, and not so much to dogmas. I do not know exactly what you mean by either term. But if by the elevation of mankind you mean teaching the ignorant, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and comforting the sorrowing, it will be worth your while to make careful examination (as I have done) on this point, and you will find that four-fifths of the support of all the schools not under state patronage, four-fifths of all the support of orphan asylums, hospitals, and other kindred institutions are derived from Christian people, and flow from the church of Christ.

I do not know you personally, and am therefore ignorant of facts; but my observation has taught me that a deterioration in life often precedes and accounts for a failing in faith.

I do not say it has been so with you, as I am not acquainted with you. I hope your unbelief may be pardoned, and that the holy spirit may bring you back to light and rest again.

Very truly, DAVID R. BREED.

REPLY.—We make no profession of superior ability in meeting the arguments and inquiries of our opponents, but in so far as we are able we cheerfully defend what seems to us to be truth, and point out what appear to be the mistakes and errors of our ecclesiastical friends who entertain views entirely different from ours.

It is pleasing to see that the Rev. Mr. Breed writes in a friendly spirit, and that he keeps up at least an appearance of fairness. He condemns calling hard names and mud-throwing, which is commendable in him to do, and we wish it might always be acted upon by his brethren of the cloth, for it cannot be forgotten that many clergymen have said false and

very unkind things about those who presume to differ from them on the tenets of supernaturalism. Whenever a professional clergyman shows a disposition to be fair and gentlemanly it is refreshing and gives encouragement to the belief that humanity and civility will, occasionally, at least, crop out and rise superior to religious dogma. This spirit of fairness is quite right in the reverend gentleman. But that he entertains some errors is not at all difficult to perceive. We will mention a few points wherein we think he is in error. Here are some of them:

1. Mr. Breed argues that because Mr. Smith appears somewhat unsettled and in doubt, he is in error. He says, "Such is always the characteristic of the mind which rejects Jesus," and condemns those "who are hungering and thirsting for something better." He is clearly wrong in this position. An unsettled mind is no indication of error. Doubt leads to agitation and investigation. If no doubt is indulged in as to the errors of past ages of superstition and ignorance, no new truths will be brought to light. If no uneasiness is felt at the blinding exactions of dogma, inquiry and science will not lead us to new treasures of nature and reason. Those are the most settled in their convictions, the least inquiring for something better, who are most sunk in gross darkness and superstition. The Jewish worshiper is fully satisfied that he is right; he firmly believes his stupid objects of adoration are potent and wasteful, and he would of course strongly condemn those "hungering and thirsting for something better." It is the same with the worshipers of many gods, and who bow down to those gods in the form of idols. They are perfectly at rest in

their mode of belief, and scorn those who hunger and thirst for something better. In like manner it is with all believers in supernaturalism and ecclesiastically prescribed lines of thought—those who believe in personal gods who beget sons upon human females, and then cause the same sons to be put to death for their own gratification.

There have been many such personal gods and begotten sons believed in, the believers in them are just as sure that they have the only truth in the world worth having as that they exist. They are supremely contented with the doctrine which they have accepted; they want nothing better nor higher; they are positive that everybody who thinks differently from them is in the dark, and loaded down with error; and they scorn all who give way to an appetite for higher truth, and hunger and thirst for something better. With this class of self-satisfied believers who accept whatever is handed out to them by their ecclesiastical teachers and mind-keepers without daring to raise an objection or a dissenting voice, they will remain settled; they will not doubt; they will make no inquiry; they will not seek or desire anything better. They believe that the dogmas taught from two to four thousand years ago possessed the whole truth; that they are perfect, and that no new discoveries can be made, and no further advances taken. They want nothing higher, and will not tolerate those who hunger and thirst for higher things. It is different with those who are not satisfied with the old husks of theology and creed, and seek always for the best that is to be had, and are not content so long as higher and better truths are to be learned. Mr. Breed may ally him-

self with those who are perfectly contented and settled, but Mr. Smith and ourselves will be numbered with those who "hunger and thirst for something better"—the truest and best that is to be had.

2. Mr. Breed dissents from the claim that there is no authority for the existence, or for the life and doctrine, of Jesus, save the four gospels in the New Testament. If he knows of any historian who corroborates those four gospels, and makes it clear that such a person existed, taught the doctrine attributed to him, and performed the remarkable miracles with which he is credited, it is a great pity he does not produce him. If he knows of any such reliable writer within a hundred years from the time Jesus is said to have lived, we urge him to bring him forth. We have recently had something to say upon this subject, and it seems hardly necessary to go the ground all over again. But we will make the assertion, and challenge proof to the contrary, that there is no reliable writer, no credible history, that substantiates the claims of those four gospels. We further showed that those four gospels, as such, were wholly unknown by the Christians of the first century, unknown by the Christians of the second century, and that it was not until more than three quarters of the second century had passed away that those four gospels were so much as named or quoted? If Mr. Breed can show that the contrary is true, will he be so kind as to do so? Thus while the four gospels which are wholly relied upon for the Christian story were unknown till the year 181, the numerous spurious gospels written before and after were denounced and rejected as spurious and unworthy of belief. This leaves the authenticity of the gospel story in a

most unfortunate dilemma. And shirk it and evade it as much as Mr. Breed and his brother clergymen please, the great damaging truth still remains—the four gospels is all there is to depend upon, and there is nothing to corroborate them. The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John clearly were not written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The world has been deceived in this matter. A lot of forgers have led the world astray. Spurious gospels are all there is to depend upon, and an original of any one of them was never seen by any of the apostles nor early fathers of the church. If there is one who ever claimed that he had seen the original of either of the four, will Mr. Breed be kind enough to point him out? The truth is that copies of copies of spurious gospels are all that the world has to depend upon to uphold the belief that a virgin bore a child without the aid of a natural father, that this miraculously begotten son performed such miracles as raising dead persons to life, and of himself rising from the dead and ascending bodily above the atmosphere surrounding the earth. The copies of copies of forgeries and spurious stories is indeed the worst possible foundation for such improbable and impossible claims to rest upon.

And just granting for the moment that the four gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, what credibility can attach to their narrative when they attempt to write an account of what took place when they were not present, and report sermons, the delivery of which they did not hear? Matthew did not hear the Sermon on the Mount, for he had not then been called as a disciple. It takes a man of remarkable memory to correctly report a

speech or sermon thirty years afterward, even if he heard it; but when he did not hear it it requires a still smarter man, for he has to draw wholly upon his own imagination. Again, how could Matthew possibly know what Joseph dreamed fifty years before the story was written? How could Luke know what kind of a vision Mary had more than fifty years before, and when he was not present? If Matthew and Luke wished to establish the alleged fact that Jesus was by blood a lineal descendant of the house of David, why did they give the genealogy of Joseph in order to prove that of Jesus? Does that prove it at all? And then if they gave the genealogy of Joseph correctly, why did they disagree so widely, one giving twenty-eight generations, and the other forty-two, with an entirely different line? Can both be true? If one is true, which is it? and is not the other false? Could John write the truth when he so totally differed from the other three writers in the character of Jesus, in what he said, in the miracles he performed, the length of his ministry, the number of times he visited Jerusalem? Could the four tell the truth when they told an entirely different story in scores of instances? Can truth contradict itself and prove itself a lie? It is mournful, too, that this record called the New Testament has been changed more or less in the copying and different renditions that have been made, to the number of thirty-two thousand. Can much respect be had for a story that has been changed so many times? Ah, Mr. Breed, what you choose to denominate "history," and to have palmed upon the world as divine truth, is most defective, unreliable, and unworthy of credit.

3. Mr. Breed cites Celsus and Porphyry as proofs of the truth of Christianity. They are indeed a weak prop for the mythical system to lean upon. They both wrote expressly to prove that Christianity is untrue, and their testimony was so damaging to the false claims that had been set up that their writings were entirely destroyed by Christians, so that a single paragraph has not come down to us save a few that Origen quoted of Celsus in order to reply intelligibly to him. A system must indeed be reduced to great straits to be driven to prove itself true by witnesses who totally deny its truth.

