

Whitefield's Evangelical Unity



Introduction: *Why Christian Unity here?*

- Before addressing the split with Wesley
- Better understand contra unconverted ministers
- Observed distancing from own church and warming to dissenters (actually called a dissenter)
- Answer whether this is new – 1st use of ‘evangelicals’
- Indebtedness to Iain Murray article

Background:

1. Divisions among Christian churches
2. Effects of Uniformity Act on Church of England
3. Establishment principles continued
4. Whitefield's own early antagonisms

Genuine “Catholicity”

- What it is not
 - o Treating doctrine as indifferent, secondary
 - o Treating every Christian in name a true Christian
 - o Treating our own denomination/church loosely
- What it is
 - o Built on the truth of infallible and inerrant Bible
 - o Centers on Jesus Christ and His Gospel grace
 - o Loyalty to church/denomination takes a back seat to the previous two points

Whitefield's Developed Unity

1. The result of the new birth

2. The result of his reading the Puritans
3. The result of being booted out of his own church, and Spirit-blessed welcome by others (observed elsewhere)

Causes of Failure in Christian Unity

- Sinfulness – prone to bigotry, prejudice, ignorance
- OPC syndrome –
- Satan's cooling the love of believers – James 3.14-15

The Increase of Catholicity

1. See others first as Christians, and not converts to a party or church
2. Recognize own narrowness in this regard – we all think we are right; what is the antidote? Jesus first
3. Keep the unity of heaven, of glory, of the hope, before you:

Father Abraham, whom have you in heaven? Any Episcopalians there? 'No.' Presbyterians? 'No.' Have you any Independents or Seceders? 'No.' Have you any Methodists there? 'No, no, no.' Whom have you there? 'We don't know those names here. All who are here are Christians – believers in Christ – men who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony.

Is This New?

1. Bebbington says yes
2. Understandable if read through broad evangelical glasses
3. Principles found in Reformed Faith
 - a. Communion of the Saints a fact, not just a law
 - b. Marks of the church – centered on gospel, nothing less
 - c. Calvinism recognizes that it is not the perfection of our belief, our faith, our love, our hope which saves – should lead to greater love for fellow believers, not less

Next Time: Against Unconverted Ministers