

every inducement to settlers to open up farms and develop the agricultural and mineral resources of the country. Is not this policy more adapted to the growth and advancement of the Dominion, than that of building a protective wall around her?

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THE TRUE IDEA OF UNITY.

A Sermon Preached at Zion Church, Montreal, by Rev. Alfred J. Bray.

EPHESIANS IV. 11-13.

Every word and all the work of the Apostle bore in one direction, toward the perfecting of manhood. In Jesus Christ he saw the ideal character—the sum and centre of all human perfections—a most incorruptible and unfading beauty, an all-conquering strength. To be like Him was the goal of life; to gain that beauty was the everlasting crown of life. This desire after growth, this longing for a true Christlike manhood had become a great and consuming passion. He wanted to be in all manful qualities like unto his Lord and Master. And he saw that it was possible to man, for it was the purpose of God. By ordinance of heaven the Christian life had been set to an ascending scale. When a man was born again of the Holy Spirit; when he was renewed in his mind and heart, all the elements of a full and perfect man were in him, great germinal forces which if but cultured and allowed free play in mind and heart would make the man like unto the captain of his salvation. And what Paul felt in himself, this strong desire for a full manhood, he sought to inspire in others. He laid before them all the grand possibilities of their renewed nature: told them of God's plan and purpose concerning them as revealed in the life and death of Jesus Christ, and reminded them that the first and main object of all church organizations, of all apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, and pastors, and teachers was the perfecting of the saints, for the bringing of men into the unity of the faith, unto the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man.

The Apostle points out here in what directions we are to seek this fulness of character, and what all this work of the edifying of the body of Christ is to end in, and, mainly, it is these, a complete unity in the man and in the multitude; the man no more rent with contending passions, and the people no more divided by opposing interests—and this, the knowledge of the Son of God. Men possessing these things shall be strong, shall indeed be Christlike.

I believe that most of us have the desire to be good and like Jesus Christ. Whether the desire is strong enough to mould our lives or not, it is there, deep and burning in our heart. We want to grow. But we know that we must grow with the crowd. Development can only go on in us, the work of faith can only be done in us when we have brought about a state of things which shall be helpful. We must be united; we must be as one; we must form a brotherhood before we can be strong and full men, perfect and Christlike.

That was not a new revelation—it was not a fact brought forth to light and knowledge by the Gospel. Men always knew that in order to be good and strong and prosperous, they must be united. But the Gospel gave it emphasis, gave it new life and new meaning. The great prayer of Christ was that his disciples "might be one." He taught them to seek a community of interests, each doing good to all, and all caring for each. It has been the work of the Church ever since. She has recognized her mission among her own members, and in the world seeking to bind men together in concord and peace. How far she is from the accomplishment of that purpose you and I know only too well. The world is as full of jangling and strife as ever—men are selfish and unbrotherly—the Church itself is broken up into sects and parties, and it seems as if apostles and prophets, and evangelists, and pastors and teachers, instead of being given for the perfecting of saints, for the purpose of bringing men into unity, were given to create parties and divide sentiments. And they have thus divided men into parties and made agreement impossible because that from the first they failed to grasp the true idea of unity, failed to see what are the real and possible grounds of a Christian brotherhood. Two methods have been selected for bringing men into unity. One was to bring about an intellectual agreement, and the other was to unite men in an institution. But in both ways they have failed. And no wonder. From the methods adopted failure was a foregone conclusion. The effort was made, and is being made now, to bring about an intellectual agreement—that men may 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. Men never have and never will be united through the intellect. It is a well known fact that physical truth, though easy, though demonstrable to the reason, is very difficult of common expression. Men discover facts of the material world; they have analysed and synthesised, and reached the point of actual certainty, and yet, not many of them can be got to adopt the same form of words to describe or to define it. Nature seems simple enough—natural truths are not hard to find—and yet scientists have no settled creed, and no fixed form of expression. They have spoken at sundry times and always in divers 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. Take an illustration from the 34th chapter of Exodus. God is the centre of truth and the brightness of all glory, the fountain of grace, the Father of lights in whom is no variableness nor shadow of a turning. Moses having received the law on the Mount hears the Lord proclaim Himself thus:—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation." There you have truth, absolute moral truth, but it flashes in many colored glory. God is merciful, patient, forgiving. God is a great and just judge, condemning the offender according to a stern and inflexible law. He allows the sin of the guilty fathers to work evil on the innocent children. These are not separate truths; these phrases are not descriptive of the Divine Being in different moods,

or as fulfilling a variety of functions in the moral universe; they tell us of God, of His unchanging character, of His plan and purpose concerning man. If you look for tenderness, it is there, and also a stern, uncompromising justice. Theologians have set themselves to harmonise these qualities; they have drawn nice distinctions; they have talked much about the human attitude toward the Divine Being; they have formulated their creeds and built up their systems, but they have failed to bring about an intellectual agreement, or unite men by getting them to reason in the same way and reach the same conclusions, for there it remains, a whole truth having varied aspects. They do not see God by looking at one aspect; they cannot account for the existence of one by looking at the existence of another. The opal shows various colors; you cannot separate them; they do not create each other, or account for each other or 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.