4. Mr. Breed attempts to prove the validity and truthfulness of the four canonical gospels by Simon Greenleaf, D.D., whom he is pleased to call "the ablest of all authorities on 'evidence.'" We do not know how able the reverend doctor of divinity was upon "evidence," for we have never read what he says in his "large book;" but if he has really succeeded in finding any real evidence that Jesus lived save what is contained in the four canonical gospels, or if he can find the slightest proof that either of those four gospels was written by the persons whose names they bear; if he can find any evidence of any person who ever saw the original manuscripts from the hands of the evangelists; if he has any evidence that these four gospels were read, mentioned, or known of by any one before Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, well along in the last quarter of the second century, he is earnestly requested to produce it. Simon Greenleaf, D.D., was a theologian—a clergyman; one who makes his livelihood by endeavors to induce people to believe that Jesus really lived, that he was begotten by a ghost, that

his mother was a virgin both before and after the begetting process, that Jesus never had a natural father, like most of the other people who have lived in the world, that he performed impossible miracles, and that he ascended away up into the upper atmosphere, or entirely beyond the atmosphere, where he is engaged at sitting at the right hand of his ghostly father, and at preparing mansions for those who can be induced to give credence to the story. Mr. Greenleaf, being a doctor of divinity, was doubtless fond of money. Many of the fraternity evince that kind of love. They find filthy lucre very convenient to meet the wants of life, and it has been discovered that they will not toil to any great extent, even to save souls from an eternal burning hell, unless they are paid the cash in advance, or have a reasonable prospect of getting it. They will not preach without money. Their standing motto is, "No pay, no preach." This they act upon with decided unanimity. Now Simon Greenleaf, D.D., no longer has uses for money, as nearly fifty years ago he departed this life and went where, possibly, he has been able to test the truthfulness of the system of religion he toiled so earnestly to defend; but if any of those clergymen who admire him, any D.D. who thinks Greenleaf, D.D., established the fact that such a person as Jesus of the gospels had a real existence, and that the four gospels were really written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and were known or alluded to before the year 181, they can doubtless be able to make a good sum of money by producing from Greenleaf or any body else the proof so greatly needed and desired. There is a great number of persons who would willingly give large sums of

money if undoubted proof of the kind indicated can be given. We are not able to give very much, but think we might safely offer one thousand dollars reward if the lost and missing proof can be produced. Possibly Mr. Breed will undertake the contract.

5. It will hardly do to give implicit confidence to the mythical characters who it is claimed saw Jesus and his disciples, for upon examination they will be found to be dissipated into thin air. These claims were undoubtedly gotten up by the authors of the gospel story; and it could hardly be expected that men capable of inventing the four gospels which Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John assuredly did not write, would have failed to speak of some of the fathers who at least had seen some of the apostles. Testimony of that kind will be found weak and unreliable. When scrutinized closely it vanishes away.

6. Mr. Breed asks "if it is possible for a man to act without any reference to religious belief." We answer, We think it is. Although the majority of human beings have a religious belief of some kind, there are many who have no settled religious belief, while taking the whole world over there is but about one in ten who even professes to believe in the religion called Christianity. But human instincts, the natural emotions of human character, are more active and will act sooner than religious belief. If almost any man who has no fixed religious belief sees a fellow-being drowning, or a house on fire with human beings in it likely to burn to death, or if he sees a child playing upon a railroad track with the rushing train rapidly approaching, he will do his utmost to save those thus in imminent danger, without stopping for a moment to think what his relig-

ious opinions are about gods, devils, and hells. When soldiers are upon the battle-field engaged in deadly conflict with a common foe they rush into the hottest of the fight, where the danger is the greatest, and without stopping a moment to mouth a prayer, to engage in a religious rite, or to think whether they hav a religion or not. Human impulses are stronger than religious impressions, and men never stop in cases of emergency to consult the latter.

7. The Rev. Mr. Breed, in conclusion, says, "My observation has taught me that a deterioration in life often precedes and accounts for a failure in faith;" or, in other words, that those who believe in the doctrin of Christian theology lead better lives than those who do not. This is unkind and untruthful in every sense of the word. Its untruthfulness is most apparent, whether the pages of history are examined, whether travels are extended to the countries of all religions, or whether our country is made the field of our search. By perusing the pages of history it will be found that believers in Christianity hav taken more human life, hav caused the blood of their fellow-men to flow far more profusely, than the believers in any other system of religion. They hav persecuted unbelievers more cruelly, hav applied torture for exercising the sacred right of opinion, hav used worse and more implements of agony, hav applied their hellish inventions in prison cells and underground dungeons; they hav tortured on the rack, they hav burnt at the stake, and practiced many other horrible modes of torture and death a thousand times over more than the believers of any other system of religion, and far more than all of them added together. Buddhism, the greatest system of

religion in the world, which has existed six hundred years longer than Christianity, and had twice the number of adherents, has never persecuted on account of its religion; it has never proselyted by the sword; it has never burnt at the stake, and has never used implements of torture in the name and doctrines of its great founder. Christians have done all this for centuries.

We have within the past twelve months visited the lands where Mohammedanism, Brahmanism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism are strongly believed in, and where Christianity has little or no foothold, and we found those people more honest, more moral, more disposed to lead upright lives, freer from frauds and deep designs against their fellow-beings, with less of cheating and swindling, less of intemperance, less of prostitution, less of crimes which take them to prison and make them outcasts in the world, than is found in Christian nations. This is positively true and cannot be disproved.

It is not found that professors of Christianity in our own country lead any better lives, are any more humane or sympathetic, exhibit any more charity, are any more kindly disposed, any less inclined to lechery and licentiousness, any more moral in any way, than those who make no profession of Christianity and do not pretend that they have been "born again." As a rule an unprofessor of Christianity will perform a kindly act, will do a good deed to a fellow being, as willingly and as disinterestedly as the professor. Even the teachers of Christianity, those who claim to act upon a commission from the throne of God somewhere above the clouds, to break the bread of life to the faithful, and to act the part of the good

shepherd, and lead the lambs of the flock to the fold of safety and protection, prove themselves to be as carnal-minded, as sinful, as much addicted to the lusts of the eye, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life as any other class of men we have among us. We have published authentic accounts of nearly a thousand clergymen in our country who within the past six years have been guilty of various crimes dishonorable to themselves and to the human race, particularly the crime of adultery and licentiousness; these being the cases that have been reported by the secular press of the country. There is no profession, whether lawyers, doctors, or teachers, who have proved themselves to be half so bad in the directions named as these professed meek and lowly disciples of Christ and self-constituted teachers of the masses; and it is probable not one in ten of the cases of their licentiousness and adultery is brought to the light. Far the larger proportion of these are "hushed up" and kept from public knowledge.

No, Mr. Breed, it will not do to undertake to establish the claims of Christianity, or to show that unbelievers are wrong, upon the ground of the superior purity and sinlessness of its professors. It is most untrue, in the face of history, observation in other countries and religions, and even a casual glance at our own country, that those who doubt the truthfulness of Christian claims are any more immoral than Christians, or that "a deterioration in life precedes and accounts for a failing in faith." If a belief in Christianity is sure to make its professor moral and pure, how is it that so many Christian teachers and communicants easily fall victims to lust and crime? If the belief in Jesus and his relig-

ion makes them sinless and pure, they must be arrant hypocrites. Unbelievers are certainly no more sinful in these directions than believers, and it is a species of clerical impertinence to insinuate it.

Perhaps we hav replied to the reverend gentlemen's arguments; and if we hav given satisfaction to himself and Mr. Smith we are truly glad. If we can perform other work in a similar direction, we will cheerfully address ourselves to it.

ANSWER TO A LONDON CHRISTIAN'S ARGUMENT.

(From The Truth Seeker, Oct. 28, 1882.)

The following letter from a gentleman of London, with whom we hav had some business transactions, is worthy of attention:

LONDON, ENG., Sept. 30, 1882.

