Christocentric Theology Series
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James A. Fowler

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Three Divine Onenesses of the Christian Faith

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Abstract

Three divine onenesses form the structure of the entirety of Christian theology. Trinitarian oneness explains the oneness of the three persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the same Being of the one God. Christological oneness is the explanation of deity and humanity being hypostatically united in the one God-man, Jesus Christ. Christian oneness is the union of the living Christ and the Christian in "one spirit." The unity of the three divine onenesses comprises the one gospel message of the Trinitarian God interacting with and in humanity.

Introduction

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). Based on Paul's sevenfold use of the word "one", we could legitimately refer to "seven onenesses." But in this article we will concern ourselves with "three onenesses" which are not necessarily equivalent with the onenesses referred to by Paul's statement to the Ephesians, yet are included within, and inclusive of, the seven onenesses mentioned by Paul. (The reader is herewith forewarned of the complexity of the "onenesses" to be considered.)

Throughout Christian history, in the literature of Christian spirituality, there have been a number of authors who have referred to "three divine unions" or "three heavenly unions."[1] These "three divine unions" have usually been identified as (1) the union of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the one Godhead, (2) the union of deity and humanity in the one God-man mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, and (3) the union of the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of a Christian individual, sometimes expanded to include the collective union of the "one Body," the Church, in union with Christ. Changing the phrase to "three divine onenesses" – (1) the Trinitarian oneness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the one Godhead, (2) the Christological oneness of deity and humanity in the one Lord and mediator, Jesus Christ, and (3) the Christian oneness of the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of an individual or the collective church in the "one spirit" union with Christ – this study will

seek to consider the distinction and relation of these onenesses.

Why have we referred to “three onenesses” instead of “three unions”? Because the word “union” implies the bringing together into one of multiple entities which were previously not conjoined. The dictionary definition indicates that “union” refers to “uniting or joining two or more things into one;” the formation of a single unit as separate, disparate or distinct entities are joined into one singular entity. Such a definition of “union” does not apply to the Trinitarian oneness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Godhead, for they are not, and have never been, separate and disparate entities which were then conjoined or united into one God. The eternality of the essential and relational oneness of the one God disallows the conjoining or uniting of separate parts or persons in such a “divine union.” Rather, God is (and has always been) a unity, a triunity, which

can, has, and does engage in unitive action to create unions that allow His unity and oneness to function therein.

The "three onenesses" which are addressed in this study all involve and include the divine Being of God, and can thus be legitimately identified as "divine onenesses", but the composition of the "onenesses" vary in terms of their essentiality, functionality, and relationality. They also vary in terms of their eternality and temporality, i.e. whether the "oneness" being referred to has always existed in unity (as has the oneness of the Triune God), or whether the "oneness" has a commencement of unitive expression in historical time (as the oneness of Christological incarnation and the oneness of spiritual union with Christ do).

The divine unity of the Trinitarian oneness of God has engaged in the unitive action of creating a divine union of deity and humanity in

the historical incarnation of the God-man, Jesus Christ. By this Christological action of the Trinitarian God and the subsequent redemptive and restorative action of God in Christ, He has taken the continued unitive action of creating spiritual Christian union as the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of man are conjoined in the union of "one spirit" (cf. I Cor. 6:17), and collectively in the union of "one Body" (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:16,18; 4:4; Col. 1:18), wherein the living Lord Jesus becomes and functions as the life of the Christian and the church.

These clarifications of terminology should provide sufficient foundation for our continued study of the "three divine onenesses" – (1) the Trinitarian oneness of the one God, (2) the Christological oneness of the one Lord, Jesus Christ, and (3) the Christian spiritual oneness of Christ and the Christian in "one spirit." As these onenesses of Trinity, Christology, and union with

Christ have traditionally been regarded as inexplicable mysteries of the Christian faith, we do not presume to be able to provide full and final definition and explanation of these onenesses in this brief study, but only to address some basic distinctives of each, and the necessity and interconnection of these onenesses in the larger framework of the Christian gospel.

Trinitarian Oneness

The mysteries of God's onenesses are such that they can only be known by revelation. God has chosen to reveal Himself and His unitive actions in the Self-revelation of Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the *Logos* of God, serves as the primary revealer of God, being the expressive Word of God (John 1:1,14). The unity and unions of God can only be known to the extent that God has revealed such in Christic revelation, so this study engages not in "natural theology" whereby man seeks to know God in the natural creation or by natural reason, but in "revelatory theology" whereby those receptive to the

revelation of God in Christ seek to understand and interpret how God has revealed Himself and His active unions.

The oneness of God's own Being was revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai and shared with the Israelite people in the *Shema* statement, "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God is *one God*!" (Deut. 6:4). This assertion of monotheism was carried over into Christian theology as the Christian faith was established in the Judaic context, and Jesus Himself reiterated the *Shema* statement (cf. Mark 12:29). The apostle Paul asserts the oneness of God, explaining to the Corinthians that "there is *one God*, the Father, from Whom are all things" (I Cor. 8:6), and to the Ephesians that there is "*one God* and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:6). Later, Paul wrote Timothy, "There is *one God*..." (I Tim. 2:5). The Christian understanding of God is clearly monotheistic.

When God made the Self-revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ there was a unique revelation that His oneness was more complex than the monadic oneness of a singular and unextended unit of one as the Jewish people had understood God. In Christ, God revealed Himself as a plurality-in-oneness – as a "three-in-oneness." Jesus declared, "I and the Father are *one*" (John 10:30). Such a statement either had to be repudiated as a blasphemous denial of God as a monadic oneness (which was the response of the Jewish leaders recorded in John 10:31,39), or the monotheistic oneness of God had to be reconsidered and reformulated in accord with God's revelation of Himself as being One with multiple personal distinction (which was the process in which the early Christians engaged theologically). It can definitely be noted that neither the first century Jews nor the subsequent Christians understood Jesus' comment to mean, "I and the

Father have one purpose or objective," as later proponents of monadic monotheistic have disingenuously suggested. Jesus' revelation of God is clear: "I and the Father *are* one;" not "I and the Father *have* one purpose or goal." The oneness refers to essence and relation, rather than to functional intent.

There were possible previous hints of multiplicity in the oneness of God, as the Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, used throughout the Old Testament, is a plural noun, and God used plural pronouns when He declared, "Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness" (Gen. 1:26). But the clear Self-revelation of God as personal plurality within His oneness only becomes evident in the historic revelation of Jesus Christ. God had declared His oneness of Being when He identified Himself to Moses as "I AM that I AM" (Exod. 3:14), but then Jesus came identifying Himself as, "I AM the way, the truth,

and the life" (John 14:6); "I AM the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25); "I AM the light of the world" (John 8:12); "I AM the bread of life" (John 6:35,48); "I AM the Messiah" (John 4:26); "before Abraham came into being, I AM" (John 8:58); "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). To claim to be the "I AM" of God is either the ultimate presumption of deceived egocentricity, or it is God's Self-revelation of Himself in His Son. Christians believe and affirm the latter.

The earliest Christian affirmations and explanations of God recognize Jesus as the Son of God (Matt. 16:16), who was God (John 1:1) from the beginning, and is God and Savior (Titus 2:13; II Peter 1:1) forever (Heb. 1:8). The Holy Spirit, identified as the "Spirit of God" and the "Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9), was also regarded as co-essential with the Lord Jesus Christ (II Cor. 3:17,18) and with God the Father (Acts 5:3,4). The three-in-oneness of this newly revealed Trinitarian

monotheism was evident in the redemptive explanation of how "the blood of *Christ*, Who through the eternal *Spirit*, was Jesus' own self-offering without blemish to *God*" (Heb. 9:14). Regenerative salvation was explained by Paul as "*God* having sent forth the *Spirit* of His *Son* into our hearts" (Gal. 4:6). The earliest baptismal formula was that of "baptizing them in the name of the *Father*, and the *Son*, and the *Holy Spirit*" (Matt. 28:19). Peter regarded his commission as apostle to be "according to the foreknowledge of *God the Father*, by the sanctifying work of the *Spirit*, that you might obey *Jesus Christ*..." (I Peter 1:2). The early doxological statements also expressed this distinctively Christian under-standing of God as three-in-one, asking that "the grace of the Lord *Jesus Christ*, and the love of *God*, and the fellowship of the *Holy Spirit*, be with you all" (II Cor. 13:14).

There can be no doubt that the early Christians accepted God's Self-revelation of Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, comprising one God. That was true despite the difficulty of articulating and explaining this Trinitarian distinctive within monotheistic oneness. The distinctive of the plurality of persons within the singularity of God's essential oneness creates a dialectic of thought that must be held in balanced tension (cf. *Diagram #1*). Some have referred to this dialectic as a paradoxical antinomy (against the law of reason), but this must not be construed to imply that Trinitarian monotheism is illogical, especially in the context of the divine logic of God's Self-revelation.

While clearly affirming the unique Christian understanding of God as three-in-one, the early Christians progressively attempted to rethink and express this reality of Trinitarian monotheism. Theophilus of Antioch (c. AD 175) referred to the

"threesomeness" or "triad" of God, using the Greek word *trias*. Tertullian, of Carthage in North Africa (AD 160-230), was (as best we can ascertain) the first to use the Latin word *trinitas* (*tri* means "three"; *unitas* means "unity") to express God's Self-revelation as three, distinct persons in the singular unity of the Godhead, explaining that God is three persons (Latin *personae*) in one substance (Latin *substantia*).

Finding words in different languages to attempt to explain the content of the triple distinction and the singular oneness of God has always been difficult – especially since languages evolve and words change meaning or have numerous nuances of meaning. The earliest Christians used the Greek language, but by the second century there were Christian theologians (ex. Tertullian) using the Latin language. Equivalence of concepts and words proved difficult. Tertullian referred to three *personae*,

which originally meant faces wearing masks as actors engaged in role-playing, but had evolved into the meaning of "individual distinction" or "distinct individuals". The Greek equivalent, *prosopon*, also referred to faces and masks worn by role-playing actors, but had not progressed into the meaning of "individual distinction" to the extent that the Latin word had. The Greek theologians preferred to speak of three *hypostaseis*, which originally had meant "beings", but had come to mean "distinct particularizations capable of interrelation," i.e. persons. If the Latin writers were then to refer to three *distinctio* or *subsistentia*, the personalism of the three divine beings tended to be diminished. Whereas Tertullian had used the Latin *substantia*, meaning "substance", to refer to the integral oneness of God, and others used the Latin *essentia*, meaning "essence," or *verite*, meaning "reality," or *natura*, meaning "nature", the Greek writers preferred

ousia which was inclusive of some of the Latin concepts but carried a greater connotation of personal "being."

This gives us some semantic background for the word distinctions that came into play at the Council of Nicea in AD 325, when 318 bishops (all but one of them from the Eastern Greek-speaking churches) assembled, at the request of the Roman emperor, Constantine, to clarify the Christian understanding of God. Constantine had expediently accepted the Christian faith and wanted to quench any divisive dissension. Arius, of Alexandria in Egypt (AD 250-336), had amassed quite a following for his thesis that the threeness of the Godhead was not three co-equal and co-essential persons consubstantially united in one Being. Rather, he claimed that the Son was made by the Father, and the Spirit proceeded from the Father, so these two were ontologically inferior to the Father, as distinct second-class demi-gods

who were not of the same essence as the Father. Arius could not maintain the dialectic in his own mind of the distinction of three equal personages in the essential unity of divine oneness. So, instead of Trinitarian monotheism, the unique Christian understanding of God, he had reverted to a monad monotheism that stressed the singular oneness of God while denying the three-in-oneness. The previously accepted Christian explanation of God's triunity had employed the Greek word *homoousion* (*homo* means "same"; *ousia* means "being"), implying that the three persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit comprised the same Being of the Godhead. This Greek term *homoousion* (as best we can determine) was first utilized by Origen, of Alexandria in Egypt (AD 185-255), despite the fact that he, too, could not maintain the dialectic tension of God's distinction and oneness, and had sacrificed the co-equal threeness of God by positing a hierarchical subordinationism that made

the Son and the Spirit inferior to the Father. So even though Origen served as a preliminary ideologue for the thinking of Arius, it was he who seems to have provided the orthodox Greek term *homoousion*. Arius rejected Origen's term of orthodox explanation of the triunity of God, stating instead that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were *anomoousion*, "not of the same being," but rather *heteroousion*, "of different being."

