

CHRISTOLOGY AS AN AFFIRMATION OF BICULTURAL IDENTITY: TOWARD
EMBRACING THE IMAGO DEI IN BICULTURAL PERSONS IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated with love to my mother:

Mama, you have listened to me talk about my thesis for so long and have never tired of discussing it with me. Thank you.

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I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Robert Nash for his invaluable guidance throughout this great undertaking. I also want to extend my appreciation to Dr. Angela Parker, Dr. Beth Toler, Beth Perry, and all the staff and students who have contributed to and encouraged me in writing my thesis, as well as being my friends. I would also like to thank Autumn Knowlton for not only helping me edit my paper but also for being a great listener.

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ABSTRACT

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CHRISTOLOGY AS AN AFFIRMATION OF BICULTURAL IDENTITY: TOWARD
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Under the direction of REV. DR. ROB N. NASH, JR., Ph.D.

This thesis offers a theological analysis of the nature of Jesus, the profound symbolism of the Eucharist, and the intricate concept of Imago Dei in order to explore the nature of bicultural identity in the United States (U.S.). The thesis opens with an introduction to the topic of social identity and categorization in the U.S. The thesis also analyzes the Council of Chalcedon's definition of Jesus, offering insights into our understanding of His nature, which is both divine and human. Then, it discusses the significance of the Eucharist or communion, highlighting its central role in Christian worship and its symbolic representation of the sacrifice of Jesus. The Eucharist highlights the dual role of the communion as a foundation of community as well as individual relations with God. Additionally, the study dives into various interpretations of the Imago Dei, a concept deeply embedded in Christian theology that posits that humans are created in the image and likeness of God. The culmination of the study brings together these diverse threads, providing a deeper understanding of bicultural identity through the lens of Christ.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Throughout my life, I have primarily identified as an Appalachian American woman because people automatically placed me in this category due to my skin color. I am not only Appalachian but also Mexican American. My mother taught me that all races and ethnicities are equal in the eyes of Jesus, but not everyone shares the same beliefs as my mother. As a bicultural individual, I often find myself torn between identifying as White or Mexican. On one hand, I feel like it would be a betrayal to my mother to not identify as Mexican. On the other hand, identifying as Mexican feels like a betrayal to my father.

I was born in Detroit, Michigan, on June 24, 1971, to a Mexican American mother and a White Appalachian father. As a child, I grew up in a predominantly Caucasian neighborhood, but I was fortunate to spend each summer with my Mexican grandmother during my teenage years. During these summers, I had the opportunity to attend family gatherings and interact with individuals from various cultural backgrounds. My Mexican family comprises individuals from various ethnic backgrounds, including White, Indian, Black, Puerto Rican, and Mexican descent. Interacting with my extended family and their friends allowed me to appreciate life's diversity and embrace differing perspectives. As a result, I value diversity and respect those with differing opinions. This unique identity has shaped me personally and professionally; I carry it wherever I go.

Through my interaction with official documents starting at a young age, I became aware that I did not fit neatly into one category or another. When filling in documents, I provided a range of personal information, such as my full name, address, phone number, date and place of birth, gender, occupation, medical history, race, and emergency contact information. These answers offer a surface-level understanding of my identity. My worldview, on the other hand, is

shaped by my upbringing and background. Similarly, when taking standardized tests, I could only select a single option regarding race. I did not understand why I had to choose one race or ethnicity.

After one of those tests, I remember going home and asking my mother, “Which option should I choose, White or Mexican?” She replied, “You should choose White because your father’s race determines your race.” How could only my father determine my race? My young mind knew that part of me came from my mother, and the other part came from my father. Her answer made no sense to my young mind. I struggled with this confusion while trying to be honest about my heritage.

As we grow up, children tend to rely heavily on our parents for guidance and support. We believe that they have all the knowledge and understanding necessary to help us navigate life’s challenges. When it comes to issues of identity, this is not always the case. For those of us who come from a multicultural background, the challenges of reconciling our identities can be significant. Our parents may have grown up in a single culture and, therefore, they not have had the same experiences as us. They may not fully comprehend the challenges we face in terms of our identity. This can lead to a sense of isolation and confusion, as we struggle to reconcile the different parts of ourselves. Therefore, it’s important to seek support and guidance from other sources outside of our parents.

In addition, I have come to realize that my identity in Jesus is strengthened by a deeper understanding of my bicultural identity. I better understand the differences within me through examining the human and divine natures of Jesus. I aim to embrace my complete identity and acknowledge my place in both worlds: the Appalachian and the Mexican. I firmly believe that my faith in Jesus connects me to a larger community of believers. By embracing my unique

identity in Christ, I can fully accept and appreciate my place in both worlds and lead a purposeful, fulfilling life that aligns with my identity.

The Christology of Jesus is a theological perspective that presents Christ as both human and divine based on the Council of Chalcedon in 451 Common Era (CE), which established language to describe Jesus's dual nature as both God and man. The Eucharist sacrament also contributes to this dual perspective by incorporating both literal and metaphorical interpretations of the body of Christ. And the Doctrine of Humanity explains what it means to be human as the Imago Dei (the image of God). The Council of Chalcedon, the Eucharist Sacrament, and the Doctrine of Humanity provide a theological framework for me to understand my experience as a bicultural woman residing in the United States. I argue that all human beings are created in the image of God and possess inherent dignity and worth. Thus, the Christological perspective, and the Eucharist combined with the Doctrine of Humanity, helps me understand my unique experiences as a bicultural woman. It allows me to appreciate both the human and divine aspects of my identity and to recognize the value that each culture brings to my life.

Background

Humans have always tended to organize and classify their environment, since the beginning of time. According to social psychologist Fritz Heider, we all function like simple psychologists, striving to understand our surroundings to make informed decisions.¹ This process includes analyzing situations, predicting others' behavior, and answering challenging questions.² This requires significant mental effort, and we conserve energy by categorizing people into

¹ Christena Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 41.

² *Ibid.*, 42.

social groups. Our understanding of groups assists us in interacting with individuals and predicting their behaviors.³ This practice is integral to our social fabric, helping us navigate our complex and constantly evolving world.

People are often sorted into groups based on superficial characteristics like looks, language, and beliefs. Breaking down broad categories (like the body of Christ) into smaller, more specific groups (like ethnic or denominational groups) allows us to make more informed assumptions.⁴ Large groups include too much variation to guess things like an individual's religious beliefs, worship style, language, or food preferences. Predicting the actions of a member of a significant, diverse group is more challenging because we can only assume a little about the group's characteristics, values, and tendencies. We also tend to see people as members of a cultural subgroup rather than as unique individuals. This can lead to unnecessary divisions between groups.

Instead of seeing the body of Christ as one big group, we often see many separate groups within it.⁵ Instead of focusing on these smaller categories, we should remember that we are all part of the larger, diverse body of Christ.⁶

Personhood

What is the meaning of personhood? Can it be defined by an individual's personality, qualities, and morals? One form of personhood can be viewed from the perspective of citizenship. The United States (U.S.) passed the Naturalization Act of 1790, which granted

³ Ibid., 41.

⁴ Ibid., 42.

⁵ Ibid., 42.

⁶ Ibid., 42.

citizenship or personhood to “all free white persons.”⁷ According to Stephen Schwartz, the act gave substance to “two separate classes of people: free and white citizens,” but it also denied citizenship or personhood to non-white persons.⁸ Between 1865-1870, former slaves were given citizenship, American Indians gained citizenship with the Dawes Act of 1887, and then the Citizenship Act of 1924 gave citizenship to “natural-born citizens.”⁹ While the U.S. and other countries view personhood through the lens of citizenship, the Church views personhood from a different perspective.

According to John Zizioulas, a person’s identity is not just about the mix of mental and moral traits that make each person unique.¹⁰ Instead, being a person is different from being an individual or having a personality. It’s not static or unchanging.¹¹ According to philosophical and existentialist thought, personhood is not a mere collection of physical attributes or biological characteristics. Rather, it is a complex concept that entails the idea of being open to the world, to others, and to oneself. This “openness of being” implies an inherent capacity to transcend beyond one’s self, to move towards communion with others, and ultimately towards the boundaries of the self.¹² This movement towards communion and transcendence is often described as the “ek-

⁷ Stephen Schwartz, “Naturalization Act of 1790,” in *Issues in U.S. Immigration*, ed. Carl L. Bankston and Danielle Antoinette Hidalgo (Amenia: Grey House Publishing, 2015), 629.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 629.

⁹ William H. Burnside, “Citizenship,” in *Issues in U. S. Immigration*, ed. Carl L. Bankston and Danielle Antoinette Hidalgo (Amenia: Grey House Publishing, 2015), 203-205.

¹⁰ John D. Zizioulas, “Human Capacity And Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration Of Personhood,” in *T & T Clark Reader In Theological Anthropology*, ed. Marc Cortez and Michael P. Jensen (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2018), 313.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 313.