D. M. BENNETT, Sir: Yours to hand. I am pleased to hear that you found your goods all right; I knew they were all right. There is no doubt you are placed in a very awkward position, as a little knowledge is dangerous in science as in theology and relativ knowledge of character. Your views and mine are very different, but that will not lessen my appreciation of the best side of your nature. But, Bennett, my friend, you must be careful what you do; it is a hard thing in this world to go through it without a base and a rock. The young, particularly, want to become enamored of that which is pure and noble. I hav in vain looked around for an antidote against the folly of youth, but I find nothing acts so well as simple faith in Christ. I hav had a large experience in the world, and mingled with all classes of society, but I find more sobriety and pureness of heart among Christian people than I do apart from them. Evidence to me, which I hav, is everything in that direction. I do not look to rascals or others who are what they do not represent. I'm sick of the rascality of the

masses, and if it were not for the influence of Christian teaching I would wish to be out of the world. However, I have no time now to enter into a discussion; but, Bennett, it seems to me you are trying to pick out all the false people and pit them against those who are true and faithful. In all grades of society there always has been and always will be hypocrites, but that says nothing against simple and pure Christianity. I have seen beautiful instances of calm resignation to the reverses of fortune, as well as beautiful peacefulness in the hour of death. Voltaire shrieked with horror when his end was approaching, and Tom Paine would have given worlds had he not written his "Age of Reason." My friend, your acquaintance through antagonism with Christian thought and feeling precludes you from estimating its value. It is always easy enough if one is so inclined to rake up filth and dirt even out of palaces laden with precious stones, but that does not alter the gems that are therein.

Yours faithfully, W. C. HUGHES.

REPLY.—The forgoing is a prelude to a business letter, the writer being the gentleman who manufactured the stereopticon, views and accompanying apparatus, which we purchased in London for the purpose of illustrating our lectures. We had with him several limited discussions upon religious subjects, and though he has to considerable extent a scientific turn of mind, he still seems not a little at fault upon theological matters. We have made the remark to him that he is a better judge of magic-lanterns and artistic views than of the intricacies and absurdities of theology, which remark undoubtedly contains not a little truth.

Like most persons who would be champions of the character of Christianity, our friend seems to have a decided tendency to be in the wrong, and for this reason we have deemed it proper to reply to some of his errors. Indeed, whenever we attempt to discuss with a devotee of the Christian system we find nearly

always the same unpleasant task lying before us—we find our opponents in deep error, and greatly in need of the light of truth to overcome and dispel their errors. In replying to friend Hughes we told him we had not time then to answer the theological part of his letter, but would do so in the columns of our paper; hence the following:

1. Our friend says we are “placed in an awkward position, as a little knowledge is dangerous in science as in theology.” There need be but little discussion on this proposition. Of course a little knowledge is not so good as a large measure, but a little is better than none at all. There is no condition so awkward as total ignorance and thorough bigotry—a fatal contentment to remain in error, lured by the delusiv belief that truth is found. We can none of us better employ our time than in increasing our knowledge, and in divesting our minds of the darkness and errors which for hundreds of years theology and superstition have been throwing around the world.

2. Our friend deplotes the misfortune of having “to go through the world without a base and a rock.” It is true every person should stand upon a firm foundation where he will not sink and swamp in the mire and overwhelming morasses of superstition and theological error. The best base we can find to stand upon is the firm rock of TRUTH as it is in nature. It is infinitely superior to the delusiv and insecure ground of revelation and supernaturalism—that of which there is and can be no proof. Millions have floundered and struggled upon that insecure standing-ground, only to sink in the worst forms of superstition and ignorance to which mankind have been dupes.

Whenever nature is set aside in favor of supernatural, when the supernatural has precedence of the natural, a bad state of things exists, and the worst of darkness and error is the consequence. It is the most important of all that we find the firm rock of truth to stand upon, and are not content with the quicksands of revealed religion and a belief in infuriated gods and devils. Above all things let us be founded upon nature, for there is nothing so true, nothing so great; nothing can rise superior to it, nothing can in anywise equal it.

3. Our friend speaks of "the pure and noble," and infers that "more of it is found in Christianity than elsewhere." The pure and noble are always grand, always to be revered and bowed down to as vastly superior to the unclean, the vile, and the base. To be pure is to possess a clean character, to be just with all men, to do deeds of kindness and mercy to the needy, the low, and the humble; to abstain from base and unclean actions, and everything of a defiling character. To be noble is to delight in elevated deeds, to despise that which is low and groveling, mean and debased. Men can take a high or low stand in life according to their natures, and the manner in which they are trained in childhood and youth.

If, however, our friend means there is more of the pure and noble in Christianity than in other forms of religion, he is assuredly mistaken. The assumption that devotees of the Christian religion are any more pure, any more noble, any more self-sacrificing, any more devoted to faultless lives, than the devotees of other religions, is wholly unsustained by proof. Christians are as great lovers of wealth, of opulence,

of grandeur and display, as any other people in the world. They are as dishonest, as wily, as designing, will exhibit as much meanness and hypocrisy to gain their ends and defraud a fellow-being, as any people in the world. There is no more cruelty, heartlessness, selfishness, falsehood and lying in existence than is found in Christian nations.

4. Our friend says he "has in vain looked around for an antidote against the folly of youth, and nothing will do so well as a simple faith in Christ." This is simply an error. So far as Christ taught pure morals and an upright life and his teachings are lived up to, they prove an antidote to the follies of youth precisely the same as do the moral teachings of Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius, who at least taught morals as pure and faultless as those of Jesus. There is nothing very peculiar in the moral code of Jesus that is not found in the teachings of others. It is found that the devotee of any great teacher is partial to his particular teacher, and claims him to be superior to all others. The followers of Zoroaster regard their great teacher as the most remarkable and true the world has known. It is the same with the followers of Buddha; they consider him the most divine teacher, the utterer of the purest morals, the best being in every sense of the word, who ever appeared upon the earth. It is impossible to convince the believers in Buddha that another person so god-like, so faultless, so pure as he ever lived. They are entirely sure that a faith in Buddha is of far more consequence than faith in any other being.

It is again the same with the followers of Confucius. His moral teachings have influenced the lives of many millions of people, and to-day not less than

one hundred and fifty millions of the inhabitant, China aim to square their lives by the high moral maxims which he uttered twenty three hundred years ago. They hav good reason to think their moral teacher has never had an equal. They take great pride in him, and take pleasure in pointing to his moral teachings and his almost faultless life.

So it may be said of the 150,000,000 to 250,000,000 who acknowledge themselves the followers of the Arabian prophet. His Koran and his moral instructions hav been the guide to his followers for more than twelve hundred years, and they stoutly insist that he was superior to all other teachers of the world. It is not strange, in view of the adoration which the devotees of each of these great teachers pay to their captains and leaders, that the followers of Jesus should do the same, and imagin that their savior, or their demi-god, is superior to all other saviors and demi-gods who hav been believed in by men. It is not strange that the claim should be set up that "faith in Christ" is superior to faith in any other person.