Athanasius, of Alexandria in Egypt (A.D. 296-373), was the young defender of the distinctively Christian understanding of God who adamantly argued at the Council of Nicea that *homoousion* was the correct word that maintained the distinction of the three persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the "same Being" of the Godhead, allowing for the Christian theological understanding of Trinitarian monotheism. The arguments of Athanasius won the day at Nicea after much contention, and Arius and his monadic

monotheism were denounced. Arius was slow to capitulate, however, and later some of his ideologues (commonly known as semi-Arians) proposed their willingness to accept the word *homoiousion* (*homoios* means "like" or "similar"; *ousia* means "being") instead of *homoousion* ("same being"). This variation of Arianism was also rejected by the church leaders of the day, but it is the basis of the age-old question: "Does it make an *iota* of difference?" (since the difference in the two words is simply the inclusion of the Greek letter *iota*). The answer of those who have held to an orthodox Christian understanding of the Trinitarian God is an unequivocal, "Yes, it does make a difference!" The Nicene Creed, initially formulated at the Council of Nicea, states that Jesus, the Son of God, is *homoousios to Patri*, "of the same Being as the Father," and this has henceforth been the Christian explanation of the

Trinitarian oneness of Father and Son throughout subsequent Christian history.

Consideration of the oneness of God's Being requires the explanation that although *ousia* referred to an abstract sense of existence in general in some of the Greek philosophers, the Christian use of "oneness of Being" does not mean that God is all that exists. Such a monistic monotheism portrays God as a singular and universal God-reality that incorporates and includes all that exists in a pantheistic monism that fails to distinguish the Creator from the creation. Some have misused Scripture to attempt to justify such monistic monotheism, arguing that the KJV rendering of Isaiah 45:5,6 is God's declaration, "I am the Lord, and there is none else. ...There is none beside Me," implying that God is all that is. They also misuse I Cor. 15:28, Eph. 4:6, and Col. 3:11, claiming that these verses state "God is all in all." God's Being is not to be abstracted as a monistic universal

existence that comprises or is intrinsic to everything in a pantheistic or panentheistic sense. The traditional Christian understanding of Trinitarian monotheism regards the three persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as constituting the personal divine Being of the Godhead.

When the oneness of God is emphasized to the denial or neglect of the tripersonal diversity and distinction of the co-equal and co-essential persons of the Trinity, then the extremisms that result cast God as a singular, mathematical oneness – either as a single, unextended authority figure, as in the monadic monotheism of Judaism and Islam, or as a single, comprehensive universal as in the monistic monotheism of unitarianism, modern "oneness" sects, and contemporary New Age religion. In either case, these inadequate explanations of the singularity of God's oneness disallow the interpersonal and relational oneness that provides the foundation and function of

Trinitarian monotheism. The oneness of God must not be viewed merely as a single and static integer of one, but as a relational oneness wherein the three distinct persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to one another in a unity of oneness. Though they are three distinct persons, they are indivisible and cannot be separated ontologically since they are essentially the same Being (*homoousion*) of the one Godhead. Their intimate interaction in the onto-relationalism of the divine Trinity is the basis for the Christian understanding of Trinitarian monotheism.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not three gods added together in the collectivity of simple addition (1+1+1=3). Such a "god of the sum" would constitute a polytheistic tritheism that preempts the oneness of monotheism. Neither are the three persons to be overly individualized as a triad of cooperative participants in a "social trinity" that is akin to a divine committee (Now

there's an oxymoron!). Though the Latin phrase *communicatio idiomatum* has sometimes been used in Trinitarian discussion, referring to the inter-communication of the properties and/or substances of the three persons, the more adequate expression to refer to the onto-relationalism of the Trinity is that employed by Gregory of Nazianzus (AD 330-389) in the later clarification of Trinitarian monotheism at the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451). The Greek word *perichoresis* (*peri* meaning "around"; *chora* means "space" or "room" and *chorein* means "to contain" or "to make room") was originally used to explain how the divine and human properties coinhered in the one Person of Jesus Christ without either being diminished thereby, but the word was then applied with an expanded meaning to the oneness of relations in the Trinity. In an attempt to explain Jesus' statement that "I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me" (John 14:10,11) the early Greek

theologians used *perichoresis* or *emperichoresis* to indicate the mutual indwelling of the three persons as they coinhere and are completely contained within each other, and yet have the "space" to be themselves and express their distinct otherness. While maintaining a distinct otherness, the three persons inexist in an immanent in-each-otherness whereby they interpenetrate one another and are mutually constitutive of the other in their relations. For example, the Father to be the Father requires the Son, and the Son to be Son requires the Father. The Father has always been Father God, and the eternal Son has never not been the Son of God, despite Arius' contention that the words "only begotten" implied that the Son was created and made by the Father out of nothing. To the contrary, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all eternal and underived Deity. In the interanimation of their interrelations they are a community of Being, and Divine Being in communion. This ontological

dynamic of divine Being in action – a triune oneness of Being and agency – is expressed in the loving (I John 4:8,16) fellowship of community in the mutual and reciprocal relationships of Trinity.

The development of the meaning and implications of the word *perichoresis* to the inner Being and interactions of the Trinity evidences the importance and necessity of differentiating between the *ontological* (Greek *ontos* derived from *ousia* meaning "being") considerations of the triune Being of God and the *operational* or functional (aka economic or ergonomic) considerations of the mutual interrelations and interactions of the Trinity. While the ontological Trinity was adequately expressed in the *homoousion* of "same Being," the operational Trinity found fuller expression in the word *perichoresis*, with its deeper implications of interactive dynamic and communion. Even within the operational consideration of the Trinity there

remains the dialectic tension between distinction of operation and the coinherent oneness of the Being of God in action. There are operational distinctions of administration and function between the three persons of the Godhead. The Father sent the Son (John 3:16), not *vice versa*. The Son emptied Himself (Phil. 2:7,8) to be found in appearance as a man, not the Father or the Spirit. The Spirit bears witness (Rom. 8:16) by His presence in the spirit of man. These distinctions of diverse activity do not, however, diminish the co-constitutive unity of their shared Being and the interrelational dynamic of their mutual action. There is allowable distinction of function, but at the same time we have the balanced tension of recognizing that when the Father, Son and Holy Spirit function, they "dance together as one" with no space or room between them, each interpenetratively contained within the other. Regrettably, the Latin word *circumcessio* (*circum* meaning "around"; *cessio*

meaning “to go”) which was used as an equivalent to the Greek *perichoresis* did not prove broad enough to convey the same meaning of the perichoretic interpenetration of God’s Being in action. The Western Church (Catholic and Protestant) has focused primarily on the static and rationalistic considerations of the ontological essentiality of Trinitarian oneness. The Eastern Church, in its various Orthodox forms, has placed more emphasis on the dynamic functionality of the operational interrelatedness and interactivity of Trinitarian oneness. Both emphases are needed for a balanced Trinitarian understanding.

In the consideration of Trinitarian oneness we must constantly reiterate the necessity of maintaining the dialectic tension of the distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in their three persons and activity, while at the same time noting their essential oneness of divine Being. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote, “I cannot think of the One, but I

am immediately surrounded by the glory of the three; nor can I discover the three, but I am suddenly carried back to the One."[2] Augustine likewise recognized that "God is greater and truer in our thoughts than in our words; He is greater and truer in reality than in our thoughts."[3] Trinitarian oneness will always remain beyond full understanding, but it is incumbent on Christians in every age to articulate the mystery of the three-in-one God in accord with God's Self-revelation of Himself, and that without reducing God to mere formulation of thought, but allowing Him to continue to reveal Himself to all Christians as the Trinitarian God that He is.

Christological Oneness

Clarification of the Trinitarian oneness of God was made primarily at the Council of Nicea (AD 325), utilizing the Greek word *homoousion* for the three persons of the Godhead comprising the "same Being." Though additional discussion of Trinitarian oneness ensued at the Council of Constantinople (AD 381) and the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), the consideration of the Christological oneness of deity and humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ was the primary distinctive of the Chalcedonian Council. Shedd wrote, "It (Chalcedon) substantially completed the orthodox Christology of the ancient church."[4]

Whereas the door to the discussion of the Trinitarian oneness of God was through the recognized monotheistic oneness of God, which then had to be dialectically balanced with the tension of the distinctive of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the door to Christological consideration was (and is) entered through the distinction of the established deity of the Son of God and the incarnation of the Son in human form, and how it is that deity and humanity can comprise one person (cf. *Diagram #2*). In other words, whereas the consideration of Trinitarian oneness moves from oneness to distinction, the consideration of Christological oneness moves from distinction towards oneness, attempting to explain the tension of the dialectic of the duality of God and man in the singularity of the person of Jesus Christ. Explaining this "two-in-oneness" both in essence and function is the task of Christological study.

The Trinitarian discussions affirmed that the eternal Son of God, the Word (*Logos*) of God, the primary agency of God's Self-revelation, was the co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal second person of the Triune Godhead. Christological considerations then had (and have) to contend with the Biblical statements that while "the Word was in the beginning with God, and *was God*" (John 1:1), "the Word *became flesh*" (John 1:14). The historical incarnation of the Son of God "revealed" (I Tim. 3:16) and "manifested" (I John 1:2) "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3), and partaking of "flesh and blood" (Heb. 2:14) or "flesh and bones" (Lk. 24:39) in connection with an historic lineage of Hebraic and Davidic heritage (Rom. 1:3) had to be addressed, and an explanation sought. How can deity and humanity, which seem to have mutually antithetical attributes, be combined in one person? How can the uncreated God and the created man be joined in such a

manner that does not posit a monistic merge that impinges upon the necessary distinction of Creator and creature?

That the Son of God was the Son of Man (Mk. 8:31; 9:12; 10:33), and truly a human man (Acts 2:22; Rom. 5:15; I Cor. 15:21; I Tim. 2:5) is attested throughout Scripture by references to His descendancy (Matt. 1:1-17; Lk. 3:23-38; Rom. 1:3), his birth (Matt. 2:1; Lk. 2:7; Gal. 4:4), his development and growth (Lk. 2:40,46,51), his human senses (Matt. 4:2; Jn 4:6; 11:34; 19:28), his human emotions (Matt. 9:36; 26:37-40; Jn. 11:35; 12:27), his temptability (Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-3; Heb. 2:18; 4:15; 5:7), and his mortality (Jn. 19:30; Phil. 2:8). But how can God and man be united or unified in a union of oneness that constitutes one Person, one Man (Rom. 5:5), one Lord (I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:5), and one Mediator between God and man (I Tim. 2:5)?

The difficulty of maintaining the balanced tension of the dialectic between the distinction of deity and humanity alongside the singular oneness of the person of Jesus Christ has led many Christian thinkers through the centuries to attempt to resolve the problem by explaining the oneness by denying a real union of the distinctions, and that by denying or diminishing the reality of either the deity or the humanity of Jesus.

One of the earliest attempts to resolve the dialectic was in the context of Gnostic thought that espoused the Greek philosophical dualism of identifying the immaterial or spiritual as "good" and the material or physical as "evil." To avoid the idea that Jesus partook of what they regarded as evil physicality, the Gnostics explained that Jesus only "appeared" to be human. This thought is referred to as "docetism," based on the Greek word *dokein* meaning "to appear." Marcion (second century) indicated, for example, that the humanity

of Jesus was just a phantom or a hallucinatory mirage.

The Ebionites, on the other hand, diminished or denied the deity of Jesus Christ by indicating that Jesus was just a man, the son of Joseph and Mary, whom God elected to be the Son of God and conferred such honor upon Him by the descent of the Holy Spirit at His baptism. Many such forms of adoptionism have been proposed by those who have emphasized the humanity of Jesus at the expense of His deity, suggesting that the man, Jesus, received a divine adoption to become the Son of God, or that the Christ-cloak or Messiah-mantle was placed on Jesus at a particular point in His life (usually at His baptism).

Since Arius (AD 250-336) did not believe that the Son of God was pre-existent or essentially the same as God the Father, but that the Son was a creature that God the Father had made, he necessarily regarded Jesus as but a man who was

chosen, exalted and inspired by God to serve as His prophetic mouthpiece. Apollinarius (c. A.D. 310-391) suggested the rational human soul (or spirit) of the man Jesus was displaced by the divine *Logos*. Others explained that the man, Jesus, developed the consciousness of God-ness by engaging in the volitional choices of sinlessness. Later forms of kenoticism suggested that the Son of God "emptied Himself" of deity in order to become a man.

All of these attempts to explain how Jesus could be the incarnate Savior diminish a real union by effectively denying either the deity or the humanity of Jesus. Other explanations of the incarnation sought to retain the dual distinction of deity and humanity, but arrived at various conceptions of the oneness, of how these categories might be united in a union.