So that there is in the human mind and in the nature of truth a principle of variation. Yes, it is a *principle*, and a principle that will make itself respected. It assures to every man who will use his reason an individuality—it gives him a place in the world which is his own—it gives to each a distinct personality, and each has thoughts and emotions and judgments, and a view of moral truth different from all others. Intellectual drones—men too idle or too indifferent to use their reasoning powers—men who let others think for them and reason for them and judge for them, may be brought to use a common form of expression, and to conclude that they have found unity by intellectual agreement; but with serious, earnest, thinking men—men who have grasped the cardinal doctrine of their own manhood, it never will be so.

You will see yet more clearly how impossible it is to bring about unity by intellectual agreement if you will consider also the atmosphere through which men have to look at theology. The Greek mind was of the highest class of human mentality—it was fine, poetic, philosophic. In the Greek, humanity, or that part of man which links him to his fellow-man, was the predominant element. In his view of the universe, man was exalted above all other beings. Through ages he had been working towards his ideal, the perfect man. To him intellect and taste were the supreme faculties. His aim was after the beautiful—but not merely the beautiful; he desired humanity made beautiful—he wanted to see the intellect fully developed and working in most graceful form; he deified and worshipped man in all his gods. And into the hands of the Greeks fell the work of giving some form of expression to the religious idea in man. The Greeks were first to fashion the doctrines of the divine nature. They said—there is a deity who governs the world with omnipotence, and guides the destinies of man with omniscience, but he is not eternal, he is under the universal law by which shapeless masses are developed into perfect forms. To them the gods of Olympus were the summit and crowning point of organized and animate life. And all their doctrines of the divine nature were fashioned upon abstract principles. They gave no heed to emotion, silenced every cry of the spirit and judged from pure reason.

The Greeks handed the results of their reasoning on to the Romans, and the atmosphere was changed. The Romans cared but little for abstract principles—but little for poetic sentiment and graceful figure. The Roman was essentially practical; in his great victorious life he made manifest the power of the human will, which by resolute and constant action will control and wield nature and mankind. Theology was made a faculty of governing—it was another clement of force—it helped the army—it awed the people—it gave weight to authority. The doctrines of sin and penalty, and justice and responsibility were all fashioned under the genius of the Roman mind. They took the sternest words of ancient revelation and made of them a creed. They formulated an angry God in the present, and a fiery torment in the future.

I am not going to say there was not much truth in this. There was. They had grasped certain conceptions of the divine character and man's duty, and made them prominent. But I do say that the systematizing of those truths—the putting of them forth in set form and a stereotyped phraseology made unity impossible. It brought men no nearer together—it healed no existing breaches—it brought about no community of sentiment and interest; on the contrary, it created parties—it rent men asunder—it was the foster-mother of bigotry and intolerance.

Then, when theology was built up into a system, it became a political influence and was made a political power. The union of church and state made a certain kind of belief a political duty and a ground of public safety. To question a creed was to endanger the throne; to rebel against it was high treason. Kings were kings by right divine, and people had to bear and endure impost and oppression by the ordinance of heaven. The church was the pillar of the state; the priesthood a kind of spiritual police, wielding most awful powers, affecting the present and the future, in the name of God. This, of course, led to scholastic nicety of expression. The meaning of every word was carefully considered. Truths were stated in learned fashion, and scripture language explained by a bewildering waste of words. Truth was built into forts; it had its strong citadels, its deep trenches, its implements of war and its skilled officers; it guarded great interests and frowned down all who sought to have freedom of thought and speech. It was not a fountain of life, but a garrison where armed men kept the people in awe. It succeeded in some degree—it humbled the proud; it stayed the hand of the oppressor; it gave the poor a few of their manful rights; it brought into existence a vast and wonderful machinery; it often lifted some great and earnest soul into a lofty sainthood—but it never gave even the fore-shining of a true unity; it over-mastered the intellect but never satisfied it and never conquered it. How could it? The creed was written; the phrases were decided on according to the most profound learning and taste of the day; when lo!—before the very ink was dry, before the priests had time to tell it from the alta-steps—society underwent a change; the atmosphere became clearer or denser, and radical ideas of God, of the divine government, of the rights of individuals, of the nature of right and of wrong, changed. The creed was out of fashion, as a garment, almost before it was worn. For as society changes, men's views on all great and vital subjects change. Be the step backward or forward, it means an altered state of mind.

I will not dwell now on the second method I spoke of, that of trying to unite men by an institutional agreement—the forcing of one set of machinery