

tree of religion at this point branches. A new line of development begins—the development of the Christian religion itself. And this consideration introduces us to the important question of the attitude of liberal theology to dogma.

Preaching on an important occasion, a dignitary of the Anglican communion compared the Christian faith to an iron casting. There was a mould, and into it the gospel had been poured like molten iron, and shaped “once for all,” clearly outlined, firmly articulated, every dogma of an intricate system precisely expressed. No doubt there is something attractive to a certain class of mind, not perhaps of the highest or strongest kind, in this presentation. In an age such as this, when men tremble at their own thoughts, there are sure to be many people who feel the need of such positive assertion. It has, however, this drawback for thoughtful people, that it does not accord with the truth. Even a superficial acquaintance with the history of our creeds is sufficient to shew this. The figure of the mould and the fluid metal bears no kind of similitude to the actual process by which these creeds were formed.

Christian doctrine, far from being a cast-iron system, is a continuous growth. This fact does not involve contempt for the old creeds and systems. The twentieth century evolutionist will regard creeds with a far more sympathetic consideration than the eighteenth century rationalist. Creeds indicate the continuous life and energy of the Christian faith, as it expresses itself in varying forms from age to age. The old creeds are like the trunk of a tree, composed as it is of successive annual layers of wood. The theological thinking of to-day is like the present crop of leaves and blossoms, to be in its turn succeeded by others, yet all the product of the same tree. The history of Christian doctrine is the record of the endeavours of many generations to give theological expression to the Christian religion. The exact form assumed by Christian dogmas at any given time is largely due to the intellectual environment of the period. The late Dr. Hatch