5. Our friend says he "finds more sobriety and pureness of heart among Christian people than apart from them." This, again, will not stand close investigation. A thorough examination proves the claim unfounded. Christian nations and Christian people are not more moral, not more sober, not more pure, than the believers in other religious systems. He says he "has had a large experience in the world, and has mingled among all classes of society," but he must admit that our age is greater than his, that we hav also visited many countries which he has never seen, and hav mingled among the believers of more

systems of religion than he has known. We shall have to insist that our experience has been greater than his. We have not only passed two periods in his own country and city, but we have visited nearly all lands, and witnessed the conduct and customs of nearly all peoples. As the result of our observations, we can say that in the religious country of England—the first Christian country in the world—we have seen more insobriety, more crime, more impurity, more prostitution, than in any other country we visited during our late tour around the world. Yes, we may say still more, and speak within the bounds of truth; we saw in the Christian city of London, in a single night, more crime, more insobriety, and more evidences of prostitution than in the six months we spent in the pagan countries of Asia. By the statistics of prisons in those countries, many of which we visited, we learned that, in proportion to population in Christian and pagan countries, there are but about ten per cent of the number of prisoners incarcerated for stealing, robbery, highwaymanism, and murder in the pagan countries than there are in the Christian nations of Europe and America. It is most untrue that Christians are any purer, abound more in chastity and sobriety, than the votaries of other systems of religion. Of course, there are pious and devoted Christians, and so there are millions of pious and devoted Buddhists, of Brahmanists, of Confucians, and of Mohammedans. It is very egotistical and self-conceited for any people to boast of their superior morality and purity, and unless the claim is founded in truth, such boasting is almost insufferable. Our friend's own countryman, Sir Rutherford Alcock, who was minister plenipotentiary for twenty

years at Peking, the capital of China, which afforded him the best of opportunities for learning the vices and excesses of the Chinese people, in comparing them with the vices of English people, stated that while the Chinese spend, on an average, about twenty-two cents per capita for opium to smoke, the average paid out by the inhabitants of Great Britain for intoxicating drinks is over twenty-five dollars per capita; thus conclusively showing that the Christian people of Great Britain pay more than a hundred times as much for intoxicants as do the pagan people of China. We saw missionaries and physicians who had resided for thirty years in a Chinese city of nearly two millions of people, who assured us that during that protracted period they had not seen more than one intoxicated person in a year. Can any person who has lived in England for a quarter of that period say anything of the kind? We traveled across the Pacific ocean with several missionaries who had passed several years in China, and the testimony of more than one who had resided eight years in that country was that they did not see an intoxicated person during the eight years they lived in pagan China. The fact is, there is more insobriety and drunkenness in England than in any other country I visited upon the entire surface of the globe. It is a most inconsistent and untruthful claim for an English Christian to make, that there is more purity and sobriety among Christian believers than unbelievers. This is about a fair sample of the superiorities claimed by Christian votaries. As remarked, there are many individual cases where Christians lead lives of self-denial, and there is abundance of the same among the Brahmans and

Buddhists. We met considerable numbers in Asia who, from a sense of leading pure religious lives, are denying themselves of most of the pleasures of life. They eat not the flesh of animals, milk being about the only article of diet; they live strict lives of celibacy, and do not give way to angry passions. If Christians lived such abstemious lives, they would be regarded as saints. There is probably the fewest number of Englishmen who deny themselves to the same extent. We were forcibly struck while in England with the hollowness and shallowness of the English Church; with its fashion, pomp, hypocrisy; its livings bought and sold; its mechanical clergy, brought up to their business precisely as are blacksmiths and engineers—the second and third sons of gentlemen, who take to the cloth simply to make a livelihood, without any more concern for the life and example of Jesus than that of Simon Magus. We could not help thinking, What a fraud! And to support this corrupt church, the government taxes the laboring classes heavily. How unlike the teachings and example of the obscure and humble Jesus! who, were he to appear here now as is reported he appeared eighteen hundred and fifty years ago, would neither recognize those who now shout in his name, nor would they for a moment accept him.

6. Our friend says he is “sick of the rascality of the masses,” and were “it not for the influence of Christianity he would wish to be out of the world.” There is little doubt but what he has good opportunities for witnessing much rascality and dishonesty, for probably no country upon the globe has more of it than England and her American descendants. These traits do indeed seem to keep pace with the

prevalence of Christianity. The more of the latter a nation has the more they are disposed to take various advantages of their fellow-beings. Christian nations have gotten up more and bloodier wars than any other nations; they have made human blood flow in rivers far more extensively than the believers in other systems of religion. The Christian religion has not been a peaceful religion. It has been spread over many countries wholly by the sword. It has done more persecuting on account of religious opinions than any other system of religion, yes, far more than all others put together. What a contrast between it and the far superior religion, Buddhism, which to-day has 500,000,000 adherents, and has had double the number that have professed Christianity, and which has never raised the sword to spread itself, and has never taken the life of a human being because it did not accept its system. It has never persecuted nor inflicted torture. Ah! how much cleaner has been its record than that of Christianity! Has it never occurred to our friend that Christianity has been a great failure? That it has not succeeded in making the world either better or happier? Were the record of its wars, like the wars of the Crusades; its persecutions, including the tortures which for five hundred years were kept up in the underground dungeons of the "Holy Inquisition;" the millions of hapless mortals that have given up their lives under the greatest inflictions of pain human beings are capable of enduring—the pulley, the rack, the pincers, the thumbscrew, the iron boots that were thousands of times resorted to (in the Tower of London our friend can see many of these horrible inventions which were used by the Christians of his own

country)—of those who were burned at the stake alone the number has been estimated at five millions of persons, while scarcely one has taken place under the power of other religions—were the whole agony of Christian rule in the world thus written, it would be far more cruel, far more merciless, far more bloody, than the acts of all other religions combined.

Has it never occurred to our friend that Christianity is responsible for much of the “rascality of the masses?” Christianity is the only system which teaches that all the sins and wrongs a person may commit are forgiven, and a home in heaven secured by a simple belief in Christ. The result of such teachings is that no matter how much wickedness, how much rascality a person may commit, the fact that Jesus died eighteen hundred and fifty years ago atones for it all, and his blood will wash the blackest sinner as white as wool. In this way, no matter how many crimes are committed, no matter how many wrongs are done, “Jesus pays the bills.” Christianity has well been termed a “bankrupt system of religion,” wherein the merits of one person atone for the misdeeds of hundreds of millions. It would be far better to teach people that they must be accountable for every misdeed performed in the course of their lives, and that they cannot escape the legitimate results of any conduct they perform. This kind of instruction would be far more conducive to good morals than the absurd doctrine that the blood of one individual washes away all the sins of the world. Right here the superiority of Buddhism over Christianity is apparent. Though Buddha taught the purest of morals and enjoined the best of lives, he never held up the idea

that his good deeds or his righteousness could be imputed to the impure, and they thereby become as meritorious and as fit candidates for heaven as himself. Christianity is the only religion which promulgates such absurd nonsense.

7. Our friend says it seems to him that we are "trying to pick out all the false people and pit them against those who are true and faithful." Oh, no! not at all; we have not picked out one in many millions of those Christians who do badly. True, we have sometimes shown up the shortcomings and crimes of those who profess to be followers of Jesus, to show how little truth there is in their claims that they have "all the sobriety and all the purity there is in the world." It is quite legitimate to bring them to the light and scrutiny of truth, and see whether their lives are equal to their professions.

8. Our friend says the abundance of hypocrisy which prevails "says nothing against simple and pure Christianity." Here he is again mistaken. A system of religion which cannot do better than rear up an immense crop of hypocrites, so that the simple and pure are merely an exception, it is not what the world needs, and it should give way for something better. A religion that cannot prevent hypocrisy among its votaries is not a perfect system.

9. Our friend says he has "seen beautiful instances of calm resignation to the reverses of fortune, as well as a beautiful peacefulness at the hour of death." We do not doubt it. We have seen the same again and again. The great bulk of mankind, regardless of their religious opinions, meet death placidly and peacefully. Death is a form of sleep, and dying is like dropping away to sleep. There is

probably not one in a thousand who passes the portal of death that does not do so peacefully and quietly, and there is not probably a hundredth part the suffering in the process of dying that is usually supposed. It is generally painless and happy. We have known many unbelievers in the dogmas of Christianity who came to the hour of death as peacefully and contentedly as a little babe falls asleep. And why should they not? They are children of nature the same as when they were born into the world. They are still in the hands of nature, and have no more to fear in leaving this world than they had in entering it. To a man who has done his duty in life there is nothing to be feared in death. It is the Christian religion and Christian priests that have raised horrors in the human mind about the awfulness of death. Their doctrine of a terrible place called hell, to which an angry God will consign nine-tenths of his offspring, the earth's inhabitants, to eternal torture of the most excruciating kind, for living up to the natures with which they were created, is what has caused more wretchedness and terror in this direction than all other causes combined. They are really the creators of hell, and it is they who thrust people into it. Dying is just as much an act of nature, just as much a necessity, as birth, and it is an unfortunate and culpable system of religion that has filled it with horror, terror, and forebodings. The wrongs which Christian priests have done in this way can never be atoned for.

