

Two methods have been adopted for bringing men into unity and both have failed. One was to bring about an intellectual agreement, and the other was to bring about an institutional agreement. Just look at it a moment and you will not wonder at the failure.

The effort has been made, is being made now, to bring about an intellectual agreement in matters of religion. That is, men shall think of the same thing in the same way; use the same forms of expression and subscribe to the same logical deductions. But such agreement always has been, is now, and always will be impossible. It is a well-known fact that physical truth, though easy, though demonstrable to the senses, is very difficult of a common expression. Men discover facts of the material world, they analyse and synthesise and reach the point of certainty, and yet, not many of them can be got to adopt the same form of words to describe or to define anything. Nature seems simple enough—natural truths are not hard to find, and yet scientists have no settled and no fixed forms of expression. They have spoken at sundry times, and always in diverse manners. If physical truth, though easy, is difficult of a common expression, what wonder that men have found it impossible to bring about an intellectual agreement concerning moral truth. For moral truth is opalescent—it reflects a light from within, and on the surface shows many and varied hues. In the Bible you have absolute truth, but it flashes in many-colored glory. The opal shows many colors. You cannot separate them—they do not create each other—they do not account for each other, and they do not contradict each other. You cannot say the gem is white, or green or yellow, or red. It is white and green and yellow and red. Moral truth shines like that; it is opalescent, and can hardly appear the same to any two who look.

Then again, religion is a progressive revelation to the mind and heart of men. As men grow, as they get greater range and more keenness of spiritual vision, as they become more wise and more spiritually minded, as they become more Christ-like in character and more in sympathy with God, so the truth is more and more unfolded and developed before them. The world is set to an ascending scale; it is ever reaching up, passing from stage to stage. Tongues cease, prophecies fail, knowledge passes away. The plot of providence is not yet played out; the divine purposes are not yet fully unfolded; man is seeing through a glass darkly; he has imperfect

faith and partial knowledge. Christ is ever saying to His earnest followers: "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." While that is so, how can there be an intellectual agreement? Men are in different stages of development; some see more than others, for they are more spiritually minded. The church has always its prophets, men of earnest souls, men of deep and true piety, men with a God-ward look that pierces Heaven, and the Church has its Pharisees, who stone the prophets and kill them if they can.

It seems to me that the prime cause of our strifes and hatreds is this, unwillingness to recognize the fact that truth is of varied and various aspects, and comes in progressive revelation. No form of creed can be permanent, for it does not hold or express the whole of divine truth; no dogma can be unchangeable, because no dogma known to man is absolutely true. It may have truth, but there is truth not contained in it. I know how difficult it is for men to give up their old and cherished notions, and I know how bitter a thing it is to attack doctrines sacred to the people; doctrines which made our fathers good and brave, and our mothers virtuous and beautiful; doctrines which have given men strength to bear the ills of life, and winged consolation in the hour of death. But in the interests of divine truth and future generations that hard and bitter thing must often be done. Knowledge must be yielded for a larger wisdom. What we have to learn is this—that we are children; that we know but in part; that our doctrines may be wrong, and that truth is more to be valued than comfort of mind, or the friendship of men, or ease of circumstance—aye, more to be valued than life itself. We think we know all about the plan of Providence; all about the divine methods of government; all about the Bible, and all about the mind of God concerning us. Well, men have often thought that, and as often has time shown them to have been wrong. Here is an illustration of it. There was a man in the land of Esau, whose name was Job. The same was perfect and upright—one that feared God and eschewed evil. He was great in goodness and high in honor. All at once there came crashing in upon him most startling calamities. Blow after blow fell until the man was prostrated. He had three friends who loved him well. They were good and earnest men, possessed of a supreme regard for truth, and they came to comfort Job. They firmly held the great and dominant religious dogma of