Nestorius (c. A.D. 380-451), for example, could accept that Jesus was both God and man, but

could not reconcile how these could be united in one person. So he denied any real union of the divine and human, indicating that there were two separate beings – a God being and a human being – within a single physical body having one face (Greek *prosopon*). Such a theory casts Jesus as a schizoid double-being.

Others offered an alternative explanation that the union was developed by humanity being subsumed into deity. Such theories of subsumption or subsumation are not far removed from the absorptionism theories that explain that either deity or humanity was absorbed into the other to effect a oneness of person in Jesus Christ.

The Christian theologians of the 4th and 5th centuries struggled to find words to explain the two-in-oneness of the distinctions of deity and humanity united in the oneness of the one Lord, Jesus Christ. Operating on the clear premise that the pre-existent and eternally generated Son of

God, the *Logos*, had been incarnated, "made flesh," by supernatural conception allowing for physical expression in the virgin birth of Jesus, they were intent on explaining that Jesus was "true God" and "true man" – fully God and fully man. The two categories of deity and humanity were variously explained as "two natures" (Greek *phusis*), "two substances" (Latin *substantia*), "two essences" (Latin *essentia*), and "two beings" (Greek *ousia*). As with the explanation of Trinitarian oneness, the different languages and the various meanings of words made definition and description difficult. One could explain that "divine being" and "human being" were united in Jesus Christ, comprising an individual "human being," but this creates a logical absurdity (being + being = being), and besides, the Greek word *ousia* was already being utilized to explain the essential oneness of Being of the triune God. So the word chosen by the predominantly Greek-speaking

theologians to refer to the two categories of deity and humanity was the Greek word *phusis*. This Greek word allowed for the broad understanding of the two "essential properties" of deity and humanity, but the word came freighted with many nuances of meaning in Greek philosophy. "Nature" was sometimes deified in Greek philosophy as the organizing entity of the universe, and "human nature" was subsequently regarded as an extension of the cosmic "nature of things." On the other hand, the usage of *phusis* by the New Testament writers seem to have reference to the spiritual condition of man: ex. "you were by nature (*phusis*) children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3), but you have "become partakers of the divine nature (*phusis*)" (II Peter 1:4), leading some to question whether man has an independent "human nature." These variant usages combined to create an ambiguity of the explanation of "two natures" in Jesus from the earliest usage of this terminology.

Choosing words to explain the union of deity and humanity in the oneness of the *theanthropos* (from the Greek words *theos* meaning "God" and *anthropos* meaning "man"), the God-man, proved just as difficult. Was the resultant oneness of Jesus Christ to be identified as "one person"? The Latin word *personae*, though originally referring to impersonation of acting out a role in a stage *persona*, had evolved into the meaning of a "distinct individual." The Greek equivalent, *prospon*, which originally meant "face," and was used for acting out a role with a face-mask, had not evolved as clearly from impersonation to personation as had the Latin word *personae*. Besides, the Latin word *personae* was already being used to refer to the distinction of the "three persons" of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If the Son of God was already divine *personae*, would it not be redundant to explain that He became *personae* in the union of

the God-man? So the word chosen by the Greek-speaking scholars at the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) was the Greek word *hypostasis* (Greek *hypo* means "under"; *stasis,* from *histeme*, means "to stand"), and had linguistically developed the meaning of a "distinct individual," somewhat equivalent to the Latin word *personae*. As noted earlier, the Greek theologians referred to "three *hypostaseis*" as the distinctions of the three persons of the Godhead. So the same logical bind of having the *hypostasis* of the Son of God becoming *hypostasis* in the individuation of Jesus Christ still remained. Despite the semantic and logical problems, the orthodox explanation of the union of deity and humanity in Jesus Christ has been identified as the "hypostatic union" ever since the Council of Chalcedon. Contemporary complications of using the language of *hypostasis* to explain the oneness of Jesus result from its primary meaning in English as the sediment of

"that which settles to the bottom," and thus "stands under" other particulate matter. Christian theology certainly does not want to indicate that the singularity of Jesus is "that which settles to the bottom" when you mix deity and humanity in one person.

In the 6th century, Leontius of Damascus (A.D. 500-561) employed the Greek word *enhypostasis* in an attempt to emphasize that the *hypostasis* of the individuated person of Jesus was truly an incarnation (Greek *ensarkos*) of God in man. The point he sought to make was that humanity does not have an independent *hypostasis* or *phusis* existence, but it was the divine nature that was operative in the man, Jesus Christ. In making such a statement he had to be careful to avoid the implication that the humanity of Jesus was just an instrumental container of deity, which would deny real union, while at the same time avoiding the earlier mis-emphases of mono-

physitism (Greek *mono* means "only"; *phusis* means "nature") which posited a fused singularity of nature, making Jesus an homogenized God-man or a hybrid synthesis of a *tertium quid* (a third alternative of a "middle-being").

Suffice it to say that the semantics of trying to explain the ineffable and inexplicable reality of the union of deity and humanity in Christological oneness have often exhausted the tools of human language. When speaking and writing of such spiritual realities, every generation, using their respective languages, must consider the explanations of prior Christian expression and use the most precise word of their own language to explain the distinction of deity and humanity in the one Lord, Jesus Christ.

In the most Christologically explicit passage in the New Testament, Paul wrote that "Christ Jesus, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man..." (Phil. 2:5-8). There has been much discussion throughout the history of Christian Biblical interpretation concerning how the self-emptying of Jesus relates to the distinctions of deity and humanity being united in Jesus Christ. The Greek word for "empty" is *kenosis*, so these interpretive studies have been referred to as "kenotic theories." If we maintain, as we must, that the God-man was fully God and fully man, then what did the divine Son of God empty Himself of? He could not empty Himself of deity, for then there would be no union of God-man. Neither could He empty Himself of any divine attributes (even the omni-attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, or omnipresence), for all of God's attributes are intrinsic to Who He is, and the emptying of any attribute would make Him less than God. The Son of God did not empty

Himself of divine glory, for when "the Word became flesh," John indicates that "we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14), and God cannot be God apart from the glory of Who He is.

It is at this point that we must differentiate between the ontological considerations of Christology and the operational (also called functional, economic or ergonomic) considerations of Christology – just as we previously differentiated between ontological Trinitarian considerations and operational or functional Trinitarian considerations. Ontologically (Greek word *ontos* is derived from *ousia* meaning "being") we consider how Jesus could *be* God and *be* man united as one Lord, and the Church has historically explained this by using the phrase "two natures (deity and humanity) in one person (Jesus)." Accepting the foundational ontological distinctions of Jesus' *being* fully God and fully man, then we can

proceed to consider how Jesus functioned and operated as God-man during His redemptive mission here on earth. Jesus could *be* God and *be* man simultaneously in the union of His being the "one Lord" (I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:5), "the man, Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5), but how did He function as the Messianic mediator (I Tim. 2:5)? It is in this context of operational Christology that we can understand the self-emptying of Phil. 2:7 without diminishing or sacrificing the essential ontological deity or humanity of Jesus. What did Jesus "empty" Himself of? He emptied Himself of the divine right and prerogative of independent divine action in order to function in the humiliation of faith-servitude, the derivative function of humanity whereby He could say, "the Father abiding in Me does His works" (John 14:10). "I do nothing of My own initiative," Jesus explained (John 5:19,30; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10,24). But, God does everything "of His own initiative," Self-generatively operating

and functioning independently and autonomously. Jesus was obviously functioning as a derivative man, dependent and contingent upon His Father to express divine action in His human behavior, though ontologically never less than God at any time during the 33 years of His earthly life. At the same time, because of the self-limitation of His self-emptying, Jesus never operated as more than a man, exercising the faith of receptivity that allowed the Father's divine activity to be expressed in the behavior of the Perfect Man, imaging the invisible character of God visible in human behavior at every moment in time, sinlessly. Thereby, He could be the sinless sacrifice, obedient in faith to the point of death, even death on the cross (Phil. 2:8). Only in this context of human dependency of function can the temptability (Heb. 2:18; 4:15; 5:7), suffering, and mortality of Jesus be legitimately explained. How did Jesus live the life that He lived? Not because

He was God, though He was, but because He functioned as "the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5) who lived in the faith-receptivity of the Father's activity (John 14:10). Even the miracles, signs, and wonders were the activity of the Father, which He "performed through Him" (Acts 2:22).

So much of the difficulty that Christian theology has in expressing the distinction of deity and humanity in the person and work of Jesus Christ stems from the failure of developing any clear understanding of Christian anthropology. If we do not understand how humanity is comprised and how humanity functions, then it is impossible to grasp how Jesus could be human and function as a man. It is incumbent upon Christian theology to define "man" in order to explain the God-man.

The entirety of the Christological pursuit to balance the distinctions of deity and humanity within the oneness of Jesus' person and function must never lose sight of the teleological purpose of

His incarnation. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (II Cor. 5:19). When the Son of God “became flesh” (John 1:14), His self-emptying (Phil. 2:7) was not a severance from the integral oneness with the Father and the Spirit. The perichoretic interactions of the divine Trinity were now present and operating in humanity. The alienation of the Creator from His human creatures was bridged in reconciliation, allowing for the restoration of divine life in mankind (I John 5:12,13) as receptive humanity was available to become “partakers of the divine nature” (II Peter 1:4), whereby Jesus could be “the first-born among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29). God’s teleological objective was to re-implement the mutual interactions of the Trinity within the behavior of humanity, and this required the “one man” (Rom. 5:5), Jesus, to live as prototypical man functioning as God intended, to die as sacrificial man in order to take the death consequences of sin and be raised

up in resurrection power (Rom. 1:4), and to pour Himself into man by the Spirit in spiritual regeneration. Only thereby could the Trinitarian love and personal fellowship function in man individually and collectively in Christian oneness, and mankind could once again "dance as one" with God and with others who thus participate in the Trinity within the "one Body" of Christ, the Church (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:16,18; 4:4; Col. 1:18).

Christian Oneness

The Trinitarian oneness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the "same Being" is the dynamic of all divine unitive actions. God's Being is inevitably and always in action to express His glorious interactive character. The incarnation of the Son, uniting deity and humanity in the Christological oneness of the person and work of Jesus Christ was for the purpose of the expansion of the presence and action of the Trinitarian Being put into action in all created humanity. The Christian oneness, also known as "evangelical oneness" or "gospel oneness," is, therefore, the epitome of God's unitive action to allow

Trinitarian Being and function to express the glory of God in His creation. The union of the risen and living Lord Jesus, by the Spirit, with the spirit of a receptive individual thus identified as a "Christian," a Christ-one, is what comprises and constitutes the Christian oneness. This has been historically expressed in Christian theology as "union with Christ," the Latin phrase being *unio cum Christo*. While some also refer to Christian oneness as the "mystical union" of Christ and the Christian, the *unio mystica* has so many added implications of spiritual attainment throughout the history of various mystical theologies that it is best avoided in reference to the Christian's regenerative spiritual union with Christ.

The foregoing Trinitarian oneness and Christological oneness were thoroughly debated in the early Church councils and articulated in the creedal formulations of those councils. Christian oneness, however, was never carefully defined by

the early Church councils. The subject of the spiritual oneness of Christ and the Christ was left open-ended, despite an abundance of references to such a union in early Christian literature. Irenaeus of Lyons (c. AD 130-200) wrote, "Our Lord Jesus Christ...became what we are, so that He might bring us to be even what He Himself is."[5] The great champion of Trinitarian oneness, Athanasius (AD 296-373), wrote the classic statement: "God became man so that man might become God."[6] These are statements that have made many later theologians cringe and avoid consideration of Christian oneness.

The Western, Latin-speaking Church did not pay much attention to these statements of Christian union expressed predominantly by Greek theologians. Instead, the Roman Church based its understanding of the relationship of Christ and the Christian on a paradigm of Roman law, wherein Christ was the propitiation or expiation of the just

consequences of sin, and man's acceptance of Christ's work allowed for a declared justification and imputed or reckoned reconciliation with God in the framework of a legal, juridical and forensic transaction. The Protestants, in their break from the Church of Rome, retained the law-based theological understanding of Christian salvation, with even more adamant statements that denied any inner change in man or oneness with Christ. The Eastern Orthodox Church, however, developed an understanding of salvation based on the early statements of the Greek theologians, regarding the salvation objective to be the union and oneness of the Christian with God in Christ. Their Christian oneness is stated in the Greek term *Theosis* that implies a participation in God or Godness and is often translated as "deification." Let it be noted, that both the Western and Eastern sections of the Christian Church at large are thoroughly orthodox in their understanding and

acceptance of the Trinitarian and Christological onenesses, though they have such a wide variance of theological explanation of Christian oneness. This difference in the Western and Eastern churches explains why those who desire and dare to address the Christian's union with Christ in Western Christianity are often regarded with suspicion, charged with subjectivism, and labeled as "mystics" or even "heretics," when actually they are often thoroughly orthodox and in accord with the historic and traditional teaching of the Church.