¹² *Ibid.*, 313.

stasis of being,” a state of being where one’s consciousness is directed towards the outside world, towards the other, and towards the infinite.¹³ At its core, a person’s relationship with others and God is characterized by their ability to empathize, connect, and communicate with them on a deep level. These relationships reflect their values, morals, and spirituality, and are a crucial determinant of their sense of purpose and fulfillment in life.

Social Identity

In addition to personhood, identity is another way people think about their role in society and whether they feel accepted. In terms of personal and cultural identity, we cannot identify ourselves in isolation; we are persons in relation to others.¹⁴ “Persons have to be understood in social terms-if only because they are somehow the product of their relations.”¹⁵ This means that we develop and understand our identity by interacting with those around us. Our experiences, conversations, and the feedback we get from others all contribute to how we see ourselves. So, our identity is not something static or inherent, but rather a dynamic process that evolves with time and social interactions.¹⁶ Only through our interactions with others can we distinguish ourselves as unique individuals.

For example, Rome’s imperial strategy allowed conquered people to keep their own traditions and beliefs, while also integrating them into the overarching social category of

¹³ Ibid., 313–14.

¹⁴ Robert Spaemann, “Text 3: Robert Spaemann, Persons: The Difference Between ‘Someone’ and Something,” in *T & T Clark Reader In Theological Anthropology*, eds. Marc Cortez and Michael P. Jensen (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 343; Paul C. Taylor, “Race: A Philosophical Introduction” (Medford: Polity Press, 2022), 137.

¹⁵ Harris, “Should We Say That Personhood Is Relational?,” 331.

¹⁶ Zizioulas, “Human Capacity And Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration Of Personhood,” 313; Harris, “Should We Say That Personhood Is Relational?,” 334.

“Roman.” This was achieved through Roman citizenship, which people could obtain by birth or through the generosity of the powerful. This created a shared and high-status identity that aimed to reconcile different social identities. The approach resulted in the formation of dual identities, such as being both Egyptian and Roman, in an attempt to bring intergroup peace by forming a superordinate identity while retaining subgroup salience.¹⁷ *The Aeneid* also describes the formation of a superordinate identity in technical detail.¹⁸ Social identity theorists have found this strategy to be quite effective in resolving real-world social conflicts where identity is central to the conflict.

Henri Tajfel explains the theory of social identity, which comes from an individual’s understanding of themselves based on being a member of a social group, and on how important that membership is to them.¹⁹ Social identity is part of an individual’s self-concept based on being a member of a group, not a characteristic of the group itself.²⁰

John Turner, a doctoral student and collaborator of Tajfel’s, expanded on social identity theory when he used Tajfel’s earlier research on intergroup behavior that focused on achieving positive differences between groups rather than social identity itself. Turner’s new theory

¹⁷ Aaron Kuecker, “Filial Piety and Violence In Luke-Acts and the Aeneid: Comparative Analysis of Two Trans-Ethnic Identities,” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 162.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹⁹ Philip F. Elser, “An Outline Of Social Identity Theory,” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 23; Silvia Knobloch-Westerwick and Matthias R. Hastall, “Please Your Self: Social Identity Effects on Selective Exposure to News About In- and Out-Groups,” *Journal of Communication* 60, no. 3 (September 2010): 518.

²⁰ Elser, “An Outline Of Social Identity Theory,” 23.

suggests that group behavior is an expression of individual behavior. Turner introduced self-categorization theory, which made social identity the basis for group behavior.²¹ According to this theory, social identity is not just belonging to a group, but the very mechanism that makes group behavior possible.²²

Turner takes social identity further as he describes depersonalization as “the process of ‘self-stereotyping’ whereby people come to perceive themselves more as the interchangeable exemplars of a social category than as individual personalities defined by their individual differences from others.”²³ Depersonalization does not refer to losing your individual identity or getting lost in a group. Instead, it is about shifting your identity from a personal level to a social level,²⁴ incorporating yourself within a broader perspective. Depersonalization offers individuals a collective identity by acknowledging social and cultural differences that have developed over time.²⁵ Group solidarity exists when members of a group acknowledge their similarities.

Personhood and Identity in the United States

The U.S. has a history of categorizing people into groups. For instance, at the inception of the U.S., even before independence from England, the practice of slavery fostered a desire for more wealth, land, and resources, often at the expense of others. This desire led the in-group, White individuals from Europe, to see the out-group as less than human to justify the greed of

²¹ Ibid., 27.

²² Ibid., 26.

²³ Ibid., 27.

²⁴ Ibid., 27.

²⁵ Ibid., 27.

the other group.²⁶ Driven by greed, the in-group violated the fundamental human rights of the out-groups, including Native Americans and the slaves they forcefully brought from Africa. During the era of slavery, White men justified their crimes, which ranged from enslaving people, forcing people to labor long, hard days, and taking out their anger and sexual desires on powerless women.²⁷ When their sexual assaults produced a new human being, a mixed-race child, White men denied wrongdoing and rejected the child born due to their hatred. The fact that these children were marked as mixed-race shows the influence of racial distinctions. Mixed-race individuals make the struggle of identity visible in unique ways.²⁸ Race is an important part of our current social and political situation in the U.S.

Laws prohibiting interracial marriages were prevalent in the American colonies before the Revolution finished in 1776. The term “miscegenation” referred to sexual or marital relationships between people of different races, and the term was coined during President Abraham Lincoln’s reelection campaign in 1864.²⁹ This term was associated with laws that criminalized any form of intimate relationships or marriages between people of different races. For example, the state of Virginia’s Racial Integrity Act in 1924 “made it ‘unlawful for any white person in this State to marry any save a White person, or person with no other admixture

²⁶ Brian Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

²⁹ Jennifer Hoewe and Geri Alomit Zeldes, “Overturning Anti-Miscegenation Laws: News Media Coverage of the Lovings’ Legal Case Against the State of Virginia,” *Journal of Black Studies* 43, no. 4 (May 1, 2012): 427-443.

of blood than White and American Indian.”³⁰ In 1958, Richard Loving, a White man, and Mildred Jeter, a woman of color, traveled from their Virginia home to Washington, DC, to get married.³¹ At the time, Virginia was one of the many states that had laws prohibiting interracial marriage. After they returned to Virginia, the couple was arrested, charged with violating the state’s Racial Integrity Act, and sentenced to one year in prison.³² Their sentence was suspended if they agreed to leave the state and not return together for 25 years.³³

The Lovings moved to Washington, DC, where they could live together as a married couple without fear of arrest. In 1963, Mildred wrote to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy for help in challenging the Virginia law.³⁴ The case eventually made its way to the Supreme Court, which ruled in 1967 that state laws prohibiting interracial marriage were unconstitutional based on the Fourteenth Amendment, which “guarantees equal protection and due process in the realm of marriage and family.”³⁵ This landmark decision in *Loving v. Virginia* struck down all remaining state bans on interracial marriage and recognized the right of all individuals to marry regardless of race. Even though the law was abolished, the disdain and animosity towards mixed-race individuals persisted in many people’s hearts and minds.

³⁰ Peter Wallenstein, “Interracial Marriage on Trial: Loving V. Virginia,” in *Race on Trial: Law and Justice in American History*, ed. Annette Gordon-Reed (Oxford: University Press, 2002), 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

³² Kevin Noble Maillard and Rose Cuison Villazor, *Loving V. Virginia in a Post-Racial World: Rethinking Race, Sex, and Marriage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁵ Noble Maillard and Cuison Villazor, 2.

Personhood and Identity in the United States Today

Race and ethnicity are relevant today, but the categories have become even more intricate based on evolving definitions and perceptions. These perceptions are influenced by socio-political changes, migration patterns, and the growing recognition of individual identities beyond traditional racial and ethnic classifications.³⁶ Theorists suggest approaches to diversity ranging from non-interference to the recognition and positive accommodation of minority practices through “group-differentiated rights.”³⁷ “A group-differentiated right is a right of a minority group (or a member of such a group) to act or not act in a certain way in accordance with their religious obligations and/or cultural commitments.”³⁸

Multiculturalism recognizes and celebrates the diversity of cultures within a society. It acknowledges that immigrants and people of all colors bring unique perspectives, traditions, and values that can enrich the social fabric of the societies where they live. Multicultural policies aim to ensure that people of color are not forced to abandon their cultural identities in order to fit into the dominant White culture.³⁹

The U.S. government is recognizing these changes slowly in the ways it tracks the U.S. population, including in the Census. Maria P. P. Root speaks to how complex identity is, and how individuals suffer from the burden of having to adopt one identity:

This throttling and stifling takes many forms: forced to fit into just one category from school registration to U.S. Census surveys; affiliations forced with oppressive questions (e.g., ‘Which one are you?’); forced to ‘act right,’ ‘think right,’ and ‘do right’ to belong,

³⁶ Taylor, “Race: A Philosophical Introduction,” 26.

