

Theological science has also made progress by co-ordinating revealed and discovered facts into a more and more thoroughly consistent system. This is the work of the professor in systematic theology, and it is sheer ignorance, advertising its voice as that of a dunce, which rails at systematic theology as a mere lagomachy of schools; for whenever any one attempts to understand the relations of moral emotions and actions, and spiritual life and its expectations, his thinking throws him into the realm of systematic theology. The apostles did not construct a system of theology. They simply wrote down the facts, revealed and discovered, and left them to after ages to put together so that naturally related and vitally connected facts shall be so set as to more impressively teach the truth than isolated facts can do. They did not discuss the connection between the universality of sin and the extent of the atonement of Christ, or the relation of regeneration by the Spirit of God to saving faith exercised by man. Such work was left for the Church that should come after them.

This work the Church has been about throughout the Christian centuries; and its undertaking is not yet discharged. There has, however, been built together a well-defined body of religious beliefs that are called evangelical, because they are most comprehensive of Scripture teaching and most consistent with one another; and these are cherished by the great majority of such as believe and call themselves Christians.

In ascertaining and establishing these constant and core truths of Christianity steady progress has marked the tireless efforts of faithful men and women. The compacted creeds of Christendom are the results of growth in the knowledge of God as revealed in the gospel. The word "trinity" was not on the tongue or known to the pen of Paul. Until the opening of the fourth century it was not thought necessary to gather out of Scripture the facts that prove the deity of Jesus Christ. But at that time a person and a party arose whose representation of Jesus so reduced Him from an exalted object of worship to the level of merely the highest man that a great theological battle began and lasted for a generation. The result was the defeat of that Christ-dishonoring Arianism, and the establishment, upon Bible grounds, of the doctrine of the deity of Jesus. That marked progress. Subsequent and similar struggles settled what is to-day the general orthodox beliefs concerning the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, the significance and efficacy of the mission and passion of the Messiah, the character and consequences of man's sin, and other such great fundamentals of our most holy faith as are the common property of the mass of Christian confessors.

But let it not be overlooked that, in gathering gospel facts and compacting the Christian creeds, not a few speculations and dubious dogmas (no difference how good the men were who advanced them) have been rejected. In the first Christian century there was a party appeared