Consideration of Christian oneness once again entails the dialectic tension and balance between the *distinction* of Christ and the Christian placed alongside the *oneness* of a spiritual union (cf. *Diagram #3*). This dialectic is just as difficult to maintain as are those of the Trinity and Christology, and it is always simpler for human thought to take one or the other, distinction or oneness, avoiding the tension of the contrasting

concepts. The Western Church, especially the Protestant portion, has opted to emphasize the *distinction* of Christ and the Christian almost exclusively. Christ and His work are objectified in the heavenly context and presence of God the divine Judge, and the Christian is only subjectively affected by assent to who Christ is and what Christ has done, accepting the objectively imputed benefits of salvation and reckoning them to be sufficient for future considerations. Christ and the Christian remain distinct, and there is no real oneness until the anticipated union in the completion of salvation in the heavenly hereafter. The Eastern Church, on the other hand, while making some attempt to maintain a balance of distinction and oneness, tends to go to the opposite extreme of advocating a *oneness* of Christ and the Christian that deifies the Christian and makes him fused or mingled with God. This evidences the need of presenting a balanced Biblical and

theological elucidation of the Christian oneness of Christ and the Christian.

The oneness of Christ and the Christian is explicitly stated in Paul's statement, "the one who joins himself to the Lord is *one spirit* with Him" (I Cor. 6:17). Whereas the Trinitarian oneness is that of "one God," and the Christological oneness is that of "one Lord," the Christian oneness is that of "one spirit." Each is unique and expressive of a particular kind of oneness. In similarity to the oneness of the Trinity, the Christian oneness should not be regarded as a mathematical oneness of a static numerical integer. Nor is it a monistic participation in an abstract cosmic or universal oneness wherein the Christian is integrated into a unified and deified whole. The preceding context that sets up I Corinthians 6:17 is a quotation of Genesis 2:24, "The two shall become one flesh." This statement of marital union reveals Paul's intent to explain the two-in-oneness of Christian

oneness as a relational union. In the oneness of marriage husband and wife remain two distinct individuals, though united relationally in marital union. The context of Paul's statement of the Christian's "one spirit" union with Christ disallows identifying the Christian oneness as a merged or monistic mathematical oneness, and demands that it be understood as a relational oneness that retains distinction within oneness. This relational oneness is, however, far more than the simplistic cliché of modern evangelicalism of having "a personal relationship with Jesus," that may be no more than a casual religious acquaintance. The relational oneness of Christ and the Christian is invested with the entire relational oneness of the Triune Godhead whom Christ, as God, dynamically brings into interactive manifestation in the Christian.

In the at-one-ment of personal reconciliation with God, the Christian becomes a "partaker of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4), a "partaker of Christ"

(Heb. 3:14), and a "partaker of the Holy Spirit" (Heb. 6:14), participating (Greek *koinoneo*), fellowshipping in a common union (communion) with God the Father (I John 1:3), the Son (I Cor. 1:9; I John 1:3), and the Spirit (Phil. 2:1). This is a real spiritual union, and not just a make-believe charade of religious role-playing. By regenerative new birth the Christian receives "eternal life" (John 6:47,54), which is the very life of the living Lord Jesus who is "the life" (John 11:25; 14:6). "He who has the Son has the life" (I John 5:12,13). Paul wrote, "Christ is our life" (Col. 3:4), and declared, "For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). His classic statement to the Galatians is, "It is *no longer I* who lives, *but Christ* lives in me," but the extended quotation reveals the balance of distinction, "the life *I* now live, *I* live by faith in the *Son of God*" (Gal. 2:20). In like manner as the mutual indwelling of the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father (Jn. 10:38; 14:10,11,20;

17:21,23), Jesus told His disciples that they would be "in Him, and He in them" (Jn. 14:20). The Christian is "in Christ" (I Cor. 1:30; II Cor. 5:17) and Christ is in the Christian (II Cor. 13:5; Col. 1:27), which is inclusive of the mutual indwelling of the Father (I Jn. 2:24; 4:2,15,16) and the Spirit (Gal. 3:3; II Tim. 1:14), but the distinction is evident in the statement, "The *Spirit* Himself bears witness with *our spirit* that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16). This concept of indwelling also conveys a sense of distinction wherein the Christian serves as a locative container, and "Christ dwells in our hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:17). The analogies of the Christian as a "vessel" (II Cor. 4:7), a "house" (II Cor. 5:1), or a "temple" (I Cor. 3:16; II Cor. 6:16) all refer to the Christian as a distinct dwelling place, and as the missionary-teacher, Norman Grubb, said, "The container never becomes the contents."

The balanced tension between distinction and oneness must be maintained in the understanding of Christian oneness, just as it was in Trinitarian oneness and Christological oneness. The Christian is "one spirit" (I Cor. 6:17) with Christ, "complete in Christ" (Col. 2:10) as a "new creature" (II Cor. 5:17) and a "new man" (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10), assuming the derived identity of a Christ-one, a Christian (Acts 11:26; I Pet. 4:10). Every Christian person is a "child of God" (John 1:12; Rom. 8:16; I John 3:1,2,10), a "son of God" (Rom. 8:14,17; Gal. 3:26: 4:6,7), a "saint" (Rom. 1:7; 8:27; Eph. 1:18; 4:12), an "heir of God" (Gal. 4:7), and a fellow-heir with Jesus Christ" (Rom. 8:17) of all that belongs to God (I Cor. 3:22,23; Eph. 1:3). The life of every Christian is "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3), and the Christian has been "made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1). This very real identification and oneness with Christ must always

be understood in juxtaposition with the distinction of the Christian and the Christ who indwells him. "Our oneness does not alter our twoness," wrote Grubb.[7] "The human is forever the human, and the divine the divine."[8] The Christian remains fully human and does not lose his own individuality and personality. Our being "sons of God" by adoption (Gal. 4:4-7; Rom. 4:15,16; 8:29) is only effected by union with the One who is the Son of God essentially. We are spiritually constituted and identified as "holy ones" (Eph. 1:4; Col. 3:12) only because the Holy One (Acts 3:14; 4:27,30), Jesus Christ, lives in us; "righteous ones" (Rom. 5:19; II Cor. 5:12; Eph. 4:24) because the Righteous One (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14; I John 2:1) lives in us; "perfect" (Phil. 3:15; Heb. 12:23) because the Perfect One (Heb. 7:28) lives in us. Our identity as Christians is always derived from the indwelling Christ.

When the distinction of Christ and the Christian is emphasized to the neglect of the recognition of spiritual oneness it results in the mis-emphases that are so prevalent in popular evangelical Christianity today. The Christian often views himself as detached, separated and independent from Christ, often emphasizing the transcendence of Christ in heaven rather than the immanence of Christ in the Christian. Many Christians see themselves as identified or associated with Jesus by a static assent, acceptance or recognition of the Savior's historic work of redemption. In Western Protestant churches, Christians have been taught an over-objectified sense of legal justification whereby it is alleged that they have been imputed and declared righteous in terms of position, standing or status before God, but this is somewhat of a legal fiction since they have not really been made righteous. Is it any wonder that many Christians have an

extremely negative view of themselves as but a "sinner saved by grace" who must constantly be engaged in self-denial, self-surrender, and the self-crucifixion of "dying to self" in order to have any sense of union with Christ or any hope of experiencing the potential benefits of Jesus in a projected heavenly future? Rather than affirming that they are "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4), Western Christians have traditionally been taught that they have two natures (an old nature and a new nature) in conflict with one another, leading to a double-mindedness of a schizophrenic duality of Christian identity, constant guilt, condemnation and confessionalism, and doubts of their salvation. This over-emphasis of distinction in the Western churches has robbed Christians from appreciating and enjoying their union with Christ.

There are small groups of Christians in both Western and Eastern churches who have over-

emphasized the oneness of Christ and the Christian to the point of denying any distinction between them. The impropriety of regarding Christian oneness as an abstract mathematical or monistic oneness, whereby the Christian participates in the "universal oneness" of a god or God who *is* all (pantheism) and *in* all (panentheism), has previously been noted. The union of Christ with the Christian is an adoptive union (Gal. 4:4-7; Rom. 4:15,16; 8:29) rather than an essential union as is that of the Son of God and the Father (John 10:30), or an "hypostatic union" as is that of the Christological God-man. The Christian oneness does, however, partake of the relational oneness of the triune God, which is perichoretically expressed in the Christological oneness and the Christian oneness. When united with Christ, the Christian is not absorbed or subsumed into Christ, nor is the Christian fused, merged or amalgamated with Christ in some form of transubstantiation. Such

confusing of Christ and the Christian leads to utter confusion! The distinct humanity of the Christian is not dissolved, obliterated, or annihilated, and the Christian does not abandon or lose his human distinction in a displacement or replacement by Christ. There is no reduction or denial of humanness wherein the Christian might fallaciously say, "I am no longer human," or "*I* am *no longer*; it is *only He* who exists as me," but instead there is a fulfillment of humanity wherein our humanity is filled-full with the reality of the life of Jesus Christ in order to function as God intended. Some have pushed the oneness of union with Christ to the point of declaring equivalence, equation, or identicality with Christ, even claiming the false identity of "I am God," "I am Christ," or "I am the third person of the Trinity." To claim to be what only God is is blasphemy and sets oneself up in the place of idolatry. Oneness with Christ is not the deification, divinization or supernaturalization of

the Christian, even though these are words used to translate the Greek word *Theosis*, which the Western church has shied away from. The Christian never becomes inherently, intrinsically, or essentially divine, and capable of being identified as a god or God. It was the lie of the serpent in the garden, "You will be like God" (Gen. 3:5). Misinterpretation of John 10:34 and Jesus' quotation of Psalm 82:6, without taking proper notice of its context, has led many Christians astray into thinking that Jesus said, "you are gods." Christians do not become God or Christ, as we must beware of the terms used by some that indicate that Christians are "engodded" or "enchristed," if by these terms they mean any more than God in Christ dwells in the spirit of the Christian. Many who emphasize the Christian's oneness with Christ refer to this union as an "incarnation" of God in man. Such terminology is questionable and if used must be carefully

explained, for “incarnation” is used theologically of “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14), constituted hypostatically as the God-man. When “incarnation” is used in reference to the Christian it cannot mean hypostatic union of deity and humanity, but is semantically generalized to refer to the “enfleshment” or “embodiment” of the risen Christ in the physical form of the Christian. The semantic difficulties of employing words from any human language to explain the Christian oneness of spirit are obvious.

As in the considerations of Trinitarian oneness and Christological oneness there is an operational dialectic as well as an ontological dialectic in the contemplation of Christian oneness. Christians derive their ontological “being” as a “new man” (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) from the very Being of the triune God, but it is important to realize the continuing tension and balance of distinction and oneness in the functional and

operational manifestation of Christ in the Christian. The oneness of *being* (ontological) is foundational to the oneness of *doing* (operational), and the *doing* can only be expressive of the *Being*. The presence and oneness of Christ with the Christian must not be viewed as a static or dormant deposit of eternal life that serves as a ticket to heavenly life in the future. The Christian's initial union with Christ in regeneration is a crisis with a view to a process. The life of the living Lord Jesus has come to be united with our spirit in order to be lived out to the glory of God, the purpose for which we are created (Isa. 43:7). The life of Jesus in the Christian demands dynamic expression, but the expression of the Christian life is not a self-generated exercise to "be like Jesus" via the self-effort of performing "works" conforming to a particular standard of behavior. "Not that we are adequate to consider anything as coming from

ourselves, but our adequacy is of God" (II Cor. 3:5).

In Christian oneness with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the operational expression of the Christian life is "God at work in us" (Phil. 2:13); "Christ living in us" (Gal. 2:20); and "walking by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25). Particularly, the Christian life is the life of the risen Lord Jesus lived out in the Christian. Christ is "manifested in our mortal bodies" (II Cor. 4:10,11) as we "live through Him" (I John 4:9). The apostle John wrote, "As He (Christ) is, so are we in this world" (I John 4:17), but this must not be misconstrued to mean, "As Christ is in His essential being, so we are in our essential being," for the entire context of I John pertains to the functional expression of love, requiring the contextual interpretation, "As Christ is the functional expression of God's love to others, so Christians are functionally expressive agents of God's love in the world around them."