³⁷ Song, “Multiculturalism.” sec. 1.3-4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, sec. 1.4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, sec. 1.4.

and forced to prove ethnic legitimacy to have an identity in an ethnically diverse society.⁴⁰

Due to Root's contributions to biculturalism, "the U.S. Census referred to these texts in their deliberations that resulted in a historic 'check more than one format to the race question for the 2000 census.'⁴¹

The 2020 U.S. Census estimated a population of 334,914,895, with 75.5% White, 13.6% Black or African American, 1.3% American Indian and Alaska Native, 6.3% Asian, 0.3% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone, and 3% of two or more races.⁴² The footnote for the "Hispanic or Latino" section that reads "Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories."⁴³ In 2020, the U.S. Census website states that "Hispanic origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before arriving in the United States. People who identify as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be any race."⁴⁴

For the 2010 Census, a new instruction was added immediately preceding the questions on Hispanic origin and race. The instruction stated that 'For this census, Hispanic origins are not races' because in the federal statistical system, Hispanic origin is considered to be a separate concept from race. There were three changes to the Hispanic origin question: (1) The wording of the question changed to 'Is this person Hispanic Latino or Spanish origin?' (2) The question provided no

⁴⁰ Maria P. P. Root, *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders As the New Frontier*, 1st ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1996), 5.

⁴¹ American Psychological Association (APA), "Maria P.P. Root, PhD," *Monitor on Psychology* 37, no. 2 (2006): 55, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/feb06/root>.

⁴² U. S. Census Bureau. "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States," accessed February 29, 2024, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/LFE046222>.

⁴³ APA.

⁴⁴ U.S. Census, "Hispanic Origin," Census.gov, accessed February 29, 2024, <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/hispanic-origin.html>.

specific instruction for non-Hispanic respondents. (3) The ‘Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin’ category provided examples of six Hispanic origin groups (Argentinean, Colombian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard and so on) and instructed respondents to ‘print origin.’⁴⁵

Dennis M. Rutledge describes everyone as “monoculturalists before we become biculturalists.”⁴⁶ Biculturalism refers to members of minority groups who have two unique cultural identities and practices.⁴⁷ Although they may appear White, Black, or Brown on the outside, bicultural children often find themselves looking for acceptance in a world that is not welcoming.⁴⁸ The moment bicultural children step outside their loving home, they are treated as nobodies or abominations due to their mixed heritage. Family members of bicultural children also fear societal backlash against their family.⁴⁹ Even if parents and grandparents are in inter-ethnic, inter-racial, or inter-religious relationships, children are seldom given an equal socialization into both cultures.”⁵⁰ Many children of bicultural ancestry “learned and know more

⁴⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, “Measuring Race and Ethnicity Across The Decades: 1790-2010,” accessed October 2, 2023, https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/race/MREAD_1790_2010.html.

⁴⁶ Rutledge M. Dennis, *Biculturalism, Self-Identity and Societal Development* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2008), 3.

⁴⁷ Sarah Song, “Multiculturalism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2020), para. 1.

⁴⁸ Leoandra Onnie Rogers, Ursula Moffitt, and Christina Foo, “‘Martin Luther King Fixed It’: Children Making Sense of Racial Identity in a Colorblind Society,” *Child Development* 92, no. 5 (October 9, 2021): 1818.

⁴⁹ Jamie Elizabeth Rosen and Geoffrey Greif, “The Voices of Interracial and Interethnic Couples Raising Biracial, Multiracial, and Bi-Ethnic Children Under 10 Years Old,” *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal* 40, no. 5 (October 2023): 674.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

about one part of their cultural heritage than the other part.”⁵¹ But how can someone be bicultural without giving up any of their identities?

The Bible and Dual Identities

The Bible offers insight into biculturalism and the idea of having multiple identities through the Christology of Jesus and his dual identity. Jesus lived during the time of the Roman Empire, which enabled individuals to maintain their original identity while also becoming part of a new social group.⁵² In his writing, Luke, a disciple of Jesus and the writer of the book of Luke and Acts in the New Testament, delineates the characteristics of the Christian community, also known as Jesus-followers, who were unified under the banner of Christianity despite their diverse cultural and social backgrounds.⁵³

According to Brian Bantum, our perception of humanity is intricately tied to our perception of Jesus.⁵⁴ Christians often view the life of Jesus as a lens through which we can better comprehend our existence, from his miraculous birth to his ultimate sacrifice. In this way, the life of Jesus serves as a guiding force that shapes our self-understanding. This view is not

⁵¹ Ibid., 3.

⁵² Aaron Kuecker, “Filial Piety and Violence In Luke-Acts and the Aeneid: Comparative Analysis of Two Trans-Ethnic Identities,” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 165.

⁵³ “Filial Piety and Violence In Luke-Acts and the Aeneid: Comparative Analysis of Two Trans-Ethnic Identities,” 165.

⁵⁴ Brian Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 83.

restricted to bicultural people. Bantam states, “Jesus’ life and death encompass all of humanity. Christ is a complete person.”⁵⁵ He cannot be one without the other.

Research Problem and Research Questions

Humans have a complex identity intertwined with our race and our place in the world.⁵⁶ No one knows precisely how identities are forged, but it is safe to say that identities are not invented: we arrive at them through our experiences.⁵⁷ The concept of double consciousness, as introduced by sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois, resonates in this context, as many individuals feel torn between two cultures and identities that are difficult to reconcile.⁵⁸ My own struggles with my ethnicity and the pressure to choose one identity over the other illustrate how individuals feel compelled to conform to societal norms and expectations regarding their racial identity. We must recognize and understand the diversity of our experiences in order to create a more inclusive and accepting society. How can we reconcile conflicting aspects of ourselves? For example, can I identify as both Appalachian and Mexican in the U.S. today? Do I have to choose one aspect of my identity and ignore the other?

I argue that the dual nature of Jesus as both human and divine, as articulated through the Council of Chalcedon, the Eucharist, and the Doctrine of Humanity, provides a theological framework for understanding my experience as a bi-cultural woman. The Council of Chalcedon may offer some insight into the idea of hypostasis, which suggests the possibility of two people

⁵⁵ Ibid., 93.

⁵⁶ Taylor, “Race: A Philosophical Introduction,” 10.

⁵⁷ James Arthur Baldwin, “No Name in the Street” (Lincoln University: The Dial Press), 63, accessed March 5, 2024.

⁵⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Souls of Black Folk” (New York: G & D Media, 2019), 14.

in one. The dual nature of Jesus as human and divine, as articulated through the Council of Chalcedon, provides a theological framework for understanding my experience as a bicultural woman in the U.S. The Council of Chalcedon's teachings can be a guide to understand the concept of hypostasis, which means the existence of two persons in one. This idea of a dual nature, like Jesus being human and divine, helps me understand my life as a bicultural woman in the U.S.

What is the experience of being a bicultural woman in the U.S.? How can the Council of Chalcedon offer insight into the idea of hypostasis? How does the dual nature of Jesus provide a theological framework for understanding the experience of a bicultural woman in the U.S.? Why is the Eucharist essential to the Church and to individuals? What are the dual aspects of the Eucharist? What is Imago Dei? What does it mean to be a whole human person as God intended us to be?

Definition of Key Terms

Biculturalism- “Biculturalism is being part of two cultures without being fully absorbed into either. You may belong to one culture initially, but later adopt another. It's like standing with one foot in each culture and navigating both.”⁵⁹

Chalcedon Council - The Council of Chalcedon met in 451 CE, at the Church of Saint Euphemia the Martyr in Chalcedon.⁶⁰ The Council addressed who Jesus Christ was and his dual

⁵⁹ Dennis, *Biculturalism, Self-Identity and Societal Development*, 6.

⁶⁰ Eboni Marshall Turman, “Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon” (New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 36.

nature of Jesus Christ and relationship to God. What came out of the council meeting was what is known as the Chalcedonian Definition of Faith.⁶¹

Christology - Christology is the branch of theology concerning the nature, identity, and mission of Jesus Christ. Through the study of Christology followers seek to understand the significance of Jesus, explore his teachings, and decipher the messages embedded in biblical scripture.⁶²

Eucharist - The Eucharist is a Christian sacrament of consuming consecrated bread and wine that represents the body of Christ.⁶³ It is also known as communion, signifying unity that encompasses differences and relationships.⁶⁴ It brings about a complete union with God, reflecting the relationship that people should have with the world.

Hypostasis - Hypostasis refers to the basic state or substance that supports everything else. In a deeper sense, it is like the material or substance that makes up reality, and this exists on its own, regardless of its features. The Cappadocian Fathers of the fourth century defined hypostasis as “individual reality.”⁶⁵ Zizioulas describes hypostasis as “of existence.”⁶⁶

⁶¹ Ibid., 35-36.

⁶² Ian A. McFarland, *The Word Made Flesh: A Theology of The Incarnation*, First edition. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), 10-14.