It is quite a mistake that Christians die any more happily than others. Believers in all systems of religion die happily, and those who are unbelievers die

happily. John Cotton was probably about right when he said

Oh, 'tis a glorious boon to die—

This favor can't be prized too high.

When the turmoils and troubles of life are over it is sweet to lie down and die, to go to sleep, and leave our cares and afflictions behind, and it is a horrible system of religion that makes people believe that they are to be tortured through an endless eternity for the mistakes they have made here.

Christians often die in greater mental agony than those who are unbelievers. Their system of belief induces this very state of things. They are taught to believe that but one in ten is to be saved, if that many; and as they know their lives have been full of faults, they are not sure that they are of the small fractional part who have been washed clean by Jesus's blood. There is inevitably an uncertainty about this which fills them with the keenest torture. The very reverend Mr. Barnes may be quoted as a case in point, after preaching fifty years. With the prospect of death before him, he used such language as this:

I see not one ray to disclose to me the reason why sin came into the world, why the earth is strewn with the dying and dead, and why man must suffer to all eternity. I have never seen a particle of light thrown upon these subjects that has given a moment's ease to my tortured mind, nor have I an explanation to offer, nor a thought to suggest, that would be a relief to you. I trust other men—as they profess to do—understand this better than I do, and that they have not the anguish of spirit that I have; but I confess when I look on a world of sinners and sufferers, upon death-beds and graveyards, upon the world of woe, filled with hearts to suffer forever; when I see my friends, my parents, my family, my people, my fellow-

citizens ; when I look upon a whole race, all involved in this sin and danger ; when I see the great mass of them wholly unconcerned, and when I feel that God only can save them, and yet he does not do it, I am struck dumb. It is all *dark, dark to my soul, and I cannot disguise it* (Practical Sermons, page 124).

As regards meeting with loss of fortune with equanimity of mind, religious creeds hav little to do with it; it mainly depends upon the natural characteristics of the minds of persons meeting with heavy losses. Some place a higher value upon wealth than others, and are more overwhelmed with grief at the loss of it. Some are organized to bear such losses far more philosophically than others, and Christian dogmas hav nothing to do with it. At all events, Christians seem to place as high a value upon gold as any other people in the world, and it seems to hurt them as badly to part with it. Any superiority which they possess over other men in this direction is wholly imaginary.

10. Our friend says, "Voltaire shrieked with terror when his end was approaching." In making this statement our friend simply repeats a priestly lie. There is not a particle of truth in the claim. Voltaire never shrieked at the approach of death, but that priests said he did is very likely. They hav been the authors of villainous lies without number. The facts in the case are these: Voltaire never fully severed himself from the church, and when he became advanced in life, and he thought he was about to die, he did not wish to be buried as an outcast by the roadside, but rather in "consecrated ground," where his grave would be attended to with becoming respect. To secure this he went through the

form of confession. But it is wholly false that he shrieked at the approach of death, and our friend should never again repeat such a falsehood.

11. Again our friend says, "Tom Paine would have given worlds had he not written the 'Age of Reason.'" Here is another unblushing falsehood. It is wholly devoid of truth. Paine never expressed a regret at the approach of death or at any other time that he had written the "Age of Reason." The only annoyance he had at the hour of death was that produced by officious priests who persistently tried to be present in his room. He repeatedly said he did not wish their presence and requested them to leave. He never expressed a regret that he had written the "Age of Reason." If Christians are driven to the employment of such miserable falsehoods their case is hopeless indeed. We have seen two or three persons who knew Thomas Paine when here, and they were positive that he never expressed a regret at a word he had written. Christians showed Paine great unfriendliness while living, and they wish to damn his name with calumny now that he is dead. Such is the nature of Christian hate.

By the bye, our friend does not use Paine's correct name; it was Thomas Paine, and not "Tom" Paine. It would not be very respectful to speak of Gladstone as Bill Gladstone, or Macaulay as Tom Macaulay.

12. Our friend thinks a spirit of antagonism precludes us from estimating Christianity at its true value. This is not correct. Few persons have studied Christianity more closely than ourselves, and we yield to none in the disposition to estimate it fairly. Because we are not blind to its glaring defects we are not necessarily incapable of estimating it.

13. In conclusion our friend says, "It is always easy, if one is so inclined, to take up filth and dirt." One who claims all the "purity and sobriety" in the world should not complain if some filth and dirt be brought to his door. The fact that filth and dirt are so easily found proves that the claim for sobriety and pureness is entirely without foundation. A pure man should not be unwilling to have his hypocritical associates occasionally shown up. It does not require silence toward hypocrites and frauds for gems and precious stones to be duly appreciated.

14. The most false thing about Christianity is its claims of supernaturalism. All religions which assume to be founded upon supernaturalism, upon a revelation from heaven, are false; as false, even, as is the claim that there is a harmony between the teachings of science and the dogmas of Christianity. The attention of our friend is called to the last published letter of his own countryman, the late Charles Darwin, than whom a greater and truer man has not been produced in his or any other country. The letter was a reply to a young student of Jena who appealed to him to settle some doubts upon religious subjects, and reads as follows:

SIR: I am very busy. I am an old man in delicate health, and have not time to answer your questions fully, even assuming that they are capable of being answered at all. Science and Christ have nothing to do with each other, except in as far as the habit of scientific investigation makes a man cautious about accepting any proofs. As far as I am concerned, I do not believe any revelation has ever been made. With regard to a future life, every man must draw his own conclusions from vague and contradictory probabilities.

Wishing you well, I remain, Your obedient servant,

Done. June 5, 1879.

CHARLES DARWIN.

This is the whole truth in a nutshell, and if the wise old philosopher was right, there is nothing in Christianity worth a groat. He very tersely says, "*Science and Christ have nothing to do with each other;*" and it is getting to be pretty well understood that the unfailing teachings of science are infinitely superior to the claims of any supernatural religion. If the wise Mr. Darwin is correct, that *no revelation has ever been made*, the quicker the absurd claims of Christianity are renounced and men taught to look to the only source of truth for guidance, the better for the world.

THE REV. JOHN SMITH RESPONDS.

(*From The Truth Seeker of Nov. 11, 1882.*)

This divine lives a long way off, as it has taken from the 23d of September till now for his response to our replies to his questions to reach us. And while he does not bring a formidable array of argument to back up his positions, we must give place to what he has to say, and reply to such mistakes he so easily runs into. Here is his last :

MR. EDITOR: A copy of THE TRUTH SEEKER, containing your answers to my six questions, was placed in my hand by a friend from whom I occasionally borrow Liberal papers. I would subscribe for THE TRUTH SEEKER, but there are two serious objections to my doing so. First, there is quite a sprinkling of articles occasionally printed in its columns that border on the obscene; hence, I do not think it would be for the best to allow children to read it. You will perhaps say that these articles are taken from a biblical standpoint and are Bible language; but there is no excuse for you to parade even Bible quotations, if they are unfit for children to read. Obscene language is no purer in THE TRUTH SEEKER than in the Bible. If you claim the Bible is obscene, why print obscene

quotations from it in your paper? Do you think it will be any more beneficial for children to read it in *THE TRUTH SEEKER* than the Bible? I admit that there are passages in the Bible that are unfit for children to read until they have become of maturity; but pray tell me if Christians teach their children to read such passages? I do not believe one child in one hundred knows such passages exist—and, even then, it probably has been the work of some Infidel who wishes to cast ridicule on the Bible.