The source of such love is revealed in Paul's statement, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5). In oneness with Christ, the Spirit of Christ in our spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9,16), manifests the character of Christ, the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22,23) in our behavior as we "bear fruit in every good work" (Col. 1:10: Jn. 15:5), the "fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:11; cf. Eph. 5:9; Heb. 12:11). Christians are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2:10), and "Jesus works in us that which is pleasing in God's sight" (Heb. 13:21), the outworking of His life (cf. James 2:14,26). This is salvation (as the Eastern Church correctly understands), as Christians are "saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10) – made safe from dysfunctional humanity to function as God intends out of oneness with Jesus Christ – and set apart for the continuing expression of God's holy character in

the sanctification of "living godly in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:12). The Christian life can only be lived by the grace of God – God acting according to His character – and the divinely empowered re-presenting (not mere representative likeness) and expressing the life of Jesus Christ by means of the Christian.

This expressed oneness of Christ and the Christian includes ministry as well as character. Christian ministry is not necessarily what the Christian does to "serve the Lord," but is what Christ does through the Christian to serve others. Paul wrote, "I do not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished *through* me" (Rom. 15:18; cf. Acts 15:12). By means of the "gifts of the Spirit" (Rom. 12; I Cor. 12: Eph. 4) Christians engage in the "ministry of the Spirit" (II Cor. 3:8) as a "letter of Christ" (II Cor. 3:3) unto others. They are priestly (I Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10) intercessors in whom Christ "lives to make

intercession" (Heb. 7:25) in "the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18). As Christians "lay down their lives" for others (I John 3:16), they participate in "the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. 3:10; cf. Rom. 8:17; II Cor. 1:5; Col. 1:24), and truly function as martyr-witnesses (the Greek word for "witness" is *marture* – cf. Acts 1:8).

The collective reality of the operationally expressed Christian union is to be evidenced in the "one Body of Christ, the Church" (I Cor. 1:27; 8:6; Eph. 1:22,23; 4:5; Col. 1:18,24). The "one spirit" (I Cor. 6:17) union of Christ and the Christian must find expression in the "unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3) wherein Christians are "united in spirit" (Phil. 2:2) and "stand firm in one spirit" (Phil. 1:27). This was the prayer of Jesus, "that they may be *one*, even as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee" (John 17:21,22). The Christian community is to have a relational oneness that evidences the spiritual oneness within the Christians who

comprise the church. The inter-relational "community of Being" that is inherent in the oneness of the Trinitarian God must find expression in the "community of being" of the Church, as Christians interpersonally "love one another" (John 13:34,35; 17:26; I Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; I Pet. 1:22; I Jn. 4:7-21) with the love of the One who is Love (I Jn. 4:8,16). As the three persons of the Godhead "dance together as one," so the oneness of Christians in the one Body of the Church allows them to perichoretically "dance together as one" in Christian unity, as they "worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24) expressing the interactive worship of the persons of the Trinity.

Alongside the operational *oneness* of Christ's active expression in the Christian, it is necessary to note the operational *distinction* that must always be maintained. Yes, "God is at work in us" (Phil. 2:13), but the preceding statement of

Paul is, “Work out your own salvation” (Phil. 2:12). While Jesus did say, “Apart from Me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5), there is still the distinction of the “Me” and the “you,” and the prior stated analogy was, “*I* am the vine, *you* are the branches.” Some have attempted to emphasize an essential and organic union from the vine-branch figure, but the context makes clear that the contingency of the branch to derive and draw from the vine in dependency is the intended meaning of Jesus. The same is true of the Head and body analogy (Eph. 1:22,23; 4:15,16).

The operational expression of Christ’s life in the Christian does not transpire out of a passive response of the Christian deferring to the Spirit of Christ as the autopilot of our lives. The Christian, as a distinct choosing human creature has the freedom of choice that entails responsibility – the response-ability to respond to what God in Christ wants to do in us. Such is the faith that responds to

God's grace (cf. Eph. 2:8), faith being best defined as "our receptivity of God's activity," or "our availability to God's ability." Paul explained that this faith is not just an initial response of receiving Christ, but "as you received Christ Jesus (by faith), so walk in Him" (Col. 2:6), walking continually in the faith-receptivity of the Spirit's activity (Gal. 5:16,25) "in the same manner as Jesus walked" (I John 2:6). Christian faith is not a "work" of self-effort on the part of a Christian, but allows the Christ with whom we are united as one to work out His life in, as, and through us, thus evidencing that "faith without the outworking of His life is dead" (James 2:14,26). Likewise, Christian obedience is not performance that keeps the rules of law, but obedience in the new covenant context is "listening under God to understand how He would have us to respond in faith to what He is doing." The Greek word for "obedience" is *hupakouo*, derived from *hupo*, meaning "under," and *akouo*,

meaning “to listen.” That is why Paul writes of “the obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). There are indeed commands and imperative statements throughout the New Testament (someone counted more than 1000) that seem to place some sense of responsibility or accountability upon the Christian, but the new covenant Christian always recognizes the grace of God that is operative within our oneness with Christ. God is the dynamic of His own demands – the completion of His own commandments in the Christian. The imperatives of the new covenant are always based on the indicatives. Indicative statements such as, “We are one spirit with Him” (I Cor. 6:17) and “Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20), state the foundational sufficiency for the imperative commands such as, “Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18) or “love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34). Thus it is that Paul writes of “striving according to His power” (Col. 1:29), of “working out your own

salvation, for God is at work in you" (Phil. 2:12,13), and follows a list of imperatives in I Thessalonians 5:12-22 with, "Faithful is He who calls you, and He will bring it to pass" (I Thess. 5:24). It is in that context that we respond to the imperatives, "submit yourselves to God" (James 4:7), "present yourselves acceptable to God" (Rom. 12:1), and "yield your members as members of righteousness" (Rom. 6:13). As disciples of Jesus (Matt. 28:19; Jn. 13:35), we are not obliged to submit ourselves to a proceduralized discipleship program, but to remain receptive in our faith-choices to however the Lord Jesus Christ wants to live His life out through us.

Many who are coming to recognize their oneness of identity with Christ and the sufficiency of His expressed action in their lives are bothered by the obvious distinction that presents itself in their personal temptations. They know that "God cannot be tempted" (James 1:13), and they

recognize that they are “tempted by the tempter” (I Thess. 3:5) in ways that are “common to man” (I Cor. 10:13). What they sometimes do not realize is the resource of escape in God’s faithful provision of grace (I Cor. 10:13), and that temptations serve the purpose of providing opportunities for faith-responses. In the midst of temptation Christians also experience the distinction that though “old things have passed away and all things have become new” (II Cor. 5:17), they seem to have a complete set of old flesh-patterns that are prone to act and react in the same ways that they did in their unregenerate days. These individually patterned propensities “set their desires against what the Spirit of Christ desires” (Gal. 5:17) in their lives. The solution to this behavioral conflict is once again provided by our oneness with Christ whereby we can “walk by the Spirit, and will not carry out the desires of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). Religion becomes very dyslexic at this point,

advocating, “if you do not carry out the desire of the flesh (by suppression or repression, which has no value against the flesh – Col. 2:20-23), then, consequently, you will be walking in the Spirit.” They have it backwards! Christians are also faced with this distinction when they sin and misrepresent their identity as a “new creature” (II Cor. 5:17) in whom Christ lives (Gal. 2:20). They know that Christ does not sin (II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15), and are sometimes appalled at their own misrepresentation of the Christ who lives in them. The apostle John realistically explained, “If (when) anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous” (I Jn. 2:1). God knows full well that we are susceptible to the seducing solicitation of the tempter, and Christians need to be reassured that sinful misrepresentations cannot impinge on our oneness with Christ, for it was never based on our performance in the first place. When a Christian quickly “confesses his sin” (I Jn.

1:9), agreeing and concurring with God that it was a misrepresentation of His character, that person can then proceed to live out of the oneness he has with Christ.

As noted previously, when distinction is emphasized to the neglect of oneness, extremisms result from the failure to maintain dialectic tension. Popular Christian religion in its multitudinous forms tends to overlook the grace-dynamic of the Christian's oneness with Christ, and "bind up" (English word "religion" derived from Latin *religara* meaning "to bind up" or "tie back") people in rules and regulations of behavioral performance or repetitive rituals of devotion. Christian people think that the Christian life is enacted by independently self-generated behavior whereby they attempt to be "like Jesus," to follow Jesus' example, and to imitate Jesus. Trying their best to conform, to be acceptable to God, and to be perfect, they are prodded on by such false

motivational mottoes as, “God helps those who help themselves,” and “Do you best, and God will do the rest.” With increased efforts of commitment, dedication, consecration and devotion, they seek to find the “will of God” as they “serve the Lord” in churchy busyness, and to maintain a “good testimony.” Religious leaders encourage them to “pray more,” to “read their Bibles,” and “get involved in the Church.” The procedures inculcated for this kinetic hyperactivity of the Christian life are so contradictory: social activism vs. separatism and isolationism; ecstatic emotionalism vs. rigid ritualism; codified legalism vs. relaxed liberty; Spirit “power manifestations” vs. passive “waiting on God;” individualism vs. collectivism. Why should we be surprised when Christians throw up their hands in despair, crying, “What am I to do?” Many simply resign themselves to misrepresentation, exclaiming, “I can’t help but sin; I’m only human,” and renew their

resolve to continue to engage in repetitive religious motion, hoping against hope that God will eventually find them acceptable. Others "burn-out" for Jesus, and are bitter that the Christian life did not work. Popular Christian religion produces a scrap heap of misused and abused Christians as they emphasize the detached distinction of Christ and the Christian, and purposefully fail to share the grace-dynamic of oneness with Christ's life.

The opposite extreme of emphasizing operational *oneness* with Christ and diminishing or denying the *distinction* of responsible receptivity of faith of the Christian is certainly less common, but it does exist in some small groups of Christians. Some of their reasoning is expressed like this: "If I am one with Jesus, then everything I do is Jesus in action. Whatever I do is what He does. God doesn't mean for a Christian to have faith, for that is a 'separated concept'. I do what I will, for what I will is what He will, for He is me.

Just speak your 'word of faith,' and by calling what is not 'is,' you will bring into being what was not, and co-operatively function as a co-creator, co-god, and co-savior. Just 'go with the flow' of God as you. As Christ is so are we in this world" (cf. I Jn. 4:17). Don't worry about sin. Christ can't sin. The 'new man' that you are does not sin. If your actions do not appear to others to be the character of Christ, don't worry – it is just an illusion. Prayer and worship are irrelevant, for they are directed at what we already are. Just go about laying down your lives for others, as Christ." What is this, but the delusion of antinomianism wherein these people claim oneness with God without any distinction of responsibility, and thereby establish themselves as a law unto themselves. Paul asks, "Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be!" (Rom. 6:1). Claiming a deterministic inevitability of the oneness of Christ-expression, these proponents posit a form of

perfectionism whereby they are mechanistic instruments of a "direct-drive" manifestation of Christ. Personal responsibility is eschewed as they overlook all incongruity and misrepresentation of sinful behavior, and claim to acquiesce passively to God's manifestation as them. They want the *indicative* of oneness without any *imperatives* of responsibility. The roots of this thought are usually in the absorptionism and universalism of monistic concepts of oneness. This thinking is akin to the Unitarian Universalist concepts of Christian Science and what is now called the "New Age Movement."

The *oneness* of the Christian's spiritual union with Christ must be kept in dialectic tension with the *distinction* of Christ and the Christian as God and man. The failure to keep this tension will always result in extremist and heretical portrayals of the Christian gospel, of the person and work of Jesus Christ, and of the Trinity of God. It is

difficult for human logic to accept and maintain this balance of contrasting concepts, but it is required to understand God's Being in action.

The Unity of the Three Divine Onenesses

These three divine oneness, the Trinitarian oneness, the Christological oneness, and the Christian oneness, are integrally connected in the unity of the "one gospel," the singular "good news" of God for man. At the same time, there are definite distinctions in each of the three onenesses that must be maintained and safeguarded. Once again, we have a distinction of order and kind as the various onenesses are compared, as well as a unity in the all-encompassing oneness of God's teleological objective to express His Trinitarian oneness in the Christological oneness and in

Christian oneness. The three divine onenesses in their interrelational connection form another logical dialectic of distinction and oneness, which we must now consider. (cf. *Diagram #4*).

Each of the divine onenesses is distinct, having an integral uniqueness in the tension and balance of their own dialectic. The integral essence of each oneness is non-transferable – the three-in-oneness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the one God, the two-in-oneness of deity and humanity in the one Lord, Jesus Christ, and the two-in-oneness of the living Christ and the Christian in "one spirit." One must beware of making logical inferences or transferences from one divine oneness to another, directly or indirectly. Grave distortions can occur when the explanation of a particular oneness is transferred as an equivalent feature or characteristic of another oneness. Improper analogies of comparison can produce ambiguity, or worst yet, fallacious and heretical

distortions that destroy the integrity of the distinct divine onenesses.