⁶³ Roland Millare, “Towards a Common Communion: The Relational Anthropologies of John Zizioulas and Karol Wojtyla,” *New Blackfriars* 98, no. 1077 (September 2017): 106. Daniel L. Migliore, “Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology” (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 446; T. J. Gorringer, *Furthering Humanity: A Theology of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 202.

⁶⁴ Migliore, “Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology,” 89.

⁶⁵ Marc Cortez and Michael P. Jensen, *T & T Clark Reader in Theological Anthropology* (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2018), 311.

⁶⁶ The Cappadocian fathers were Basil the Great (330-379), the Bishop of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa (335-395), and Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389), Patriarch of Constantinople.

Hypostatic union - The Council of Chalcedon affirmed the belief that Jesus was both fully divine and fully human, and that these two natures were united in one person, without mixture or confusion.⁶⁷ This doctrine is known as the “hypostatic union” and is a foundational belief of orthodox Christianity.

Imago Dei - The image of God in humanity; it reflects the idea that Jesus can have multiple natures and still be one person.

Researcher Positionality

I empathize with the experience of fulfilling different roles in life. I assume various responsibilities daily and interact with diverse individuals, as a mother, grandmother, daughter, and sister. Moreover, I am often perceived solely through the lens of my physical appearance, which is typically categorized as white and female. Acknowledging and addressing the privileges and advantages of one’s racial identity is essential. We must actively work towards dismantling systemic inequalities and injustices. I must admit that I have personally benefited from being perceived as white. For a long time, I was unaware of the implications and impact of white privilege. Society has constructed arbitrary barriers that divide people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and gender.⁶⁸

Outline of the Thesis

Chapter one presents a case study and provides background information on being a bicultural individual in the U.S. It reviews the history of biracial marriages and the Census and discusses key terms.

⁶⁷ Eboni Marshall Turman, “Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon” (New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 36.

⁶⁸ Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo, *Majority World Theology: Christian Doctrine in Global Context* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 41.

Chapter two delves into the dual nature of Jesus, addressing the question, “Was Jesus human or God?” It covers the Council of Chalcedon, which provided definitive language to describe Jesus, and discusses what Jesus is not. The chapter then explores Christology and its relation to humanity.

Chapter three discusses the Eucharist, also known as communion, and views the sacrament as both a literal and metaphorical event. It emphasizes the importance of the Eucharist to the Church community and individuals.

Chapter four answers the question, “What is the Imago Dei?” It explains what the Imago Dei looks like within the community and within oneself.

Chapter five brings all the topics together in the conclusion, providing my unique insights into understanding my bicultural identity through Christ. I end by emphasizing the presence of Imago Dei within me and embracing both cultures.

CHAPTER 2: THE NATURE OF JESUS

Was Jesus a Human or a God?

The birth of Christianity can be traced back to the ministries of Jesus Christ among the Jews of the first century.⁶⁹ He was born in Bethlehem and later began teaching and preaching among his fellow Jews. God had prepared the way for the disciples to spread the “good news” by sending Jesus.⁷⁰ In the Bible the *Book of Acts* mentions, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).⁷¹ Through their faith in Jesus, his disciples were promised to receive the Holy Spirit which will allow them to spread the “Good News.”

In Christianity, there is a profound understanding that Jesus Christ represents both the essence of humanity and divinity, a concept that might seem paradoxical considering the general perception of human nature.⁷² This belief holds that Jesus, while being divine, also shared common human experiences and emotions, thus embracing the full spectrum of human existence. This dual nature of Jesus, being both human and divine, is a cornerstone of Christian theology and is central to its teachings and doctrines and divinity.⁷³

⁶⁹ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 1: The Early Church To the Dawn Of The Reformation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 13.

⁷⁰ Gonzalez, 13.

⁷¹ All scripture citations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted. Biblegateway.com, n.d.

⁷² Karl Barth, “Church Dogmatics,” in *T & T Clark Reader in Theological Anthropology*, eds. Marc Cortez and Michael P. Jensen (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2018), 48.

⁷³ Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity*; Marc Cortez, “Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed,” (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010).

In 451 CE, the Council of Chalcedon, a global ecumenical council, convened to discuss Christian unity.⁷⁴ It introduced terminology to express Jesus’s dual nature as God and man.⁷⁵ Vladimir Lossky, a Russian Eastern Orthodox theologian, provides an analogy for understanding Christ’s dual roles in the Trinity as defined by the Council of Chalcedon: “One must conceive in Christ at once two distinct operations and a single goal, a single act, a single result. Christ acts through these two natures, as a sword reddened in the fire cuts and burns at the same time. Each nature cooperates in the single act according to the manner suitable to it.”⁷⁶ Lossky explains that “Christ is consubstantial with the Father by His divinity, and He is consubstantial with us by His humanity.”⁷⁷ The Father and Christ are of the same substance. In fact, “there was never a time when Christ did not exist.”⁷⁸ Christ and humanity are also of the same substance. This means Christ is a single person with two underlying natures or hypostasis “without divinity being transformed into humanity, nor humanity into divinity.”⁷⁹ Both natures are balanced, and neither is more or less than the other.

⁷⁴ Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo, *Majority World Theology: Christian Doctrine in Global Context* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 192.

⁷⁵ Paul Senz, *Church Councils: 100 Questions and Answers* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2023), 47.

⁷⁶ Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978), 104.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁷⁸ Bart Ehrman, Michael F. Bird, and Robert B. Stewart, *When Did Jesus Become God?: A Christological Debate* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing, 2022), 31.

⁷⁹ Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, 104.

Christology from Above

Was Christ human or divine? This question has been debated by the Church and its followers since his death and resurrection in 33 CE. In 451 CE, the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon convened to establish a common understanding of Christ. Two notable perspectives were the Alexandrian school in Alexandria, Egypt, and the Antiochene school in Syria.

The Alexandrian school and the Antiochene school stood out. According to Turman's book *Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation*, the Alexandrian school, led by the Pope and Patriarch Alexander (ca. 326), believed in the Logos-sarx or "word-flesh," Christology, which held that Jesus embodied the Word or Spirit of God, but Christ "is not a human being."⁸⁰ The Alexandrian school denied Jesus's humanity entirely, even though God assumed human form through the logos, Jesus was not human.⁸¹ The term "logos" represents wisdom, learning, philosophy, and divine insight.⁸² For the Alexandrian school, Jesus has always been and will always be equal to God the Father. This belief, known as Christology from above, is based on the confession of faith in the deity of Christ as expressed in the New Testament.

From the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE until the Enlightenment period in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Christian Church's primary approach to Christology was from a top-down perspective.⁸³ Theologians drew their understanding from the Gospel accounts in the New

⁸⁰ Turman, "Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon," 20.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸² Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 47.

⁸³ Kärkkäinen, *Christology*, 4.

Testament and attempted to express it in “precise philosophical and theological terms.”⁸⁴ It is worth noting that the Church fathers’ interpretation played a crucial role in shaping faith in Christ.

During this time, theologians placed great emphasis on the divine nature of Christ and his role as the Son of God. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, author of *Christology: A Global Introduction*, states they considered the Gospels credible sources that revealed the truth about Jesus and used them as the basis for their theological reflections and teachings.⁸⁵ The Gospel records were foundational in their teachings and helped them understand the nature of Christ more deeply.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, a group of theologians, including Emil Brunner, Karl Barth, and Rudolf Bultmann, put forth a theological argument that the basis for understanding Christ was not the historical Jesus but the *kerygma*, which refers to the Church’s preaching or proclamation of Christ.⁸⁶ They believed the kerygma was the authoritative source for understanding Christ’s identity and message. According to this theology, Christ could not be fully understood through historical documentation alone but only by interpreting the Church’s proclamation of Christ.⁸⁷ This approach emphasized the importance of faith and the Church’s role in shaping the understanding of Christ’s message.

The Alexandrian school, headed by Pope and Patriarch Alexander, advocated for the Logos-sarx Christology, rejected Jesus’s humanity, and asserted that He has always been and will forever be equal to God the Father. This was known as Christology from above. There was

⁸⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 5.

an alternative approach, Christology from below, which emphasizes Christ's humanity, as I explore below.

Christology from Below

The Antiochene school of thought emphasized a particular Christology that is known as “logos-anthropos” or “word-human being.”⁸⁸ This theological perspective emphasizes Jesus Christ's humanity and recognizes his significant role in God's work of saving humanity. This perspective is often called low Christology, as it focuses on Jesus's humanity rather than his divinity. Nestorius (386-451), the Archbishop of Constantinople, was a leading representative of the Antiochene school, which believed this perspective allowed believers to more fully understand and appreciate the human experience of Jesus, who was both fully God and fully human.⁸⁹ By emphasizing Jesus's humanity, the Antiochene school also emphasized the importance of human agency and free will in the work of salvation.

The Antiochene school had a different perspective from Alexandrian Christology's understanding regarding the logos. They believed that it could restrict the logos by subjecting it to human limitations and emotions.⁹⁰ Instead, Antiochene theologians proposed the concept of “two distinct natures held in unity with one another.”⁹¹ In simpler words, Jesus Christ is both human and divine.

