

Unity in Essentials, Charity in Nonessentials

Truths that separate Christians from non-Christians. Worth dying for.

E.g., Trinity, incarnation, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, resurrection of the body

Nicene Creed vs. Arianism

Preaching: always, dogmatically, anywhere



“as of first importance” (1 Cor. 15:3);
“the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3); *“one faith”* (Eph. 4:5)

“what has everywhere, always, and by all been believed” (Vincent of Lerins)

Essentials
The gospel is at stake.

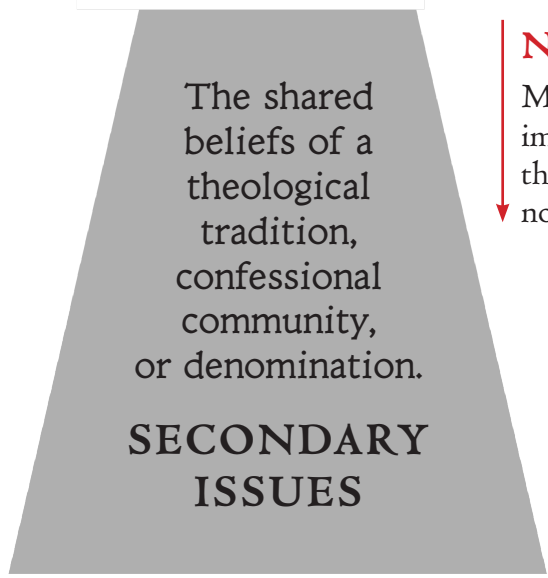
Liberalism
Minimizes or denies essentials.

Important enough that Christians may separate into distinct worshipping communities but not so important as to divide from common causes.

E.g., views of the church and its government

39 Articles of Religion vs. Westminster Confession vs. London Baptist Confession

Preaching: frequently, humbly yet confidently, affiliated audiences



Nonessentials
May be very important, but the gospel is not at stake.

Sectarianism
Treats some nonessentials as essential.

“Although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection?”

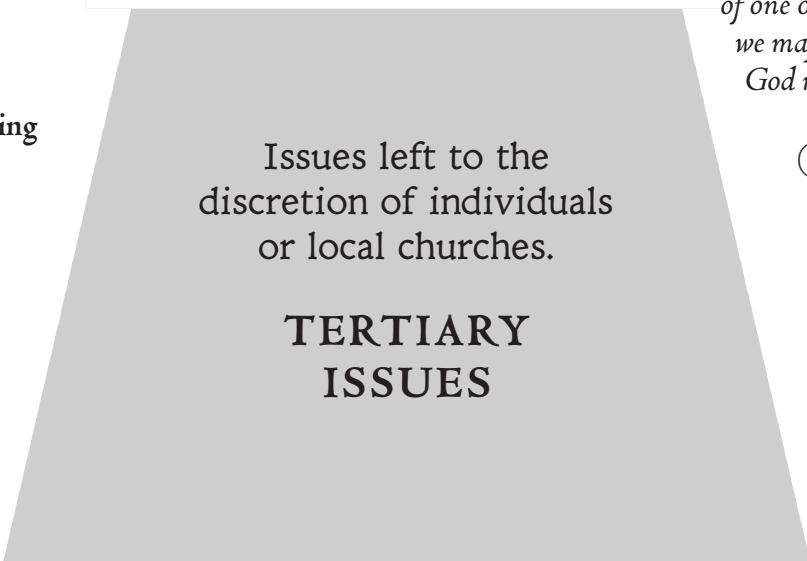
Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences.”

(John Wesley, Sermon 39: “Catholic Spirit”)

May be important, but usually not enough to warrant distinct worshipping communities.

E.g., view of the millennium; age of the earth

Preaching: rarely, tentatively, very familiar audiences



“welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions ... each one should be fully convinced in his own mind” (Rom. 14:1, 5)