It was previously noted (in the introduction) that the Trinitarian oneness is a divine *unity* that has always existed as such, while the Christological and Christian oneness are divine *unions* enacted by the unitive action of the Triune God with historical starting-points. These are further differentiated in that the Trinitarian oneness is an essential or inherent unity, while the Christological oneness is explained as a hypostatic union, and the Christian oneness is an adoptive spiritual union. The Trinitarian oneness is explained as "three persons" in the "same Being" – Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one God. The Christological oneness has traditionally been explained as "two natures" in one particular individual (*hypostasis*). The Christian oneness, lacking clarification of explanation throughout Christian history, is the union of

the living Christ with the Christian in a "one spirit" (I Cor. 6:17) union.

The non-transferability of the features and characteristics of the onenesses must be preserved. The three-in-oneness of the Trinity, for example, cannot be transferred, even as an analogy, to man's constitution and function. Some, like the original Scofield Bible notes (cf. Gen. 1:26,27), have tried to explain that man, like God, is a "trinity," comprised of the functional interaction of spirit, soul, and body (cf. I Thess. 5:23). When this is described as "trichotomy" (meaning "to cut in three"), it most certainly is not indicative of the divine Trinity of God that can never be divided. "Trinity" is a term best reserved for God's oneness alone – not used for man's composition and function, and certainly not used for an alleged "trinity of evil" to describe "the world, the flesh, and the devil," as some have indicated.

When Jesus declared, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), challenging the monadic monotheism of Judaism, He was indicating that Father and Son were essentially and relationally one. The ontological essentiality of the *homoousion* “same Being” of the Godhead cannot be transferred to the other onenesses. There is an ontological equivalence in the Trinity, that is not the same as the ontological integration in the *hypostasis* of the God-man, or the ontological identity established in the Christian’s union with Christ. It is certainly invalid to transfer the essentiality of oneness from the Trinity to the Christian oneness, asserting that Christ and the Christian are essentially one in equivalence (ex. “I am Christ” or “Christ is me”)

The relational oneness of Father and Son in the Trinity cannot be transferred wholesale in defining the other oneness either. Jesus did pray that Christians “might be one,” even as He and the

Father are one (John 17:11,21,22), and this surely refers to relational oneness, but such relational unity among Christians must be derived out of, and be expressive of, the relationality of the persons of the Trinity. On an individual basis, the Christian oneness of "one spirit" (I Cor. 6:17) is also relational rather than an essential oneness of a mathematical integer, since the context for explaining this oneness is the relational oneness of the marriage union and sexual union (I Cor. 6:16,18). The primary word used to explain the operational and relational oneness of God was *perichoresis*. The word was first used of the inseparability, and thus the coinherence of deity and humanity in the Christological oneness of Jesus Christ. Later the word was employed in reference to the operation and relations of the Trinity, and invested with expanded meanings that could not be conversely transferred or applied to the Christological oneness or the Christian

oneness. Yes, just as there is a mutual indwelling of the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Father (John 10:38; 14:10,11,20; 17:21,23), there is also a mutual indwelling of the Christian "in Christ" (cf. I Cor. 1:30; 15:22; II Cor. 5:17) and Christ in the Christian (cf. Jn. 14:20; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27). The perichoretic implication within the Trinity indicates that there is no place or space within the Trinitarian oneness where the Father, Son or Holy Spirit is not, for they coinhere with one another, interpenetrate one another, and are contained or comprehended by the other. Similarly, there is no space or place in the personality of the Lord Jesus Christ where deity is not, or humanity is not, for these categories coinhere interpenetratively within the person of Jesus Christ (though they do not constitute a unity as in the Trinity). Likewise, there is no space or place within the spirit of the Christian where the Spirit of Christ is not, for there is an interpen-

etration of coinherence that constitutes a real and complete spiritual union that makes the Christian "complete in Christ" (Col. 2:10). But when *perichoresis* is explained as the mutually co-constitutive relations of the Trinity, we cannot transfer this thought to indicate that Christ's humanity constitutes His deity, or that the Christian constitutes the reality of Christ. Definitional inferences of *perichoresis* transferred from the Trinitarian oneness to the other onenesses are not the issue, however. We must move beyond ontological logic to the interrelational dynamic of how Father, Son and Holy Spirit function operationally and "dance together as one," for this is perhaps the most important idea to be mined from the word *perichoresis*. The extended flow of God's perichoretic "dance" is to be seen in Jesus Christ as He enacts Trinitarian relationality within humanity, and becomes "the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29), so that all mankind

might "dance together as one" with the divine Trinity and with all other human beings.

Characteristics of the Christological oneness have also been improperly transferred to the Christian oneness. Jesus is the divine Son of God (cf. Matt. 16:16; 27:43). Christians, too, are called "sons of God" (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 3:26; 4:6,7), but whereas Jesus is *essentially* the Son of God, Christians are "sons of God" *by adoption* (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5-7). Out of His *essential identity* as the Son of God, Jesus could say, "I AM the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6), "I AM the light of the world" (Jn. 8:12), or "I AM the Good Shepherd" (Jn. 10:11,14), and in His *integrated identity* as the God-man, He could say, "I AM the Messiah" (Jn. 4:26), the one mediator between God and man (cf. I Tim. 2:5). But Christians cannot declare, "I am God," "I am Christ," or "I am the Holy Spirit", or "I am the co-creator, co-redeemer, co-savior of the universe." Such

statements are blasphemous claims of claiming to be what only God is, and thus setting oneself in an idolatrous position. The Christian's identity is a *derived identity* that is established by his being a "partaker of Christ" (Heb. 3:14), and thus a "new creature" (II Cor. 5:17) and a "new man" (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) because he is identified as a Christ-one, a Christian.

The traditional explanation of the Christ-ological oneness asserts that the "two natures" of deity and humanity were brought together in Jesus Christ. This is not a valid basis for claiming that the Christian has "two natures," as has been popular in much Christian teaching. Whereas Christian theology has identified the union of divinity and humanity in Jesus as a "hypostatic union," the union of Christ and the Christian is an adoptive, spiritual union that is relationally based (I Cor. 6:16,17). "The Word becoming flesh" (John 1:14) has been theologically defined as the

"incarnation" of the *theanthropos*, the God-man, but direct transference of the terminology of "incarnation" to the life of Jesus being enfleshed or embodied in the Christian should probably be avoided. The Christian does not become God-man, but "the life of Jesus is manifested in our mortal bodies" (II Cor. 4:10,11). Neither is the *kenosis* of Jesus' "emptying" Himself (Phil. 2:7) transferable to the Christian union in any sense of a Christian's emptying himself of humanness in order to be replaced by *theosis*, as some have taught.

There is a transferable concept between Christological oneness and Christian oneness that is based on the kenotic self-emptying of Jesus, however. Emptying Himself of the divine prerogative and right of independent divine function, the Son of God, the "man, Christ Jesus" (cf. Acts 2:22; I Tim. 2:5), functioned by faithful dependence upon the Father. Whereas the Triune God functions in the operational inherency of Self-

generation and Self-actuation, Jesus, as man, functioned in operational derivation – the receptivity of God's activity (cf. Jn. 14:10), i.e., faith, that allowed God the Father to act perfectly in the man, and that in the midst of temptability, suffering, and mortality. The Perfect Man demonstrated human function and behavior as God intended, and Christians are also called to function by operational derivation, allowing for the receptivity of God's activity – faith – in the midst of temptation, suffering, and death. The man, Christ Jesus, modeled man's derivative function of faith.

Trinitarian plurality or multiplicity in unity also serves as the basis for the collective unity of Christians in the "one Body" of the Church of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 12:13; Col. 1:18,24). It was Jesus' prayer (John 17:11,21,22) that the relational unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit might be evident in the relational oneness of Christian

people. This only results when the Trinitarian "community of Being" becomes the dynamic relational expression of the "community of being," the Church – when divine love, divine fellowship, and divine interpersonal relations are manifested among and between Christians.

If the distinctions of the Trinitarian, Christological, and Christian oneness are unduly pressed so as to deny or disallow the oneness of the Triune God's teleological objective to involve His Trinitarian relations within His created order, several perversions ensue. An historical example was presented when Arius (A.D. 250-336) could not maintain the dialectic of Trinitarian oneness and opted for a monadic monotheism wherein the Father made the Son and the Spirit proceeded from the Father in such a way that the Father alone was God. When Trinitarian oneness is denied, and the Son of God is not divine, this disallows any connection with Christological oneness or

Christian oneness. There is no Trinitarian dynamic of relationalism to connect with or create a union in Christ or the Christian. Forms of such Arian thought are seen in the teaching of the Jehovah's Witness and in various oneness sects today.

Dare we suggest that traditional Western Christianity, as a whole, has also failed to understand the connection and unity of the three divine onenesses? Though the early church saw the connection between the Trinitarian oneness and Christological oneness, they neglected to follow through with any clear explanation of Christian oneness, and how such Christian oneness is the necessary and logical outcome of the other two. Western theologians emphasized the ontological essentiality of the *homoousion* oneness of God, and neglected the operational relationality of the *perichoresis* of the Trinity. In so doing, they failed to teach the ontological and operational oneness of Christ and Christians, and the dynamic reality of

Father, Son and Holy Spirit operative in and through the Christian. Instead, they adopted humanistic presuppositions that denied any need for a connective unity of the three onenesses, positing an inherent ability in man to live as a Christian, either by "infused grace" (Roman Catholicism) or by "alien righteousness" (Protestantism). Such "evangelical humanism" does not recognize any need for connecting the divine onenesses. When they are thus dis-connected, the so-called "Christianity" that results is but a variant form of deism wherein God is detached and separated from any relational and operational oneness with mankind.

On the opposite side of the dialectic, we note that the Eastern Church has had a tendency to push the connection of the three onenesses to the point of advocating the deification or divinization of man. Some Western mystics also made invalid connections of the three onenesses that portrayed

man as capable of a supernatural otherworldliness. Oftentimes these mis-emphases on the unity of the divine onenesses result from an Eastern perspective that merges the Creator and the creature in a monistic and pantheistic oneness. Monistic monotheism that claims "God is all in all" as "the only Person in the universe" is a denial of Trinitarian monotheism, merging the three onenesses in a false unity that makes the Christ-ological and Christian onenesses superfluous and unnecessary, since all is one with God already. If everything and everyone is inherently and intrinsically one with God, then we are lulled into a deterministic passivism of universalism that ends up being fatalism.

It is now time to explain the oneness of connection and unity in the interrelation of the three onenesses. The three are necessarily related, because they are all *divine* onenesses, and the same God is present and operative in all three. They are

united in the operational and functional expression of God's Being in action, as together they comprise the oneness of God's teleological purpose. Together they encompass the entirety of the gospel! In fact, the oneness of the three divine onenesses is the "one gospel" – the singular "good news" of the Triune God's Being in action to involve Himself and express Himself in man by His Son, Jesus Christ, becoming the God-man. Taken in sequence, they reveal the "flow of the gospel," the river of divine life flowing to give life to the created order and to express the character of God's three-in-oneness in His creation. The "one gospel" formed by the unity of the three divine oneness is the "gospel of salvation" (Eph. 1:13), for it is the only "good news" that makes men "safe" to function as God intends. "Participation in the gospel" (Phil. 1:5) is only experienced as we participate in the dynamic relationalism of the Triune God, and that as the Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit are present and active in Christians, individually and collectively.

A better perspective can be gained if we follow the flow of the unity of the three divine onenesses, and see how they connect as "one gospel."

The *Trinitarian oneness* is the foundation of all divine onenesses. Apart from this extended interpersonal oneness, God is either separated in static superiority (monad monotheism) or absorbed in universal allness (monistic monotheism). Trinitarian oneness allows for both an *essential* oneness as well as a *relational* oneness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The essential "same Being" oneness of the Trinity, by itself, can become a meaningless mental abstraction. The Western Church, emphasizing the *homoousion* phrase of the Nicene Creed, has often allowed their teaching of Trinitarian oneness to degenerate into mere epistemological assent to essential Trinitarian

oneness. Theology in the Western Church has often neglected the fact that the essential ontological oneness of the Trinity has living expression in the operational relational oneness of the Trinity, as emphasized by the usage and interpretation of the word *perichoresis* at Chalcedon. The relational oneness of the Triune God allows us to see the interaction and interpersonal expression of divine love, goodness, kindness, and personness between the persons of the Trinity. In this interpenetration and co-constitutive oneness, divine character flows between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That perfect and harmonious interactive movement of *perichoresis* is the basis for explaining that the three persons of the Trinity "dance together as one."