⁸⁸ Turman, “Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon,” 21.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

The Logos, the divine, exists within Jesus without erasing his humanity. Both divine and human aspects of Jesus exist together in unity while maintaining their distinctiveness. According to Logos-Anthropos Christology, Jesus's humanity originates directly from God.⁹² This understanding interprets Jesus Christ as a unity of divine and human nature, emphasizing the moral unity of their intentions and actions. Jesus is considered human because of his relationship with God. Both the Antiochene and Alexandrian schools sought to understand the identity of Jesus and whether he was both Logos and sarx (flesh), only Logos, or only sarx. Turman points out that "both schools of thought inherited the 'preexistent' criteria and presuppositions of the Logos-theology of the Apologists that was concretized at Nicaea. And both agreed that the Logos could not be subject to human limitations."⁹³

This agreement on the nature of the Logos-theology underscores the unity in Christian belief, despite different interpretations. This interpretation of the Logos as beyond human limitations reflects the divine nature of this theological concept.⁹⁴ This belief is fundamental to the faith, shaping the understanding of how the divine wisdom of God, the Logos, interacts with the world and humanity.⁹⁵ Many Christians interpret and understand their faith and their relationship with the divine through this lens.

Like Jesus, every person has a complex physical body consisting of muscles, bones, blood, and skin. This body is how we perceive ourselves and others and identify and

⁹² Ibid., 21.

⁹³ Ibid., 21.

⁹⁴ McFarland, *The Word Made Flesh: A Theology Of The Incarnation*, 65.

⁹⁵ Turman, "Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon," 21.

communicate with each other. The body can differ in size, height, and skin color, ranging from pale, fair, medium, olive, naturally brown to dark brown/black. A person's hair can also vary in texture, from straight, wavy, curly, or even nonexistent. The physical body is a source of diversity among people, and it can also be a source of discrimination and inequality when it does not conform to dominant beauty standards. As Turman highlights, the "physical body is problematic to the extent that it is characterized by its visible and active noncompliance with dominant standards."⁹⁶ People who do not conform to these standards are often subjected to negative stereotypes and discrimination, which can lead to a lack of opportunities and social exclusion.

Even Jesus's human body faced problems due to its nature, as he was born into a society that had specific expectations of what a "perfect" body should look like. Jesus's teachings emphasized valuing people for who they are rather than their physical appearance. As such, according to the teachings of Jesus, we should strive to treat each other with kindness and respect, regardless of our physical differences.

The Antiochene school of thought emphasized the "logos-anthropos" Christology, focusing on Jesus Christ's humanity and his role in salvation. This perspective, represented by Nestorius, Archbishop of Constantinople, proposed Jesus Christ as a unity of divine and human nature, with both aspects existing in unity while maintaining their distinctiveness. The school also highlighted the importance of human agency and free will in salvation. Despite differing interpretations, both the Antiochene and Alexandrian schools agreed on the divine nature of the Logos, shaping the interaction of divine wisdom with the world and humanity. This

⁹⁶ Ibid., 37.

understanding extends to the physical body, emphasizing respect for diversity and noncompliance with dominant standards, as exemplified by Jesus’s teachings.

Interpretations of Christ’s Humanity

Throughout the history of the Catholic Church, there have been a total of 21 Ecumenical Councils held, each with its significance and impact on Christology.⁹⁷ During the early history of the Christian Church, there was debate about the true nature of Jesus, which was settled during the first four ecumenical councils. The term “ecumenical” comes from the Greek *oikoumene*, which means “the whole inhabited world.”⁹⁸ In ecclesiastical contexts, it refers to the entire universal Church— for example, ecumenism is the term for efforts toward Christian unity— the unity of all who profess faith in Christ.⁹⁹

The concept of personhood in relation to the Trinity, particularly between Christ and the Father, is a complex theological issue that has been debated for centuries.¹⁰⁰ In the Trinity, God is understood to exist as three distinct persons in one divine entity. The Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit are all distinct persons, yet they are all fully God, co-equal and co-eternal.

⁹⁷ Paul Senz, *Church Councils: 100 Questions and Answers* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2023), 22.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹⁹ Senz, 21; Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 1: The Early Church To the Dawn of The Reformation*, 186.

¹⁰⁰ Cortez, *T & T Clark Reader In Theological Anthropology*, 311; Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity*, 15; Turman, “Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon,” 36.

The New Testament does not use the terms *consubstantial* or *homoousios* to describe the relationship between Christ and the Father, which has resulted in various interpretations and understandings of the Trinity within different Christian denominations.¹⁰¹ Some believe Christ and the Father are distinct, separate beings, while others believe they are of the same substance or essence. The latter view has been expressed using the term *consubstantial*, which means “of the same substance,” or *homoousios*, which means “of one essence.”¹⁰² Constantine the Great (306-337 CE), ruler of the Roman Empire, suggested the use of the word *homoousios*.¹⁰³

Arianism was first attributed to a Christian presbyter Arius of Alexandria (256-336 CE). Arianism emerged in the early Christian Church, positing that since only one God exists, the Son cannot be God.¹⁰⁴ Instead, Arianism asserted that Christ occupies a level below God, and all other beings are subordinate to him.¹⁰⁵ They believed he was made in heaven before the world started, and was nearer to God the Father than any angel.¹⁰⁶ The Arians claimed that Christ is a created being, not co-eternal with God the Father, and therefore not equal to him in divinity.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo, *Majority World Theology: Christian Doctrine in Global Context* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 41; Justo L. Gonzalez, *MAÑANA Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 102.

¹⁰² Green, Pardue, and Yeo, 41; Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 95.

¹⁰³ Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, 188.

¹⁰⁴ Turman, “Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon,” 25.

¹⁰⁵ Green, Pardue, and Yeo, *Majority World Theology*, 41.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁰⁷ Turman, “Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon,” 25.

This view challenged the traditional understanding of the Holy Trinity, which holds that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct persons in one divine nature.

Arianism generated much debate and controversy in the Christian world.¹⁰⁸ Many theologians, bishops, and ordinary Christians rejected it as heresy, arguing that it denied the full divinity of Christ and undermined the foundations of Christian faith. Arianism also had influential supporters, including some emperors and bishops, who saw it as a reasonable and logical interpretation of the Scriptures.¹⁰⁹

Sabellianism emerged as a response to the challenge of explaining the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity as depicted in the New Testament.¹¹⁰ Sabellianism is named after Sabellius (215), a third-century priest and theologian.¹¹¹ To Sabellianism, the Son is not separate from the Father but is the Father in another form or ‘mode’ of being.¹¹² This view denies Christ’s unique identity and suggests that Jesus just a persona of God or that God is concealing himself behind Jesus.¹¹³ Sabellianism proposed a modalistic view of the Trinity, which sees the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as different modes or aspects of the one God.¹¹⁴ This

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰⁹ Green, Pardue, and Yeo, *Majority World Theology*, 41.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹¹ Kärkkäinen, *Christology*, 50.

¹¹² Green, Pardue, and Yeo, 41; Jean Metr Zizioulas, “The Church As Communion,” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1994): 8.

¹¹³ Ehrman, Bird, and Stewart, *When Did Jesus Become God?*, 63.

¹¹⁴ Kärkkäinen, *Christology*, 49.

view was criticized by many Church leaders, who saw it as a threat to the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity.

The debate between Sabellianism and orthodox Trinitarianism was a major theological controversy of the early Christian Church.¹¹⁵ The Council of Nicaea in 325 CE affirmed the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and condemned modalism as a heresy, thereby resolving the controversy. The Council of Nicaea was called to address the controversy surrounding Arius's teachings.¹¹⁶ Arius believed that Jesus was not fully divine.¹¹⁷ But the Cappadocian fathers who attended the Council decreed that Christ was indeed fully divine and a distinct entity.¹¹⁸ They also confirmed the Church's belief in the Holy Spirit as the third member of the Trinity.¹¹⁹ This decree led to the creation of the Nicene Creed, which is still recited in many Christian denominations today.¹²⁰

The Council of Constantinople was convened in 381 CE to clarify the Nicene Creed and address the controversy surrounding the Holy Spirit.¹²¹ The third council, the Council of Ephesus, was convened in 431 CE to address the controversy surrounding the teachings of

¹¹⁵ Green, Pardue, and Yeo, *Majority World Theology*, 41.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 352-353.

¹¹⁷ Turman, "Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon," 25.

¹¹⁸ Green, Pardue, and Yeo, *Majority World Theology*, 352.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹²⁰ Richard E. Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God: The Struggle to Define Christianity During the Last Days of Rome* (New York: Harcourt, 1999), 75.

¹²¹ Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 1: The Early Church To the Dawn Of The Reformation*, 218.

