

Articles and Sermons :: Thoughts on Christian Unity in The Theological Realm; Eli Brayley**Thoughts on Christian Unity in The Theological Realm; Eli Brayley - posted by alan4jc (), on: 2010/1/27 13:41**

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." - 1 Corinthians 1:10

There are few statements I like less than "agree to disagree". It is a declaration of one's value of truth. I am not saying that we should not agree that we disagree, but what is really being said by such a statement is that since we disagree, let's not discuss the matter any further. I am not willing to continue exploring whether my belief or yours should be believed. We disagree, and I don't care if either of us are wrong. The truth isn't really all that important to continue thinking about or discussing. Wouldn't it be better to just drop the matter and go get some ice-cream?

Unfortunately, it seems that lately the Christian church has opted for this kind of superficial unity. When was the last time you saw disagreeing believers, let alone pastors, really connect with one another in meaningful discussion and arrive at a mutual understanding and agreement on some matter of faith? Is it not possible for such a thing to happen? By the grace of God, of course it is. The main problem is not that such a thing is not possible, but the problem lies in our pride and our egos: we do not believe that such an outcome is possible because someone is going to get angry or offended. Who would want to admit they were wrong? I am convinced that this alone is the main reason why people choose to "agree to disagree" rather than seek the God-intended blessing of Christian like-mindedness. Therefore, instead of seeking to terminate our pride, we seek to terminate the conversation. What a failure for humility and truth! Should not pride be eradicated? And is not truth too valuable to be so quickly sacrificed for the sake of our own personal egos? Most certainly this is not what Christianity is all about.

Ironically, it is at this very point, when we as Christians, with our semblance of unity, choose not to move into discussion with those we disagree with, that unity itself is eliminated. The moment the Church seeks unity apart from truth on account of fear we have become dis-unified, our fellowship becomes superficial, and what inevitably results is that we all end up going to our own little corners and huddles, never truly experiencing the sweetness of the true brotherly unity and fellowship that Christ intends for us. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1) How rarely is such a statement heard today. We must understand that for such fellowship to be attained, brothers must dwell together in unity. Dwelling together means encountering one another, not hiding from one another. It means coming into contact with all of our brethren's uncomfortable idiosyncrasies and differing viewpoints. I think that most of us are afraid to dwell together. When we do come together we zip our lips and smile. Instead of connecting, we avoid, and before long we grow tired of saying nothing and revert back to our corners where we feel free to discuss the things we long to discuss amongst those who are like-minded. Of course we say we are all Christians and are unified, but is this true Christian unity? Is unity in the body of Christ only supposed to be between arm and arm, or foot and foot, and not between every member of the body?

To be sure, I am speaking about theology and doctrine, and it may be challenged that there is more to Christian unity than just doctrine. But what, may I ask, is more needful? Without truth we are left with nothing. It is truth that creates and orchestrates love (Galatians 5:6; Philippians 1:9). What alone unites us as believers but our "like precious faith" in the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ? That is doctrine. And what alone has separated us as believers but our doctrinal disagreements which we refuse to come to terms with as a body? If our unity as believers lies in anything other than doctrine then we destroy whatever is meant by "Christian unity" and we may have unity with any non-believer just the same. One may say, "I still think that other things, like pride and lack of love, are what separates us as believers." This is most certainly true, and I am not suggesting otherwise, but only that our failure in the arena of doctrine is nothing less than a failure in love and humility! It is not because we disagree doctrinally that we separate, but because we will not face our disagreements on account of fear, carelessness and pride. Should we not greatly long to be joined together in one mind with our fellow believers? Should we not want our fellowship to include every member of the body of Christ? If we do not, what does that reveal? Should we not value truth, and our fellow brothers, so much that we care when we see a fellow Christian not understanding the Word of God correctly? If we honestly believe a brother to be in error, should we not move toward him and not away? Would we not want someone to do that for us?

Such a vision of like-mindedness in the Church is perhaps the single greatest contribution to our unity. Just as doctrine really does divide (Matt. 10:35), so doctrine really does unite. It is not that we must all believe the same things before we can be united, but when every member has a vision of like-mindedness, when instead of "agreeing to disagree" we begin to connect with one another in love and humility, seeking to bless and edify and attain to a mutual understanding in those matters in which we disagree, unity actually starts taking place. Unity is found more in moving toward the goal of like-mindedness than in arriving at the goal itself. This is because the act of simply moving toward each other rather than away necessitates humility of heart, love for the brethren, and the embracing of a bigger vision of unity, expectancy and possibility.

