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4004 B. C.

Very few people are aware of the fatally suffocating effect upon religious thought, the result of trying to restrict the history of humanity into the artificial limits of six thousand years. Perhaps there are no more who are aware how this artificial era was arrived at.

It is placed at the top of our Bibles when they have a marginal reference, and is taught in our Sunday schools and preached in our pulpits, and millions of devout Christians believe it to be a divinely revealed thing. Many a compassionate Christian is praying to-day for "free thinking" relatives who have dared to think differently, and for whom they anticipate an eternal perdition for having refused to accept the church teaching.

For it is not the teaching of the Bible. Bible scholars have tortured the dates and events of the Jewish Record and evolved numerous chronological systems, but there is no ground upon which to erect any certain standard, and no harmony among these conflicting authorities. Colonel Wilford, Archbishop Sepp of Munich, and Archbishop Ussher, are responsible, in various degrees, for the settlement of the date 4004 B. C. The figures 4321 were found at the beginning of many ancient MSS. and after much speculation and many endeavours to make things fit, it was decided that these figures represented lunar years, and that by changing them into 4004 solar years, the exact date of the birth of Christ, reckoning from the day of creation, would be attained. Archbishop Ussher pieced together the patriarchal and prophetic fragments to support this invention, and our pastors have been leading us for a long time to believe in its inspiration.

The figures 4321 are the first four

digits in reverse order, symbolized by the Pythagorean triangle of the ten jods, and make up in their sum the number of perfection, ten itself. Unity becomes dual; the duality is manifested in the trinity; and the triangle is embodied in the square. Mystical numbers of creation, truly, but having little connection with ordinary historical chronology.

Imprisoned in these narrow limits the thought of our times has been contracted to the ungodly proportions of current theology. With a restricted perdition of souls it appeared excusable to accept the comparatively recent dogma of eternal damnation for sinners, and to contemplate the edifying spectacle of the Divine Being compelled to create souls at the lustful caprice of fallen men. To think of these processes as having continued for hundreds of thousands of years in the past, with the consequent perdition of the illimitable millions of people who thus never heard of the "scheme of salvation," is more than even the orthodox mind can accept. Hence the orthodox disinclination to accept the truth of history, and, indeed, of the Bible itself. Many church people prefer to abide by the inventions of the scholars of the dark and the mediæval ages, to the honest pursuit of truth itself. They doubt God, and imagine that He might be false to them.

The day is at hand when every pulpit must accept the historic records of the past. Nipur, the ancient city of Assyria, with its tablets giving up the story of ten thousand years ago; Eridu, the wonderful Chaldean seat at the head of the Persian Gulf in the height of its glory six thousand years ago; King Sargon, 3800 B. C., with his marvellous library recording the history of his times and the story of human knowledge and