Nestorius, who believed that Jesus had two separate natures.¹²² The fourth council, the Council of Chalcedon, was convened in 451 CE to address the controversy surrounding the teachings of Eutyches, who believed that Jesus had only one nature.¹²³ Overall, these ecumenical councils played a significant role in shaping the beliefs and practices of the Christian Church, particularly regarding Jesus's nature and being.

The Catholic Church's 21 ecumenical councils have significantly impacted Christology, shaping the understanding of Jesus's nature. Key debates include the relationship between Christ and the Father, with terms like *consubstantial* and *homoousios* used to express their shared substance or essence. Arianism, attributing to Arius of Alexandria, posited that Christ was a level below God, while Sabellianism suggested that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were different modes of one God. The Council of Nicaea in 325 CE affirmed the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and condemned Arianism and modalism as heresies. Subsequent councils further clarified these doctrines and addressed controversies surrounding the nature of Jesus. The Chalcedon Council defined the dual nature of Christ, as I will explain below.

The Chalcedon Council

The contemporary Church often neglects to discuss Jesus's dual nature as God and man. We use words in many ways and define their meaning from different perspectives. James Thieke argues that "terminology is an issue," depending on which discipline or lens one uses, a word can be "analogous to 'human being' as an entity, or as a specific philosophical construct, or in a

¹²² Ibid., 298.

¹²³ Turman, "Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon," 36.

theological sense as equivalent to ‘hypostasis’ or ‘subsistence.’¹²⁴ In Christological views, personhood carries “no biological or cultural factors.”¹²⁵ When defined scientifically, personhood adopts a more human nature-oriented stance.¹²⁶

The Chalcedon Council of 451 CE stands out as the most significant and influential council because it played a pivotal role in shaping the doctrines of the Church and defining the beliefs of Christianity regarding Jesus that are still upheld today.¹²⁷ Chalcedon differentiated between God’s three distinct identities and his singular being.¹²⁸ For Sarah Coakley, “Chalcedon is strictly speaking, neither end nor beginning, but rather a transitional (though still normative) ‘horizon’ to which we constantly return, but with equal forays backwards and forwards.”¹²⁹

Sarah Coakley proposes using the term “apophatic” to reconcile the apparent conflict between Jesus’s two identities.¹³⁰ This is also known as negative theology, which asserts that we can only describe God by what God is not.¹³¹ “Coakley argues for an apophatic understanding of the Chalcedonian Definition that casts it as a transitional horos (boundary) that functions as both

¹²⁴ James Thieke, “Energies and Personhood: A Christological Perspective on Human Identity,” *Zygon*® 57, no. 3 (2022): 681.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 681.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 681.

¹²⁷ Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity*, 90.

¹²⁸ McFarland, *The Word Made Flesh: A Theology of the Incarnation*, 2.

¹²⁹ Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity*, 93.

¹³⁰ Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity*, 92.

¹³¹ Richard Jones and Jerome Gellman, “Mysticism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, eds. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Fall 2022 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2022), sec. 2.4.

end and beginning.”¹³² Bantum argues that “the framework of Chalcedon’s definition as apophatic is crucial because it offers a way of inhabiting the language of the creed. That is, the definition itself witnesses to a possibility that itself cannot contain.”¹³³

Brian Bantum argues that Christ is complete and cannot be separated into individual components. Bantum describes a “neither/nor” identity of Christ. The phrase “He is, and he is not” is used to clarify the center while hiding the mystery of the internal workings of the wills.¹³⁴ It is important to acknowledge this internal moment as central to the person.¹³⁵ We can only understand the mystery of his lineage and biology when we confess Christ’s undivided personhood.¹³⁶ This language emphasizes this internal aspect as key to the person. “Christ is a complete person. The mystery of his origins, his ‘biology,’ can only be understood within the acknowledgment of Christ’s unified personhood.”¹³⁷ The Doctrine of the Incarnation as womanist mediating ethic fundamentally asserts Jesus Christ as never either/or, but always both yours and mine.¹³⁸ As Bantum argues for a neither/nor identity of Christ, he provides a framework for my identity as a bicultural woman. I cannot be me without my Appalachian father or Mexican mother.

¹³² Turman, “Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon,” 39.

¹³³ Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity*, 93.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹³⁸ Turman, “Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon,” 56.

Coakley argues that the Chalcedon’s definition of faith sets limits on what can and cannot be said about Christ¹³⁹ by ruling out Apollinarianism, Eutychianism, and extreme Nestorianism— three incorrect interpretations of Christ—and providing a rule of language for distinguishing between unity and duality in Christ.¹⁴⁰ The definition leaves us with a boundary, which is where salvific acts must be brought to avoid doctrinal error.¹⁴¹ But the definition does not explain or grasp the reality it points towards.¹⁴²

The Council of Chalcedon played a significant role in shaping the doctrine of Christ’s dual nature as both human and divine.¹⁴³ The declaration affirms that Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully divine, known as the doctrine of the hypostatic union.¹⁴⁴ The members of the Chalcedon Council provided this statement to clarify and unite their teachings.

We also teach that we apprehend this one and only Christ-Son, Lord, only begotten-in two natures; and we do this without confusing the two natures, without transmuting one nature into the other, without dividing them into two separate categories without contrasting them according to area or function. The union does not nullify the distinctiveness of each nature. Instead, the properties of each nature are considered, and both natures concur in one “person” and one reality <hypostasis>. They are not divided or cut into two persons but are together the only begotten Word <Logos> of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus have the prophets of old testified; therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ taught us: thus the Symbol of Fathers <the Nicene Creed> has been handed down to us.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Ibid., 39.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 39.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 39.

¹⁴² Ibid., 40.

¹⁴³ Green, Pardue, and Yeo, *Majority World Theology*, 44.

¹⁴⁴ Thieke, “Energies and Personhood,” 678.

¹⁴⁵ Roger W. Nutt, “Thomas Aquinas on Christ’s Unity: Revisiting the De Unione Debate,” *Harvard Theological Review* 114, no. 4 (October 2021): 491-507.

This doctrine explains that Jesus has two distinct natures—one human and one divine—which are inseparably united in one person, without confusion, change, division, or separation. The Council’s ruling that hypostasis and prosōpon could be used interchangeably allowed for the creation of the Latin term ‘persona,’ which defined the concept of Christ’s dual nature more precisely.¹⁴⁶ This means that Jesus is not half human and half divine but fully human and fully divine. This decision had far-reaching implications for understanding the nature of God and humanity.

How Does Christology Relate to Humans?

The personhood of Christ helps us understand Christ’s nature and identity, but it also has an interconnection with humanity. When Jesus took on human form, he began to live the life of humanity. In this regard, Jesus was like any other human. At first, he was born and cared for by his mother, Mary. Growing up, he learned and experienced the same world humans do. He was tempted by evil, shunned by many, and was tortured and killed. Jesus also experienced happiness and joy, sorrow, and pain, belonging and not. Jesus feels and endures the same human condition that we do.

The Chalcedon teachings of Christianity hold that Jesus is not just a human being but also God. As God, Jesus has supernatural abilities that surpass those of humans. He performed many miracles during his time on earth, including turning water into wine at a wedding feast (John 2:1-11), feeding thousands of people with just a few loaves of bread and fish (Matt 14:13-21), and casting out demons from sick individuals (Matt 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-17).

¹⁴⁶ Green, Pardue, and Yeo, 44.

Furthermore, Jesus was crucified and then resurrected from the dead, which is considered the cornerstone of the Christian faith (Rom 6:8-11, Phil 2:8-11, Rev 1:5-6). This event proved Jesus's divine nature and power over death, which is why Christians believe in eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

The concept of multiple entities of the same person, reflected in the Trinity and the Imago Dei, suggests that one person can exist in multiple forms without compromising their unity. The declaration also affirms the concept of multiple entities of the same person, where one person can exist in multiple forms or entities without compromising their unity.

Conclusion

The concept of personhood in relation to the Trinity, particularly between Christ and the Father, has been a complicated theological matter. Different interpretations have led to various understandings among Christian denominations. Arianism proposes that the Son cannot be God, while Sabellianism suggests that the Son is the Father in another form. In 325 CE, the Council of Nicaea affirmed the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and condemned modalism as a heresy. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE played a significant role in shaping the doctrine of Christ's dual nature as both human and divine.

The Council of Chalcedon's declaration that Jesus embodies two natures in one, without transformation or separation, can be paralleled to the experience of bicultural individuals. This Christological perspective, along with the concept of Imago Dei, can help bicultural people understand and embrace their dual identities. The teachings of Christianity also highlight Jesus's human experiences and divine nature, reinforcing the belief in the inherent value and dignity of every individual. As Bantum argues for a neither/nor identity of Christ, he provides a framework for my identity as a bicultural woman. I cannot be me without my Appalachian Father or

Mexican mother. This understanding of Christology can help individuals with dual cultural identities navigate their sense of self and reinforce the belief that every person, regardless of their ethnicity, is inherently valuable and deserving of respect. The idea of a dual nature, like Jesus being both human and divine, helps to understand life as a bicultural individual in the U.S.