God's creative action was not based on any need within Himself, for this would necessitate an unthinkable divine contingency. "God is love" (I

John 4:8,16), and it was His desire to share Himself with others – to draw others into the glorious dance of the shared life and character of His Trinity. God's purpose in creation was to express the glorious perichoretic interaction of divine character within a created order. "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1), and humanity was "created for His glory" (Isa. 43:7). But God "does not give His glory to another" (Isa. 42:8; 48:11). God is glorified by man only when His all-glorious life and character is ontological present in the creature, and operationally expressed in the relationalism of human interaction. When man allows for such a visible expression of the invisible interactive expression of the character of the Triune God, he serves God's purpose of "imaging" God – "Let *Us* make man in *Our image*" (Gen. 1:26).

"What God *is*, only God *is*"[9] – God is Trinitarian oneness, ontologically and operation-

ally, essentially and relationally. "God *does* what He *does*, because He *is* Who He *is*" – the Triune God acted in creation and redemption to implement the relationalism of His Trinitarian oneness in humanity, so that He could be glorified by the expression of His own glorious Being in His created beings. Mankind's choice of sin in Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12-21) did not deter God's love objective. His Being continued to be expressed in action, determined to see a fulfilled humanity – filled full of the interaction of Triune character. Because the Trinitarian oneness *is* Who He *is*, He took the unitive action to bring into being the Christological oneness and the Christian oneness – the incarnational manifestation of Christ, and the union of Christians with the risen Christ.

The *Christological oneness* was but the outflow of the Trinitarian oneness. Despite man's being disconnected and alienated from God by the fall into sin, God is not an "offended deity" out to

impose vengeance upon man. God has always been, and will always be, FOR us![10] God wants to see His original intent of His Trinitarian interrelationships implemented in mankind unto His own glory. God took the initiative action to implement His desire for mankind, because He wanted to see His creation restored in re-creation, comprising a "new creation" (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).

God the Father sent His Son to become flesh (John 1:14), to become the God-man, the revelation of the Trinitarian oneness within humanity, the relational oneness of the Trinity functioning in humanity as God intended. In the Christological oneness of the incarnation, the Son of God became man, bringing His divine relational oneness to humanity, and demonstrating that humanity could only function as God intended by deriving from, and participating in, the relational oneness of the Trinity. As "perfect man," Jesus

allowed for the "perfect sacrifice," taking the death consequences of man's sin by His own death on the cross. From the cross the dying Jesus declared, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). This declaration of *Christus Victor* affirmed that the "finished work" of Christ had been set in unstoppable motion to reimplement Trinitarian life in mankind. By His resurrection Jesus was "declared the Son of God with power" (Rom. 1:4), empowered to draw all man into participation in the life of the Trinity as they are "born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead" (I Peter 1:3). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (II Cor. 5:19). The redemptive mission of Jesus Christ must not be detached from the action of the Trinity. The person of Jesus Christ should not be isolated as just "one part" of God, for it was the Triune God who intersected with humanity, and Jesus perfectly allowed the Trinity to "dance together as one" in Him and with the humanity that

He represented, in order to reconnect and reunify Trinitarian activity within humanity. Jesus' objective was to "bring many sons to glory" (Heb. 2:10) by being "the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). By the Pentecostal out-pouring (Acts 2:1-36) of the Trinitarian Spirit, the Christ of history became the Christ of faith as the risen and living Lord Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, could dwell within and function within the spirit of a Christian in Christian oneness. "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9).

Christian oneness flows out of, and is the intended consequence of the Christological oneness. The God-man reintroduced Trinitarian relationality to humanity. In union with Christ, Christians are "partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4), fellowshipping and participating with God in the relationalism of His Trinitarian oneness. "Joined to the Lord, we are *one spirit*

with Him" (I Cor. 6:17), and "the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16). "Christ lives in us" (Gal. 2:20). The very resurrection-life of the risen Lord Jesus is functioning in the Christian and empowering the Christian life. Our *raison d'etre* has been restored. The Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is spiritually united with the Christian, so that the Christian can derive from and participate in the interactive and relational oneness of the expression of God's character of Trinitarian oneness, to the glory of God. Mankind can once again "dance together as one" with the Triune God. C.S. Lewis explained, "The whole dance, or drama, or pattern of this three-Personal life is to be played out in each one of us…"[11] In the words of C. Baxter Kruger,

> "The great dance is all about the abounding life – the fellowship and togetherness, the love and passion and joy – shared by the Father, Son and Spirit. The

> incarnation is the staggering act of this God reaching out to share their great dance with us. Our humanity is the theatre in and through which the great dance is played out in our lives, and human history is the harrowing experience through which we are educated as to the truth of our identity"[12]

The interpersonal relationality of the Trinity within Christians is the basis for all interpersonal relationships within the "one Body," the Church of Jesus Christ. The loving community of the divine Trinity is to be expressed in the loving community of the Church. The life, the love, the fellowship, the worship, the prayer, the witness, and the unity of the three-in-one God are to be expressed within humanity, individually and collectively. Christians are to "dance together as one" as the Triune God "dances together as one" in them.

Conclusion

The entire structure of the gospel, of Christian theology, boils down to the inter-penetrative, perichoretic flow of the Trinitarian oneness of God expressed in Christological oneness and Christian oneness. Bringing the three-in-oneness of the Triune God into mankind to operate and express the character of God in created humanity is the essence of Christianity. Apart from this three-in-oneness of God's function in humanity, individually and collectively, what is called "Christian religion" is just another static, sterile, and stale religious system – lifeless and dead. It is just another epistemological belief-system. It is just another

ethical codification of moral behavior. It is just another institutional machine that perpetuates the superstitious traditions of the past. Genuine Christianity, however, is the dynamic expression of the relations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within mankind.

Endnotes

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Diagrams

Diagram #1
Trinitarian Oneness

Diagram #2
Christological Oneness

Diagram #3
Christian Oneness

Diagram #4
Unity of the Three Divine Onenesses

Diagram #1

TRINITARIAN ONENESS

Distinction ⟷ Dialectic (Tension and balance) ⟷ Oneness

Polytheism - many gods
Tritheism - three gods

Subordinationism
Son and Spirit subordinated to Father as second-class deities

Arianism (Arius-250-336)
Not co-equal, co-essential persons.
Son made by the Father.
Spirit proceeded from the Father.
Thus Son and Spirit are ontologically inferior to the Father, as demi-gods.
anomoousion - "not same being"
heteroousion - "different being"
Semi-Arians - Son and Spirit are *homoiousion* - "like or similar being"

Social Trinity
Divine committee

Multiplicity, plurality, complexity
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
co-equal, co-essential, co-eternal
Jesus declared:
"I and the Father are one" (Jn. 10:30).
"I AM way, truth, life" (Jn. 14:6; cf. Jn. 4:26; 6:35,48; 8:12,48; 11:25)
Jewish leaders rejected as blasphemy against monad God.
Early Christians forced to consider how such a oneness could be explained.

Singularity, simplicity, unity
One God - Deut. 6:4; Mk. 12:29; I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 2:5
Monotheism
Trinitarian Monotheism
Triunity - Trinity - three-in-one

Single integer
Mathematical oneness

Monad Monotheism
(singular, unextended unit of one)
Judaism, Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses

Monistic Monotheism
(singular, comprehensive extension in all things)
"Only one Person in the universe"
"God is all in all"
"God only"

Monarchianism
Impersonal primacy of God the Father

Modalism - Sabellianism
One God without distinction, revealed in 3 modes, manifestatins, forms or roles.

Unitarianism

Ontological Trinity

Theophilus of Antioch (175)
Referred to Father, Son, Holy Spirit as *trias* - triad or threesomeness.
Tertullian of Carthage (160-230)
First to use Latin *trinitas* - triunity or trinity

What are the three?
Distinctions, realities, natures, particulars, persons?
Council of Nicea (325) identified as "three *personae*"

What is the one?
Substance, nature, essence, being?

Athanasius (296-373) explained that the three Persons were essentially and consubstantially the "same being" - *homoousion*.
Council of Nicea (325) accepted *homoousion* as orthodox statement of God's oneness.
Essential Oneness

Operational Trinity

Administrative and Functional Distinction
Paternity, filiation, procession
The Father sent the Son. the Son emptied Himself, the Spirit is joined with the spirit of man.

Gregory of Nazianzus (330-389)
Used Greek *perichoresis* to explain the interpenetration and coinherence of the persons of Trinity.
Mutual indwelling - "I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me" (Jn. 14:10,11)

Relational Oneness

Diagram #2

CHRISTOLOGICAL ONENESS

Distinction ⟷ Dialectic (Tension and balance) ⟷ Oneness

Deity and humanity

Deity - Jn. 1:1; 5:18; Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9; Titus 2:13; I John 5:20

Humanity - Acts 2:22; Rom. 5:15; I Cor. 15:21; Phil. 2:7,8; I Tim. 2:5

Incarnation - "God in the flesh"

"The Word became flesh" - Jn. 1:14
Cf. Rom. 8:3; I Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:14; I Jn. 1:2

One Lord - I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:5

One Man - Rom. 5:5

One Mediator - I Tim. 2:5

God-man

Greek word *Theanthropos*

Ontological Christology

What are the two?

Substances, essences, beings, natures?

Council of Chalcedon (451 established orthodox explanation as "two natures".

Indissoluable Distinction

"Fully God and fully man"

What is the one?

Being, person, individual?
Council of Chalcedon (451) determined that Jesus was one *hypostasis*, meaning "particular individual." Thereafter the union of deity and humanity in Jesus has been referred to as an "hypostatic union."

Indivisible Unity

Communicatio idiomatum - properties of both deity and humanity attributed in full to one person interchangeably.

Operational Christology

What did Jesus "empty" Himself of?

Phil. 2:7 - "emptied Himself" - Greek *kenosis*
Deity? Omni-attributes? Glory?
Divine prerogative and right to act independently as God?

Divine function: independent, autonomous, Self-generative
Human function: dependent, derivative, receptive

Temptability, suffering, mortality experience by humanity.
cf. John 5:19,20; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10,24; Acts 2:22

Teleological objective

"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (II Cor. 5:19)

Deity emphasized

Docetism - from Greek *dokein*, "to appear". Gnostic idea that Jesus only appeared to be human. Marcion said Jesus was just a "phantom."

Absorptionism - Jesus' humanity was absorbed or subsumed into His deity.

Apollinarianius (310-391) - The divine *Logos* replaced the human spirit or soul of Jesus, so He was just a human body.

Monophysitism - Jesus had only one nature.

Humanity emphasized

Ebionites - Jesus just a man who God elected to be Son of God,

Adoptionism - the man Jesus adopted by God, and given Christ-cloak or Messiah-mantle.

Arius (250-336) denied the deity of Jesus, and necessarily posited some form of adoptionism.

Radical kenoticism - explained that Jesus "emptied Himself" of deity.

Nestorius - (380-451)

Jesus was both divine and human - two persons adjoined in one body. This makes Jesus a schizoid double-being.

Eutychianism - (378-454)

Deity and humanity become one compound nature - synthesized, homogenized, merged, intermixed, amalgamated, con-fused. Creates a conglomerate or a hybrid.

Diagram #3

CHRISTIAN ONENESS

Distinction ⟷ Dialectic (Tension and balance) ⟷ Oneness

Western Church
Kept Christ and the Christian distinct from one another in legal, forensic, and juridical context. Real union with Christ projected in heavenly future.

Separated concept
- Deistic detachment
- Transcendence instead of immanence
- "God in heaven; me on earth"
- Independent self

Objectified relationship
- Objectified standing, status, position before God in heaven.
- Imputed righteousness; declared
- Acceptance of, assent to, Christ
- Casual relationship with Christ
- Possess Christ as ticket to heaven

Negative concept of "self"
- Self-denigrating; self-depreciating
- "Just a sinner saved by grace"
- "Still a dirty old man"
- "You don't know the real me"
- Worm theology - "I am nothing"
- Self-surrender, brokenness
- Self-denial; suppression
- Self-crucifixion; "die to self"

Duality
- Two natures in conflict
- Double-minded - James 1:8
- Spiritual schizophrenia, paranoia
- Doubts of salvation
- Emotional experientialism

Christ and the Christian
"If any one does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9)
"The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16)

"Our oneness does not alter our twoness" (NPG)

"One spirit" - individually
"The one who is joined to the Lord is *one spirit* with Him" (I Cor. 6:17)

"One Body" - collectively
"By one Spirit we were all baptized into *one Body*" (I Cor. 12:13)

Ontological Christian union

Gal. 2:20 - "life *I now live*, *I live* by faith in *Son of God*.."