Another objection to *THE TRUTH SEEKER* is, it demonstrates too much of the immoral doctrines of Spiritualism. Of all the beliefs in the world, that is the most silly, the most ridiculous, and the most corrupting. I have known a great many Spiritualists, and I have seen but few who were moral people, and I judge from that that Spiritualism has a tendency to corrupt society. It causes more insanity and disturbance in family affairs—more divorce cases—than any belief that has ever been known to man. They teach no teachings that are ennobling or beneficial to the human family; their meetings and seances are nothing but frauds, cheered on by a lazy crowd of mediums and spiritual healers, who bleed the poor dupes of their coin, and laugh in their sleeves at the unsophisticated greenness of people who cannot see through their own superstition. Spiritualism is based on undemonstrable claims. I have challenged different mediums to answer to some tests, doing so for the purpose of demonstrating the truth or falsity of their claims, but I cannot find one who is willing to stand the test.

Now in regard to your answers to my questions. To my first you make some queer remarks. You say: "That Jesus once lived is not a self-evident fact any more than the assertion that such characters once lived as Aladdin, Sindbad, Crusoe, and others." Why, my dear sir, I have never heard it claimed that they were historical characters; but millions claim that Jesus was. Is not your comparison rather flimsy, when pagan and Jewish writers of early date admit that Jesus once lived—yes, even learned Infidels admit that he was once a dweller on this earth? Then, again, you admit there might have been an humble individual who might have assumed to be the rightful ruler of that country, and was crucified, etc. But it would be

queer if an humble, obscure man was served that way. He must have had power and influence to have incurred the wrath and jealousy of a king. I would like for you to give some authority for asserting that the Christian chronology was first instituted in the eighth century. As you are a spreader of light, you should, when making claims, give the source of your light, as people do not like *ipse dixit* assertions and claims.

To my second, you claim that because Brahma, Siva, and Christna were myths, Christ must have been. How do you know that even they were myths? They might have been prominent men, who were deified after death by their superstitious followers.

To my third and fourth questions you address the myth idea to help you out. Infidels use the myth argument to help them out of a hard corner. I suppose you would also claim that Noah, Abraham, Solomon, Philo, Tacitus, and other notable historical characters are myths.

Your reply to my sixth question I admit, after investigation, is correct. Tell was probably a brave man who lived and died in Switzerland, and after death his history has had a great deal of the mythical attached to it.

In regard to the six questions you have submitted to me, I will gladly avail myself of the opportunity to throw light on some things that look dark to you.

To your first, I would say yes; all the early fathers of the church—Barnabas, Clement, Hermas, Polycarp, Irenæus, Eusebius, and pagan writers, such as Celsus, Porphyry, Emperor Julian, Hierocles, Eunomius—all testify to Christ. St. Paul, I think you will admit, is testimony that cannot be disputed. Is that sufficient for you?

To your second, I shall also emphatically say yes. Does not St. Paul speak of Jesus as a living man and god? Was not St. Paul contemporaneous with Christ? The four gospels must be accepted as genuine until you can prove different. They will stand as testimony to Christ.

To your third: It is immaterial whether the gospels were written by the persons whose names they bear or not. Does it make them any the less reliable?

To your fourth: Yes. Do not the early fathers who lived

before the year 181 make extensiv quotations from the gospels? It will not do to say they copied from older existing writings, for even then it would not prove the gospels false. A copy can be as true as the original. Gerostratus, in his apology to the emperor, Adrian, in the year 125, refers to the gospels. Eusebius speaks of Clement's account of the origin of the gospel of Mark; also of the statement of Papias that Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew. There is other proof which can be adduced to prove the gospels, or the originals, were in existence before the year 181.

My reply to your fifth question is this: I admit that nearly all of the dogmas and rites of our religion were practiced by pagans. I find some twenty of the early fathers of Christianity testifying to that fact, directly or indirectly; but, even then, does that make those dogmas and rites any the less divine? The pagans borrowed them from the Jews, and the Jews received them from God.

To your sixth I will reply by asking you if Christna was a demi-god or savior? Was he crucified? Did he perform miracles? Was he divinely begotten? If so, please give your authority for the history and claims of Christna; and we will compare the historical evidences of the two, and leave it to the judgment of the readers of THE TRUTH SEEKER to decide whether you can adduce as good evidence in favor of Christna as can be brought forward in favor of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. If you can do so, please do so. As I am searching for the truth, and as yourself claims to be a truth seeker, perhaps I can help you to find it; or, if you have some truths which I am not versed in, I am not going to ignore truth, no matter where it comes from. The truth is the truth, even if given or spoken by Satan. I do not wish you to take this as comparing you to Satan. I do not see why you condemn Christianity as it is to-day. I admit some over-zealous Christians of the past have been a disgrace to the true religion, but what nation, religion, or sect of people have not persecuted? And right here I would like to ask you this: Is it not a self-evident fact that if the Infidels had the power they would persecute all who differed from them? All religions have persecuted more or less; but to-day Christianity is a necessity, even

if it was not divine, as it teaches men and women to do right. Do Christians persecute now? No. Do they teach immorality? No. Do not Christians build colleges? Yes. Do not Christians favor equal rights to all? Yes. Are not Christian nations the most civilized? Yes. Then why do you fight it?

On the other hand, do Infidels build colleges? No. What do they do? Tear down and do not build. I will admit that the more Atheistical some men are, the less they stray from doing right, and it is a mystery to me why it is so, and to me it is unaccountable why it should be so. I know from my experience with Infidels, I have always found them honorable and just men and women, while again I have seen ministers who were villains. I know some ministers make unwarrantable attacks on Infidels, and often misrepresent them in regard to their morals; but they are over-zealous, and Infidels should not judge Christianity by what some of its believers do, but should search for Christ and be saved, for good works alone will not save them.

Search the Bible for truth, pray to God with faith in him, try to seek for comfort in Jesus, and he will answer you. You cannot find out God's love and mercy by ridiculing his works.

Hoping you will publish this and answer it, I remain yours, believing in Christ,

(REV.) JOHN SMITH.

Hillsboro, Oregon, Oct. 10, 1882.

REPLY.

It will be seen that the reverend gentleman, before attempting to disprove the answers we had made to his inquiries, undertakes to arraign THE TRUTH SEEKER, calling it an obscene paper. We are sorry to see the gentleman descend to such slander, and to make the charge without bringing a particle of proof to sustain it. Every honorable man, when making such an offensive charge, should justify it by proof. This the Rev. John Smith does not do. He is content to denounce the paper as obscene without adducing a single instance where it has been so. We undertake to say he charges the paper falsely,

and that it is not obscene. It has never published an obscene article or word, unless, possibly, in quoting parts of the Bible, which is held up to us as God's word, and perfect in every particular. It is placed in every family, in every Sunday-school, before every child in the land, and we certainly are entitled to quote correctly from it to show what it contains. If the Rev. John Smith rejects THE TRUTH SEEKER because it is obscene, how much more should he reject the Bible for the same reason! If THE TRUTH SEEKER, because it contains some quotations from the Bible, is unfit for the children to read, how much more unfit is the Bible itself to be placed in the hands of children! When the reverend gentleman admits the Bible contains portions unfit for children to read, why does he not condemn it, cast it aside, or seek to expurgate it of the foul and objectionable features?

Another objection is that THE TRUTH SEEKER "demonstrates too much the immoral doctrines of Spiritualism." We hardly know what the gentleman means. We are not aware that THE TRUTH SEEKER has made such demonstration as he points out. Neither are we aware that the doctrines of Spiritualism are immoral. In many respects they agree closely with the doctrines of Christianity. Spiritualists believe that human beings continue to live in spirit form after this life is over. So do Christians. Spiritualists believe that the dead have the power to communicate with the living. So do Christians, and all their claims about the spirits of the dead holding communications with the living are directly upon this claim. Christians are clearly and distinctly Spiritualists, and it cannot be successfully denied.