CHAPTER 3: WHY IS THE EUCHARIST ESSENTIAL TO THE CHURCH AND TO INDIVIDUALS?

The Church is a group of people brought together in Christ and the Spirit to echo the eternal communion with God on earth.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, the Church's identity comes from its connection with God.¹⁴⁸ Zizioulas and McPartlan write that the Church should mirror God's way of existence through personal communion.¹⁴⁹ Zizioulas concludes that the "Church is by definition incompatible with individualism; her fabric is communion and personal relatedness."¹⁵⁰ Colin Gunton, author of *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, points out how often Paul talks about community or the "body of Christ," when referring to the Church and its role in the world (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-26; Eph. 1:23; 4:12-16; 5:36; Col. 1:18-24).¹⁵¹ The Church is not merely a building or organization, but a community called by God, the Church cannot exist alone, only in relation to God and humanity.

The Bible's call for us to "become as God is" (Luke 6:36 and parallels) or to be "partakers of divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), which means that the Church cannot exist without reference the Holy Trinity in its existence and functions.¹⁵² The Holy Trinity is the way God

¹⁴⁷ John D. Zizioulas and Luke Ben Tallon, *The Eucharistic Communion, and the World* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), 14; Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003), 12.

¹⁴⁸ John D. Zizioulas, *The One And The Many* (Alhambra: Sebastian Press, 2012), 1423.

¹⁴⁹ Jean Zizioulas and Paul McPartlan, "Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church" (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 4.

¹⁵⁰ Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, loc. 1429; Zizioulas, "The Church As Communion," 8.

¹⁵¹ Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 61.

¹⁵² Zizioulas, *The One and the many*, loc. 1423.

exists (as defined by the Cappadocian Fathers as “mode of being).”¹⁵³ The Cappadocian Fathers, prominent Christian theologians in the 4th century, defined the Persons of the Trinity as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.¹⁵⁴ This definition emphasizes that God is trinitarian and exists in a relationship of love and communion. It means that God is not just a solitary entity but a relational being.¹⁵⁵ God relates to humanity through the persons of the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Trinitarian nature of God emphasizes the importance of relationships, love, and communion in Christian theology. In other words, communion is a manifestation of the trinitarian nature of God, a reflection of the perfect union and harmony within the Godhead.¹⁵⁶ Christ is unique in that he is both fully God and fully human at the same time. Christ serves as a mediator between humanity and God, just as the Holy Spirit bridges the gap between the two.¹⁵⁷ Christ is our link to the Divine.

The Church, as a communion of people in Christ, mirrors God’s existence and is incompatible with individualism. The Church and the Eucharist are closely linked, with the term “Church” often referring to gatherings for the Eucharist in the early Church. The Church’s existence and functions should reference the Holy Trinity, emphasizing relationships, love, and

¹⁵³ Zizioulas, “The Church as Communion,” 8.

¹⁵⁴ Green, Pardue, and Yeo, *Majority World Theology*, 44; Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 10.

¹⁵⁵ Zizioulas and McPartlan, “Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church,” 6.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵⁷ Dick Osita Eugenio, “Communion With God: The Trinitarian Soteriology of Thomas F. Torrance” (Ph.D., England, The University of Manchester), 106, accessed December 6, 2023, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1779539277/abstract/8A804D57201841F8PQ/1>.

communion. Christology and pneumatology are interdependent, with Christ serving as a mediator between humanity and God.

Why is Eucharist Essential to the Church as the Body of Christ?

The Eucharist is also known as Holy Communion or God's unity as a living community, which encompasses differences and relationships.¹⁵⁸ At the congregational level, Eucharist refers to the Christian ritual of partaking in consecrated bread and wine, symbolizing participation in the body of Christ. "The Eucharist achieves full communion with God and this union between God and the person is meant to characterize the relationship that a person ought to have with the world – one of transforming union."¹⁵⁹ This act symbolizes the divinity and humanity of Christ, suggesting that the participant, through Christ, also embodies both divine and human aspects.

The Eucharist commemorates the Last Supper, where Jesus shared bread and wine with his disciples, symbolizing his body and blood (Mark 14:17-26, Matt 26:20-30, Luke 22:14-23). During Eucharist services, believers partake in this symbolic meal, serving as a reminder of Christ's sacrifice and an affirmation of their faith.¹⁶⁰ Paul references the Lord's Supper as a symbolic communion with Christ. The night before Jesus' crucifixion, he had his last supper with his disciples. During the Supper, Jesus took bread and broke it, telling his disciples, "This is my body given for you. Every time you eat it, do it in memory of me (Matt. 26: 26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:24)." He then took his cup of wine and said, "This is the new covenant in

¹⁵⁸ Migliore, "Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology," 89.

¹⁵⁹ Millare, "Towards a Common Communion," 606.

¹⁶⁰ Zizioulas and Tallon, *The Eucharistic Communion, and the World*, 1; Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 72.

my blood. Every time you drink it, do it in memory of me (Matt 26:27, Mark 14: 24, Luke 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:25).” Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. saying, “This is my body given for you. Every time you eat it, do it in memory of me (Matt. 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:24).” He then took his cup of wine and said, “This is the new covenant in my blood. Every time you drink it, do it in memory of me (Matt 26:27, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:25).” By participating in this Holy Sacrament, believers become part of the Body of Christ.

In the New Testament, the Church often linked the Eucharist so closely with the Church that the terms *Eucharist* and *Church* could be used interchangeably.¹⁶¹ In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul provides guidance for their Eucharist gatherings.¹⁶² Even though he’s talking about the Eucharist, he refers to it as ‘when you come together as a Church...’ (1 Cor. 11:18).¹⁶³ According to Zizioulas, Paul used the term ‘Church’ to specifically reference a gathering or meeting to celebrate the Eucharist.¹⁶⁴ The idea that people in the first century CE could be considered a ‘Church’ even when not physically gathered was not a prevalent concept.¹⁶⁵ The Church of Paul’s day gathered in homes and temple areas to break bread with each other (Acts 2:46, Acts 12:12, Rom 16:3-5, Col 4:17). Modern views of the ‘Church’ as a universal entity or theoretical concept were not present at the time.¹⁶⁶ Church was where the people were.

¹⁶¹ Zizioulas and Tallon, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, 15.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

On an ecclesiological level, according to Zizioulas, communion is rooted in “faith in a God who is in His very being *Koinonia*.”¹⁶⁷ *Koinonia* is a Greek term that refers to Christian fellowship or communion. In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, Paul discusses the Church’s relationship with *koinonia* and its role in linking humanity and the Trinity. He criticizes the Church for engaging in arguments, fights, and divisions among themselves, instead of operating as one cohesive unit. Paul observed corruption, hunger, and greed in the Church, which hindered unity. This approach was not conducive to being in communion with Christ and God’s creation. God appointed Christ as the head of the Church, with the Church functioning as the Body of Christ. Each person is connected to one another, constituting the body of Christ. Through communion, humanity is connected to God, but also to humanity as a whole in all of our uniqueness.

Koinonia cannot be attributed to any specific Christian denomination but can be traced back to the early Latin church fathers, such as Ambrose and Augustine.¹⁶⁸ These Church fathers emphasized the importance of the Church’s unity and the need for Christians to unite in communion through the Eucharist. In *The One and The Many*, Zizioulas highlights that “*koinonia* derives not from sociological experience, not from ethics, but from faith in God.”¹⁶⁹ The term *koinonia* does not originate or draw from sociological experiences, such as community interactions, or from the study of ethics and moral philosophy. Instead, this concept has its roots deeply embedded in the belief and faith in God. It is faith that provides the foundational basis for the understanding and application of *koinonia*, rather than any societal or ethical perspective.

¹⁶⁷ Zizioulas, “The Church As Communion,” 6.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹⁶⁹ Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, loc. 156.

Expanding on the Body of Christ requires effort, commitment, and a focus on Christ. By working together and embracing the diversity of its members, the Body of Christ can thrive and fulfill its purpose as God intended. Communion is part of the broader mission, the Body of Christ is called to uphold justice, peace, and charity. By serving others and advocating for the marginalized, the Church embodies the teachings of Jesus and strengthens the bond of *koinonia*. It is in this collective effort that the Church truly comes alive, becoming a testament of love and unity in the world.

Zizioulas outlines four aspects of communion present in the Eucharist: (1) God communicates himself to humanity, (2) humanity enters into communion with God, (3) humanity enter into communion with each other, and (4) God communes through humanity to all of creation as a whole.¹⁷⁰ Communion between God and humanity thorough the Eucharist “calls humanity to relate the world to God.”¹⁷¹ Communion among humanity relates to the community, the people of the earth, as they relate to each other.¹⁷² Humanity bridges the space between God and the world so that all of creation—the animals, land, etc.—can commune with God.¹⁷³

These aspects of communion, as outlined by Zizioulas, underscore the interconnectedness that permeates every level of existence. This communion is not limited to the divine and the human but extends to all creation. It highlights humanity’s role as a conduit for Holy

¹⁷⁰ Millare, “Towards a Common Communion,” 606; Zizioulas and McPartlan, “Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church,” 7.