Gal. 2:20 - "*no longer I* who lives... *Christ lives* in me.."

Indwelling Trinity
Father - Jn. 14:27; I Jn. 4:12,15,16
Son - II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27
Spirit - Rom. 8:11; I Cor. 6:19; II Tim. 1:14

Analogies:
Vessel - II Cor. 4:7
House - II Cor. 5:1
Temple - I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; II Cor. 6:16

"The container never becomes the contents." (NPG)

Identification and Derivation
"sons" because the Son of God lives in us - Gal. 4:6,7
"holy ones" because Holy One in us - Acts 3:14; 4:27,30
"righteous" because Righteous One in us- Acts 3:14; 7:52
"perfect" because Perfect One lives in us - Heb. 7:28

The Christian remains fully human.
We retain "personal individuality"
There is still a "me" that relates to Christ
"Yourself" - Rom. 6:11,13; II Cor. 13:5; II Tim. 2:15; II Jn. 8; Jude 21

Union
Historically expressed as *unio cum Christo* - "union with Christ." The phrase *unio mystica* - "mystical union" is best avoided because carries connotations of attainment.

At-one-ment of reconciliation with God
"Partaker of divine nature" - II Pet. 1:4
"Partaker of Christ" - Heb. 3:14
Communion, participation, fellowship with Trinity
I Cor. 1:9; I Jn. 1:7; Phil. 2:1
"Christ is our life" - Col. 3:4
"Hid with Christ in God" - Col. 3:3
"Complete in Christ" - Col. 2:10
"Sit in heavenly places in Christ" - Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1
"Every spiritual blessing in Christ" - Eph. 1:3
"In Christ" - (in union with) - I Cor. 1:30; II Cor. 5:17

Identity
"New creature" - II Cor. 5:17
"New man" - Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10
Christ-one; Christian - Acts 11:26; I Pet. 4:10
"Child of God" - Jn. 1:12; Rom. 8:16; I Jn 3:1,2,10
"Son of God" - Rom. 8:14,17; Gal. 3:26; 4:6,7
"Saints" - Rom. 1:7; 8:27; Eph. 1:18; 4:12
"Heir of God" - Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7

Eastern Church
More adequate understanding of salvation as union with God in Christ, but *Theosis* concept often conveys idea of merged oneness with God.

Monistic oneness
- Abstract, universal oneness
- "God is all in all"
- "Spirit is the only reality"
- "God only"
- Pantheism; panentheism
- Divine determinism

False views of union
Essential union - equivalence, tran-sub-stantiation, consubstantiation, indistinquishable, absorbed, merged, fused, coalescence.
Deification, divinization, supernaturalization.
Inherently, intrinsically divine
"I am God, Jesus Christ, or Spirit"
Organic union - vine/branch analogy
Hypostatic union - as in Christology
Universal union - if God is all, then all is one with God. Divine light, seed of Christ in every man.

View of humanity
Obliteration, annihilation, abandonment, dissolution, displacement, replacement.
Depersonalizing, reduction of humanity
Kenotic emptying of humanity
"I am no longer human"
"I am not; only He is"

Operational Christian union

Human potentiality
Evangelical Humanism-"you can do it"
"God helps those who help themselves"
"Do your best; God will do the rest"
Self-generated righteous behavior.
Important to know the right doctrines
Fundamentalistic belief-system
Individualistic Christianity

Performance
Trying to be like Jesus - Christlikeness
Imitation; follow Jesus' example
Trying to be acceptable, perfect.
Seeking to find the "will of God."
Commitment, dedication, consecration
Serving the Lord; working for Jesus
"Pray more; read your Bibles more"
Be a witness; have a "good testimony"
Social activism; problem-solving
Morality, ethical conformity - WWJD
Legalism - keep God's Law
Religion - "to bind up

Paranoia - Fear, Uncertainty
"What am I to do?"
"Is it me, or is it Jesus?"
"I can't help but sin, I'm only human."
"I am secure -once saved, always saved

Sin-consciousness
Introspection, guilt, condemnation
Suppression, confession
Hypocrisy

Worship - emotional, sensate ecstasy
Prayer - pleading for God's help

Separatism, isolationism, exclusivism

Response-ability
Christians are choosing creatures. They are responsible before God to make behavioral choices of faith that allow the life of Christ to be lived out in behavioral expression.
"I can do all things through Christ" - Phil. 4:13
"Without Me, you can do nothing" - John 15:5

Faith
Christian person remains derivative, dependent, contingent.
Faith is "the receptivity of God's activity".
"As you received Christ Jesus, so walk in Him" - Col. 2:6
"Full assurance of faith" - Heb. 10:22
"Obedience of faith" - Rom. 1:5; 16:26
"Faith without outworking is dead" - James 2:14-26

Imperatives - (over 1000 in New Testament)
"Work out your own salvation" - Phil. 2:12
"Love one another" - Jn. 13:34,35
"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing" - I Thess. 5:16,17
"Reckon yourselves dead unto sin" - Rom. 6:11
"Present your bodies a living sacrifice" - Rom. 12:1
"Yield members as members of righteousness" - Rom. 6:13
"Submit yourselves to God" - James 4:7
Discipleship - Matt. 28:19; Jn. 13:35
Obedience - II Cor. 10:5; I Pet. 1:2,14

Misrepresentation
Despite the Christian being "complete in Christ" (Col. 2:10) with "old things passed away, and all things made new" (II Cor. 5:17), there remains the possibility of misrepresenting our identity in Christ.
"Flesh" - patterned desires of selfishness and sinfulness in the soul of the Christian.
"In my flesh dwelleth no good thing" - Rom. 7:18
"The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit" - Gal. 5:16-21
Temptation - the tempter tempts the Christian - I Thess. 3:5
"No trial/temptation but common to man" - I Cor. 10:13
Sin - The Christian can misrepresent Christ in sin.
"If we sin, we have an advocate" - I Jn. 2:1; 1:8

Trinitarian dynamic
Grace - II Cor. 9:8,14; 12:9; Eph. 3:7
Father
"God is at work in us" - Phil. 2:13
"our adequacy is of God" - II Cor. 3:5
"we live by the power of God" - II Cor. 13:4
"He will bring it to pass" - I Thess. 5:24
"Strength which God supplies" - I Pet. 4:11
"His power has granted us everything..." - II Pet. 1:3
Son
"Christ lives in me" - Gal. 2:20
"we shall be saved by His life" - Rom. 5:10
"we reign in life through Christ" - Rom. 5:17
"we have the mind of Christ" - I Cor. 2:16
"Christ is manifested in our bodies" - II Cor. 4:10,11
"as He is, so are we in this world" - I Jn. 4:7
Spirit
"live by Spirit, walk by Spirit" - Gal. 5:25
"filled with Spirit" - Eph. 5:18
"Spirit makes utterances" - Rom. 8:26,27

Character
"Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace..." - Gal. 5:22,23
"fruit of righteousness" - Eph. 5:9; Phil. 1:11; Heb. 12:11
LOVE - Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:6,13,14; I Jn. 4:7-21
"live godly in Christ Jesus" - I Tim. 3:12
Sanctification - I Thess. 4:3-7; Heb. 12:14; I Cor. 1:30
"Good works" - Eph. 2:10; Heb. 13:21; James 2:26

Ministry
"Christ through me" - Rom. 15:18; Acts 15:12
"Ministry of the Spirit" - II Cor. 3:3,8,9
"Ministry of reconciliation" - II Cor. 5:19
Spiritual giftedness - Rom. 12; I Cor. 12; Eph. 4

One Body - I Cor 12:27; Eph 1:22,23; 4:4; Col 1:28,24
Unity - Jn 17:21,22; Eph. 4:3; Phil. 1:27; 2:2
Fellowship of suffering-Rom 8:17,18; Phil 3:10; Col 1:24
Interpersonal relationalism of the life of Trinity.

Divine inevitability
Deterministic expression of deity within humanity.
"Everything I do is Christ in action."
"Whatever I do, is what He does."
Direct-drive; autopilot Christian life
"God only" - at work in me

Passivism
Deny responsibility of the Christian
"God doesn't mean for man to have faith - just express God."
Acquiescence - "Just go with the flow"

Pride
Gnostic elitism
"We are knowers, see-ers"
"We have God-consciousness"
"I AM all that Jesus is."
"As He is, so are we" (I Jn. 4:17)
"I do what I will, for what I will is what He wills."
"We are co-gods, co-creators, co-redeemers, co-saviors"
"Word of faith" - calling into being, what is not. "Faith is just speaking your word."

Perfectionism
"New man can't sin."
"What appears to be sin is illusion"
Docetism - "appears" to be sin
Antinomianism, libertinism
Law unto themselves.
Disregard for holy behavior
Flaunt liberty and sin
Worship - "Why worship ourselves?"
Prayer - "Why pray to ourselves?"

Diagram #4

UNITY OF THE THREE DIVINE ONENESSES

Distinction ⟵ Dialectic ⟶ Oneness
Tension and balance

Monadic monotheism

Denies Trinitarian monotheism

No distinction within unity in God.

No relational dynamic that is invested into created order of mankind.

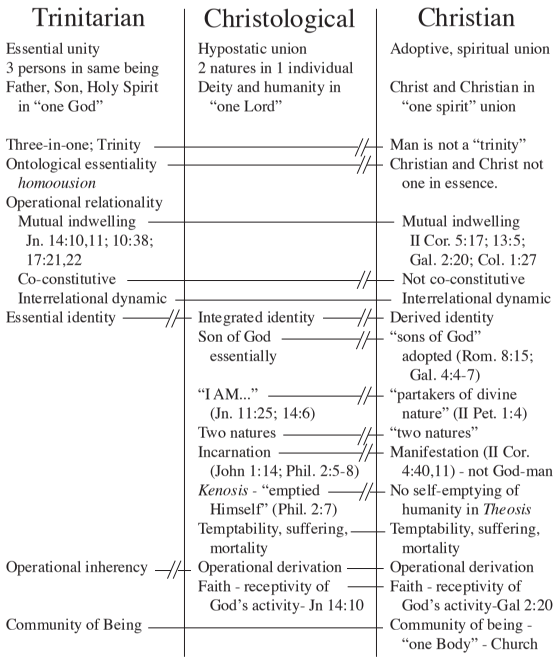
Arius (250-336) by denying deity of Jesus, could make no real connection of unity between God and man.

Monadic understanding of God in Judaism, Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses

Traditional Western Christianity connected Trinitarian oneness and Christological oneness, but did not follow through to Christian oneness.

- Emphasized essentiality of *homoousion*, but neglected *perichoresis* relationality.
- Failed to understand ontological and operational dynamic of Trinitarian function in the Christian.
- Evangelical humanism has posited humanistic presuppositions that deny the need for a unity of three onenesses. Human potentiality and individualism emphasized.
- Essentially deistic concept of God, who is detached and separated from man, but assists by "infused grace" (Roman Catholic) or "alien righteousness" (Protestant).

Each of the divine onenesses are distinct and unique.
Integral essence of each oneness is non-transferrable.
Distortion and destruction of the onenesses can occur when improper inference or transference is made from one to the other.



One Gospel

The three divine onenesses comprise the one "gospel of salvation" (Eph. 1:13) in which all may participate (Phil. 1:5).
In the sequence of the three onenesses we observe the "flow" of God's teleological purpose and action.

Trinitarian oneness

Essential oneness - *homoousion*
Relational oneness - *perichoresis*
God created to include others in relational Trinitarian life, unto His glory (cf. Isa. 43:7).
Man's sin did not deter God's purpose. God is FOR man!

Christological oneness

The Father sent the Son (Jn. 3:16) to become flesh (Jn. 1:14), the God-man. Living in perfect participation of Trinitarian life as a man, He took humanity's death for sin to give them Trinitarian life. By resurrection empowerment the life of the Trinity was made available to all men at Pentecost.

Christian oneness

Joined to the Lord, and "one spirit" with Him (I Cor. 6:17), Christians are "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). The relational life of the Trinity indwells and functions in Christian people, and collectively in the "one Body" of the Church.

Monistic monotheism

Denies Trinitarian monotheism

Merges the three onenesses in false unity that makes Christological oneness and Christian oneness superfluous and unnecessary.

"Only one Person in the universe"
"God only"
"God is all in all"

Pantheism, Panentheism

Hinduistic, Buddhistic philosophy

Inherency, intrinsicality of God in all leads to determinism and universalism.

Tends to make direct equivalences between the distinctions, playing semantic games.

Eastern Church tended to push unity of three onenesses to deification or divinization of man.

Some Western mystics also tended to monistic supernaturalization of man.

Seen in Christian Science, New Age.