As to the morals of Spiritualists, we are unable to say what the Rev. Mr. Smith knows about them, but as far as our own experience extends we must say we have found them as moral, and to lead as good lives as any other class of people. They teach that man's condition in the future depends upon his good or bad conduct here, and there is certainly nothing very immoral about that, nor is it a belief calculated to make one immoral. The statement that Spiritualism causes more insanity and family disturbances than any other belief is wholly unproved. The statistics of the various insane asylums show there are far more cases of insanity caused by a belief in Christianity than by a belief in Spiritualism. While the morality of believers in Spiritualism formed no part of the questions propounded in our friend's interrogatories, we trust he will not be unjust, and slander Spiritualists as being more immoral than Christians.

1. To recur to the questions under consideration, our friend objects to our saying that the assertion that Jesus ever lived is not a self-evident fact. The assertion that any person lived does not make it a self-evident fact. Thousands of characters have been said to have lived who never did live; and the simple assertion that they lived by no means makes it a self-evident fact or a fact of any kind. Nor does the belief of millions that any given character lived make it in the slightest degree true; and unless there is other proof to rest the claim upon it must fall to the ground. Unfortunately, there is a great weakness touching the life and mission of Jesus. There might have been a person by the name of Jesus, but there is no historical confirmation of it.

first made in the sixth century, was not introduced into Gaul till the eighth century, and into England nearly a century later. For authority for this we refer him to the greatest cyclopedia of the world, the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, under the article on "Chronology." The *People's Cyclopedia*, also, says the Christian era was not generally adopted till the middle of the fifteenth century.

3. Our reverend friend suggests that Brahma, Siva, and Christna were real characters, men in the body, not myths; but inasmuch as no claim has ever been set up that they were corporeal persons—yes, and as by the common consent of the literary world they were myths, we are quite justified in so regarding them. We regard all as myths who are held to have performed wonderful miracles, or, at least, that part of the claims set up about them is mythical. Our friend's slur about Infidels using the myth argument is rather far-fetched, and does not amount to much. Nothing is more certain in the world than that the literature and religious claims of the past millenniums are replete with myths, and the Rev. Smith cannot successfully deny it. We do not claim that Christ was a myth because Brahma, Siva, and Christna were, but because there is much that is mythical in his claims, and because his story is very imperfectly corroborated. Our friend does not go far astray when he supposes that such characters as Noah, Abraham, Solomon, etc., are regarded by us as myths. We do not believe that such persons ever had a real existence. There is no corroborative proof that such persons ever lived. Abraham was about as close a copy of the Hindoo Brahma as the names are alike. Max Muller, in ar-

icle now appearing in an English magazine, is showing how much of the Hebrew theological story was borrowed from the Hindoos. He makes a strong case of it. The Rev. Smith will do well to read it. And again Moses was simply a copy of the Menu of India, the Menes of Egypt, and the Minos of Greece, who were all noted law-givers. If there was such a wonderful man as Solomon, with his thousand wives and concubines, with his brilliant court, with his magnificent temple, all surpassing in splendor and richness all the other kings of the earth, it is very singular that nobody else ever knew anything about it save the writer of Jewish fable. There were other historians in those days, and who followed on closely afterward, including Berosus, of Chaldea; Herodotus, of Greece; and Diodorus and Xenophon, of the same country. They seem never to have heard of Solomon and his wonderful glory. Herodotus made two extensive journeys through Syria, of which Palestine is a part, not long after the time alluded to as Solomon's. He wrote full histories of what he saw and what existed, but he had not a word to say of the riches and glory of such a person as Solomon, and the only rational conclusion is that no such person existed. I repeat, if there was such a man, no other nation or people ever heard of him. The Bible claim that he should be more known and honored of all nations than any other king in the earth is clearly untrue. As to Philo and Tacitus, there is the clearest proof that they existed. The slur that they were myths amounts to nothing.

4. It is gratifying that Brother Smith has received satisfaction on the William Tell subject, and he is

honorable in acknowledging that additions were made to the story of Tell after his death, the same as has been done by many others.

5. As our clerical friend has no objections to bring with reference to what we had to say relative to the Christian era being founded upon the story of Jesus, though eight hundred years or more afterward; about the number of Christians in existence being no special truth of the story of Jesus; about the probability of Jesus and other religious characters being myths, of the remarks we made about Buddha and Mohammed, it is gratifying to see that he gracefully acknowledges the truth of what we said. If he could have refuted our remarks he assuredly would have attempted it.

6. Upon the subject of the questions which we put to him he needs a little more light, which we will cheerfully impart. His replies exhibit a degree of ignorance hardly pardonable in a clergyman who assumes to discuss the subjects and to set Infidels right. To our first question, "Is there any reliable history about Jesus save what is contained in the four gospels attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; if so, please name it?" he replies, "Yes, all the early fathers of the church, Barnabas, Clement, Hermas, Polycarp, Irenæus, Eusebius, and pagan writers, such as Celsus, Porphyry, Emperor Julian, Hierocles, Eunomius, all testify of Christ." Here is dishonesty or ignorance—and which to place in advance we scarcely know. Not one of the persons among the Christian fathers named claimed to ever have known Jesus, or to have seen him, and not one of them attempted to write his history. To show how weak and dishonest Brother Smith's posi-

tions are it is only necessary to inform him that Irenæus did not flourish till the latter part of the second century, a hundred and fifty years after the time of Jesus's death, and Eusebius was in the fourth century, and knew just as much about the real existence of Jesus as the Rev. John Smith does himself. They neither of them attempted to write a history of Jesus, and had they done so they were so erratic and untruthful that their statements would not have been entitled to credit. The dishonesty, also, of attempting to prove the existence of Jesus by pagan writers whose main effort was to show that no such person lived, is particularly weak, and shows to what straits the defenders of the Jesus story are driven to make out their case. The very fact that the writings of Celsus and Porphyry are brought up to prove Christianity, when the early Christians considered them so damaging that they utterly destroyed them, is in keeping with Christian tactics and fairness. The fact is there is no history corroborating the four gospels, and it is positively certain that they had no existence till the latter part of the second century.

7. As to Paul, he does not pretend that he ever saw Jesus in the body, or that he knew personally anything of Jesus. He was a warm partisan; he had seized the story of Jesus, whether mythical or otherwise, upon which to build up a new system of religion, which was a very common thing at that time, the Jewish people abounding in many religious sects. The probabilities are that Paul was a restless, enthusiastic sort of person; that he saw in the story attributed to Jesus a sufficient basis on which to start a new religion, and he appears to have been more the founder of Christianity than Jesus, who

never established a church, or perfected any kind of organization. Paul was an ardent, shrewd man, but he never pretended to have seen Jesus while he lived. He got up a vision story, but it is so differently told in different places that unfortunately it is worthy of but little credit. To lug Paul in as a writer to show that Jesus existed, strongly shows the very little real proof that exists.

8. To our third question—"Is there the slightest proof that the four gospels attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were written by them?"—our friend makes this singular reply: "It is immaterial whether the gospels were written by the persons whose names they bear or not;" and then he coolly asks: "Does it make them any the less reliable?" Well, if this is not yielding the whole subject, we know not how else to understand it. To say that it matters not whether such persons as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John had a real existence; to say that four spurious and unknown persons, a hundred and fifty years later, who could not know the first thing about Jesus, undertook to write in the names of persons they never saw, and to pass themselves off for persons whom they were not, is just as good as though the writers were the persons they pretended to be; that it is just as good to be spurious as genuine, is just as good, just as reliable as though the entire story were true, is a most astonishing position for a reverend gentleman to take. He might just as well admit that the whole Christian story is false and is not worth a straw. When a clergyman is prepared to admit that spuriousness is just as good as genuineness, and that falsehood is just as good as truth he is very far gone; his system has become extremely

originals of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were known previous to the year 181, and it has not been able to do so. The fact is, no "original gospel" has ever been seen by anybody. They are all copies of spurious copies, and no originals of the now called inspired gospels were ever known. It four shows the weakness of Christian claims to exhibit this fact, but fact nevertheless it is. No matter how damaging truth may be to any pet theories, it should be brought out.