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13) The average, contemporary understanding of unity is deficient and has brought us into a state that is far below the glorious ideal of Christian unity in the New Testament. Let us not settle for anything less than God's best for His Church: perfection of unity in truth and of love. May we be so dissatisfied with "agreeing to disagree" that we would see our fellow brethren and the truth as so valuable that we could not help but move toward being one accord in Christ.

Re: Thoughts on Christian Unity in The Theological Realm; Eli Brayley - posted by alan4jc (), on: 2010/1/27 15:18

Bump :)

Re: - posted by rainydaygirl, on: 2010/1/27 18:31

Hi Alan4jc

I read over this article and while I do think that there are some really good points in it. I am praying about this and want to see what the Lord has for me before I comment any further. Its interesting that you posted this though because I was kind of talking about this topic with some others on a different thread.

love in Him
rdg

Re: Thoughts on Christian Unity in The Theological Realm; Eli Brayley - posted by sojourner7 (), on: 2010/1/27 19:54

This is very encouraging as well as challenging.
It is encouraging to believe that the Body of Christ will learn to put aside differences of doctrine for the sake of a greater LOVE that will bind us together and unite us for the glory of the Father and the sake of His Son!!

Re: Thoughts on Christian Unity in The Theological Realm; Eli Brayley, on: 2010/1/27 20:28

Eli writes.....

"There are few statement I like less than "agree to disagree". It is a declaration of one's value of truth. I am not saying that we should not agree that we disagree, but what is really being said by such a statement is that since we disagree, let's not discuss the matter any further. I am not willing to continue exploring whether my belief or yours should be believed. We disagree, and I don't care if either of us are wrong. The truth isn't really all that important to continue thinking about or discussing. Wouldn't it be better to just drop the matter and go get some ice-cream?"

Spoken like a young man who truly believes in the infallibility of his position :) When we come before the Lord, we will not here these words, "Depart from me you workers of iniquity, for you never knew your Calvinism." We will either enter into the Joy of the Lord or we will hear these words "I never knew you." Bottom line, do you know Jesus? If you do, no matter what your theological stance is, whether Calvinistic or Arminian, you will love one another and when the impass comes, you will agree to disagree because your love for your brother will be more important than your love of theology. That is why I love the phrase "Let's agree to disagree." Of course I am assuming that it comes at the end of an iron sharpening iron encounter and no agreement can be reached. I am also assuming that each side is fully persuaded. Now, if it comes at the beginning, then that is just plain lazy :).....brother Fank

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2010/1/27 21:03

Quote:

-----Spoken like a young man who truly believes in the infallibility of his position

Or one that is as willing to be challenged as he is to challenge.

Quote:

-----...I love the phrase "Lets agree to disagree." Of course I am assuming that it comes at the end of an iron sharpening iron encounter.
..

I believe this is the very point. How often does it come after such an encounter as compared to the times it is simply handed out in order to dodge the iron sharpening all together?

You are right, it is not about Calvinism or Arminianism.

It is about the gospel.

Interesting thread...

Re: Thoughts on Christian Unity in The Theological Realm; Eli Brayley, on: 2010/1/28 9:34

Hello Eli,

I think you've expressed extremely well, what I also feel, and it's timely, because of discussions in other threads.

The more I read the New Testament, the more apparent it is to me, that 'sound doctrine' or 'the apostles' doctrine' or 'the doctrine of Christ' are one and the same thing.

When Paul says 'teach no other doctrine' or refers to 'the name of God and doctrine' or 'the doctrine which is according to godliness', this is, every time, a singular doctrine. It is not doctrines.

I know that we all bring our worldly mind into the Church with us. Paul several times urges that we be 'renewed in the spirit of our mind', and it is plain that he himself had had a great change of mind at his conversion, and in the desert for three years, but even these were not the total transformation.

Later, we have these two allusions to times when Paul was thinking one thing, and God was thinking another: Acts 9:26, Acts 16:7.

Surely we know that we are bound to have more to learn, and from the moment it dawns on us that we do have to change our minds, the whole process is prone to be both joyful (through direct revelation through illumination of scripture by the Holy Spirit), and painful, if God chooses to show us what we're like by put us up against someone who isn't like that at all. Now, the other person may not be *all* right, but when we bring ourselves before God, we *must* to be open to the possibility that *neither are we*.

I find this extremely challenging. Definitely, I've had some very hard places broken down by the Lord, and still, I would find it challenging to be really gracious to a person trying to bring to my attention some misunderstanding in my theological armoury. However, I *want* to be able to take away the fine detail of another person's revelation, and be examined by the Holy Spirit and the light of the face of Jesus Christ, and embrace the changes which ensue.