

and no "destruction" follows in their path-way. Brethren, we need more reading of the Bible; and any persons who provoke us to it, call them by a denominational name or not, deserve our thanks. But let our Bible be, not the mass of meanings the "traditions of the elders" have heaped upon the words that prophets and apostles spoke. Let our Bible be the thoughts of the sacred writers, so far as critical investigation can give them to us. If, when you have these thoughts, you still find yourself impelled to construct them into logical systems, construct them. Adopt your hypotheses for the explanation of the facts you discover. Weave them into the strongest, the finest, the most beautiful webs you can. But, for God's sake, for the sake of a world that may be misled or saved, do not impose upon that world your own metaphysics and logic as if they were the truth revealed by God. Do not make essential to Christianity that which is essential only to the logical consistency of systems of thought. Do not, as you love your fellow-men, identify your systems with the Word of God. There is no explicit theological system in the Bible; and no human system has yet embraced all the facts of the Bible, and nothing more, into one consistent whole.

We have, in our houses and schools, the works of Homer and Virgil. They tell us of a city called Troy. But, in the lapse of ages, its site became a subject of controversy. Some antiquarians said: "It is here!" Others said: "It is there!" Others cried: "There was no Troy: it was but a dream!" But Dr. Schliemann dug through the accumulation of centuries, in different places, through ruined towns, even down to the primitive rock. He found that, on the very spot where the voice of ages had placed it, covered by a deep mass of earth and ruins, Troy had been. It was not the Troy of his imagination. Its shape was not what poetry had made it. Its images were not clothed with the beauties with which fancy had invested them. But it was Troy the genuine; and the rich treasures of the king were there, embedded amid its deep foundations. We have heard that there is such a thing as Truth. The varying voices of our theologies are crying: "It is in me! it is in me!" The great world laughs at the discordant babble, and mourns: "Alas! there is no Truth. We hoped it was a reality; but it was only a pleasant dream."

V