

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear New City

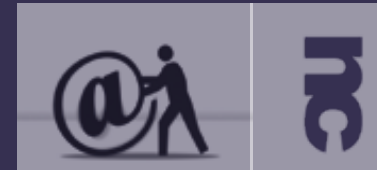
I was interested to read Keith Pennington's article 'Towards better disagreement' and Paul Gateshill's related editorial comments (New City, February 2018). In particular Keith wrote that 'we share the same values about how to live regardless of whether we follow a particular faith or not', and Paul noted that 'dialogue doesn't necessarily lead to unity of thought. In the end it is more about the way we dialogue, rather than whether we agree or disagree.'

For me these are key points about the nature of unity: unity doesn't mean all believing the same thing in terms of religious creed or indeed the rejection of religion, but rather the sharing of common, broadly universal values, and exploring the extent and nature of this underlying single human identity.

Unity needs to be constantly worked on – too often the focus tends to be on the more superficial differences which so often distort or conceal the substance. The labels we give ourselves – Catholic, Muslim, atheist,

agnostic (like myself) etc. – can represent a barrier preventing direct person-to-person communication and understanding of all the things we hold in common and which demonstrate the most noble, unique, and deeply meaningful aspects of our shared humanity.

Such labels also sometimes provide a kind of comfort zone for us, and an excuse for inaction. But complacency is dangerous, and risks us moving inadvertently in the opposite direction, towards conflict, strife, and ultimately our own downfall in one form or another. Human nature – and probably each individual – has astonishing potential to stretch towards either end of a continuum ranging from sublime goodness to unspeakable evil. Apathy is not an option, and for me, Keith's group provides an inspiring example of active good practice.



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