10. It is gratifying to see that our friend admits that "nearly all the dogmas and rites of our religion were practiced by pagans. I find some twenty of the early fathers of Christianity testifying to that fact directly or indirectly." Here our friend has more candor and fairness than might be looked for. of the dogmas and rites existed in the pagan world before the advent of Christianity it clearly follows that Christianity is not an original system. If these wonderful doctrines which are the only hope for the salvation of the world were known long before Christianity was gotten up, it certainly did not require an enormous amount of divine revelation to introduce them into the world. It would seem unnecessary for a god to leave his happy home in heaven to enter a woman's womb, remaining there nine months, to pass through the stages of infancy, childhood, youth, and manhood, and then to ignominiously die upon the cross to tell the world what they knew all about before. The whole thing cost more than it came to—far more than it is worth. The fact is, the whole story is extremely silly, and it is a wonder how sensible people can give credence to it. The dishonesty of our friend, however, again

crops out when he tries to make it appear that the dogmas of Christianity are divine because the Christians got them from the pagans, "the pagans borrowed them from the Jews, and the Jews received them from God." This is one of the weakest arguments Brother Smith has used. The Jews never had the dogmas of the Christian religion, and the pagans never borrowed anything from the Jews. This is but a fair specimen of the frivolousness and falsity of the entire Christian claims, and clearly shows how little of truth the system has to rest upon. Max Muller clearly shows that the pagans borrowed nothing from the Jews, but that the Jews borrowed much from paganism. Paganism is the real foundation of Christianity, and this cannot be disproved.

11. Our friend attempts to reply to our sixth question by asking a few questions about Christna. He asks if he was a demi-god or a savior. We answer, Yes, he was. He was claimed to have been begotten by the god Vishnu upon the human virgin Devacki, or Devanaguy. He asks if he performed miracles. We answer, Yes; the claim is he performed many miracles, including raising the dead to life. He asks if he was crucified. We answer, Yes, or something very much like it. He was impaled on a tree by the river Ganges, and he died for the salvation of the world. Our friend calls for authority of the Christna story. We refer him to Sir William Jones's "Asiatic Researches." He acted as judge for more than twenty years in India, and wrote up very elaborately what he learned there. The truthfulness of his statements has never been questioned. We also refer him to the writings of Sir Godfrey Higgins in "Anacalypsis," to Sir Cockburn Thompson,

to the writings of Dr. Haug, of Muir, of Max Muller, and of the French writer, Jacolliot. Is it not most absurd to claim that the Hindoos borrowed this story from the Jews? The truth is there is far stronger proof that the story of Christna had a foundation for belief among the Hindoos than that of Jesus had among the Jews. The Hindoos accepted the story of Christna, while the Jews wholly rejected the story of Jesus. That the story of Christna is many hundreds of years older than that of Jesus is proved from Sir Wm. Jones, Dr. Haug, Max Muller, Sir Cockburn Thompson, Jacolliot, and others. That he was held to be before the time of Buddha is clear from the fact that Christna was the eighth avatar of Vishnu, while Buddha was the ninth. Buddha is held to have been born 625 B.C. In our belief Christna was a myth, but no more so than Christ. Their claims of existence are about equal; neither has much to stand upon.

12. Our friend says he "does not see why we condemn Christianity as it is to-day." We answer, Because we believe it a false system, founded upon false claims, and not the result of divine revelation. We do not believe that God ever begot himself upon the person of a little Jew girl, that he was compelled to take his own life to place himself in an amiable mood toward his creatures. We do not believe he ever created man and woman with passions and failings which must inevitably lead them astray, consigning them to an everlasting hell which he expressly prepared for them. We totally disbelieve in such a hell and such a God. We believe the whole system is wrong, and that it has led mankind from the truth instead of to it.

13. Our friend admits there have been very bad Christians in the past, but he seems to think they are better now. True, the world has advanced in general intelligence, and Christendom has advanced with it. But what kind of a perfect system of revealed religion is it which changes with the progress which man makes? If it is a perfect, divine system, is it within the power of fallible man to improve it?

14. Our friend asks what nation, religion, or sect have not persecuted? We answer, the Buddhists, though existing for twenty-five hundred years, now numbering five hundred millions, have not persecuted. The Confucians have not persecuted, though they have amounted to many hundreds of millions. We have no account that the Therapeuts of Egypt, or the Essenes of Palestine, ever persecuted, while Christians have been most bloody persecutors—have taken more life in the name of religion than all other religions in the world. If persecution and life-taking are bad marks of a religion, Christianity is by far the worst religion that has ever existed.

15. Our friend asks, "Is it not a self-evident fact that if Infidels had the power they would persecute all who differed from them?" We answer, No, by no means is any such thing a self-evident fact. Infidels or Freethinkers have never shown any such disposition. That there might be some among them who would be indiscreet under certain circumstances is barely possible. But it is a belief in an angry, vindictive, revengeful God who leads his followers to persecute and take life. They wish to help out their bloody-minded and cruel God, hence they persecute and take life. "Those who believe not shall be damned" has been the authority for all the holy

murdering and persecuting Christians have ever done. They believe heretics are doomed to hell forever, and if they can add a little to that hell here they are perfectly willing to do so. Freethinkers believe in no such god and no such hell, hence they do not wish to persecute.

16. Our friend asks, "Do Christians persecute now?" We answer, Yes, they persecute with all the power they possess and all they dare to. They have persecuted us; they thrust us into a vile prison for a year on a mere pretext, but really because we oppose their views and use arguments against them which they are unable to answer. They aimed to destroy our business and to send us to our grave, but they failed. We still live and are able to bear the testimony of truth against them.

17. Our friend asks, "Do Infidels build colleges?" We answer, Yes, so far as they are able. They are invariably in favor of the general diffusion of science and education. The Infidel, Stephen Girard, built in Philadelphia one of the finest colleges in the country, but the Christians have been so mean as to pervert it to uses which he proscribed, and are doing their best to put it to uses he did not wish. The Infidels have Cornell University in Ithaca in this state; it is confessedly an Infidel institution. And now the Infidels are talking about building another college. Let not our friend crow too loudly against Infidels not favoring colleges.

18. We are pleased that our friend has the fairness to say, "I will admit the more Atheistical some men are the less they stray from doing right;" and again, "I know from my experience with Infidels I have always found them honorable and just men and

women, while again I have seen ministers who were villains." These are words of truth, though our friend seems to wonder how it can be so. The explanation is, Infidels believe in humanity and not in an angry, revengeful God who punishes his children for being just what he made them. They believe in the rise of man rather than in his "fall," and that the more good he does in the world the better he will be. He looks to himself and his fellow-men around him instead of to a mythical God above the clouds, and it makes him a better man.

19. Our friend winds up by saying, "Search the Bible for truth, pray to God with faith in him, try to seek comfort in Jesus, and he will answer you." We shall do nothing of the kind. We do not believe the Bible is the source of truth. Praying to God we regard as time thrown away, and believe that the prayer of effort is the only prayer that brings answers that amount to anything. We shall not seek comfort in Jesus, for we do not want the kind he is supposed to abound in. We find no proof that he knew more or had more comfort than other people when upon the earth, or that he has very much increased his stock since. We do not believe he will answer us. We tried praying to him daily and sincerely for nearly twenty-five years, and now on looking back we cannot remember of his ever answering us in a single instance. Had we spent that amount of time in the study of truth it would have been vastly better. We shall search nature for truth, believing she is the only source of truth. We are anxious to learn from her and her eternal laws all we can. She is an unfailing source of truth. We shall turn from all pretended revelations from in-

visible unknown gods, and regard them only as stumbling-blocks, and blind leaders of the blind. We shall try and do what good we can in the world, and at least to do our fellow-beings no harm. We acknowledge our duty to our fellow-beings and to ourselves, but acknowledge no duty or allegiance to invisible gods and devils. We shall try to make the world a little better and no worse; we shall continue to disseminate truth as we understand it, and according to the best of our ability. We shall try to lead the best life we are able, and abide the consequence.

20. As the Rev. Smith has had his say, as he has given us the gist of what he has to communicate, we can hardly expect to hear further from him. Brother Smith, good-bye.