¹⁷¹ Zizioulas and Tallon, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, 36.

¹⁷² Millare, “Towards a Common Communion,” 606; Zizioulas and McPartlan, “Communion And Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church,” 7.

¹⁷³ Zizioulas and McPartlan, “Communion And Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood And The Church,” 7; Millare, “Towards a Common Communion,” 606.

communion, facilitating a relationship between God and humans and between God and all of creation. Daniel L. Migliore writes that communion signifies differences without division, giving without loss, and eternal harmony and peace.¹⁷⁴ The communion serves as a tangible representation of these connections. Zizioulas' perspective thus offers a comprehensive understanding of communion, encompassing divine, human, and ecological dimensions and emphasizing the importance of each in maintaining a harmonious balance. Moreover, the Church acts as a beacon of hope, guiding individuals on their spiritual journey. Through prayer, worship, and sacraments, it provides spiritual nourishment, encouraging believers to grow in faith.

Why Is the Eucharist Essential to People?

Zizioulas suggests that when the Church or individuals start relating to God as if He only relates to them after He “is,” they fail to grasp the full essence of God.¹⁷⁵ They reduce God to a mere object of their faith rather than experiencing Him as a dynamic and living presence.¹⁷⁶ But when they understand that God is *koinonia*, they can experience communion with Him and each other much deeper and more meaningfully.

Ultimately, Zizioulas argues that communion is not just a concept or a practice but a way of life.¹⁷⁷ It is a way of living in a relationship with God and others, grounded in the understanding that God is *koinonia* and that we are called to participate in the divine life. By embracing this understanding of communion, we can experience a profound transformation in

¹⁷⁴ Migliore, 89.

¹⁷⁵ Zizioulas, 6.

¹⁷⁶ Zizioulas, “The Church As Communion,” 6.

¹⁷⁷ Zizioulas and Tallon, *The Eucharistic Communion, and the World*, 82.

our lives and the Church's life.¹⁷⁸ The Church's life is the life of the community and the people who make up the Church. Through the act of communion, we are taking the Divine into ourselves creating a duality of the Divine and human within ourselves.

When partaking in communion, the Church and the people participate in the body of Christ by partaking in the consecration of bread and wine.¹⁷⁹ Within many Evangelical Churches, bread and wine are symbolic of the body and blood of Jesus, just bread and juice; within the Catholic Church, communion is a sacred ritual. As Robert Nash says, "We take the Divine into ourselves in the act of communion and the Divine is affirmed."¹⁸⁰ This act symbolizes the body and blood of Christ, thereby bridging the gap between humanity and God.¹⁸¹ Through this sacred act, believers acknowledge their unity with Christ and each other, experiencing a sense of spiritual fulfillment and fellowship.

Paul's teachings remind us that communion is not a mere ritual but an embodiment of Christ's love and sacrifice. It serves as a constant reminder of Christ's Last Supper, initiating a deep, personal connection with the divine. This connection is not just about remembering Christ's sacrifice; it's about living out His teachings in our everyday lives. By participating in communion, each person is reliving the very act Jesus preformed at the Last Supper with his disciples. When Jesus pronounced the bread and wine "My blood" and "My Body," he was

¹⁷⁸ Zizioulas, "The Church As Communion," 5-6.

¹⁷⁹ Zizioulas and McPartlan, "Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood And The Church," 10.

¹⁸⁰ Advsiior Meeting, March 15, 2024.

¹⁸¹ Mark Finney, "Social Identity and Conflict in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 11.17– 34 in Context," in *T & T Clark Handbook of Social Identity in The New Testament*, eds. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 211.

providing all of humanity the Holy Sacrament which is God to dwell within themselves. This act creates a dual identity of Divine and human attributes to those who participate in the Sacrament.

Conclusion

The Church is a community that is called by God and is inherently connected to the Eucharist. In the New Testament, these terms 'Church' and 'Eucharist' are often used interchangeably. The existence and functions of the Church should reflect the Holy Trinity, emphasizing relationships, love, and communion. The Eucharist is a symbol of participation in the body of Christ and is essential for achieving full communion with God and fostering unity within the Church. The role of the Church is to bridge the gap between humanity and God, embodying the teachings of Jesus and upholding justice, peace, and charity. Communion is not just a ritual but a way of life, fostering a sense of belonging, unifying the community, and deepening our relationship with God. The Eucharist provides another way to participate in the divine through communion with God and each other. God communes through humanity to all of creation, and by participating in communion, we possess both divine and human elements, providing another perspective on dual natures.

Zizioulas posits communion as a way of life, a relationship with God and others, grounded in the understanding that God is *koinonia*. The Church and its people participate in the body of Christ through communion, symbolized by the consecration of bread and wine. Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 highlight the Church's role in bridging the gap between humanity and the Trinity, emphasizing unity and service to others. Communion is not just a ritual, but an embodiment of Christ's love and sacrifice, fostering a sense of belonging, unifying the community, and deepening our relationship with God.

CHAPTER 4: IMAGO DEI

What is the Imago Dei?

The phrase “Imago Dei” is a Latin term which translates to “in the image of God.”¹⁸²

This concept is significant in theology and philosophy. Donal Murray describes what the Imago Dei means:

I respect another person, not just because he or she is like me. I respect every other person because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has united himself to that person to set him or her free (Gal 5.1); the Spirit, whose presence gives freedom (2 Cor 3.17) is within them; the Father, the source and goal of freedom, has loved them first. The freedom which we respect is not only an ‘exceptional sign of the image of God in the human being’, but also a sign of God's presence; its deepest meaning lies in God’s friendship.¹⁸³

According to Migliore’s interpretation, Imago Dei refers to human life in relation to God and other creatures.¹⁸⁴ In other words, the reflection of God’s image in humanity enables us to relate to God and other beings in a meaningful way. De La Torre adds that every individual reflects God’s image, regardless of their beliefs, race, gender, sexual orientation, or immigration status.¹⁸⁵ Similarly, Mary McClintock Fulkerson suggests the importance of having a God-centered or Theocentric relationship with the world that honors its “finitude” and “particularity,” not through categories of race, sex, or other, “but valued in its magnificent plurality.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Cortez, *T & T Clark Reader In Theological Anthropology*, 73; Migliore, “Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology,” 453.

¹⁸³ Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity: A Theology Of Culture*, 232.

¹⁸⁴ Migliore, “Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology,” 145.

¹⁸⁵ Miguel A. De La Torre, *The Politics of Jesus: A Hispanic Political Theology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 50–51.

¹⁸⁶ Cortez, *T & T Clark Reader In Theological Anthropology*, 103.

The question of what constitutes the “image of God” has been a topic of debate among scholars for centuries. St. Augustine (354-430 CE) interprets Ephesians 4:23-24 and Colossians 3:10 to suggest that the essence of human form lies not in physical attributes but in the illumination of the mind.¹⁸⁷ He argues that the “new man” referred to in the biblical passage represents a transformation in spiritual state rather than physical form. It signifies a renewed perspective and a shift towards spiritual maturity, embodying the core principles of love, unity, and selflessness as exemplified by Christ. The “new man” is thus seen as the embodiment of the transformative power of communion, bridging the gap between humanity and the Divine and fostering a deeper connection with God and His creation. Augustine quotes Eph 4:23-24 and Col 3:10, “Be renewed in the spirit of your minds and put on the new man, who is being renewed for the recognition of God according to the image of him who created him.” Augustine asserts that man was created in God’s image not in the physical body but in the form of an enlightened mind.¹⁸⁸ Through this spiritual transformation, individuals can commune with God and facilitate communion among each other, thereby reinforcing the interconnectedness of all beings within the grand scheme of God’s creation.

Theologian Karl Barth author of *Church Dogmatics* disagrees with Augustine and Aquinas’s “analogy between creation and Creator.”¹⁸⁹ Barth writes, “Man is a reflection and imitation of God.”¹⁹⁰ While Barth says “being made ‘in our likeness’ means we share certain

¹⁸⁷ St. Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis.,” in *T & T Clark Reader In Theological Anthropology*, eds. Marc Cortez and Michael P. Jensen (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2018), 76.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁸⁹ Kärkkäinen, *Christology*, 97.

¹⁹⁰ Barth, “Church Dogmatics,” 95.

qualities with God. Even though humans are God’s creations, our nature is not completely different. We are made in a way that reflects God’s own nature. In simpler terms, we reflect God.”¹⁹¹

Within God’s own being and realm, there exists a counterpart: a genuine and harmonious self-discovery and encounter, free co-existence and cooperation, and openness in confrontation and reciprocity.¹⁹² Man embodies this counterpart as a reflection of God, imitating the encounter and discovery present within God’s own being.¹⁹³ In fact, this reflection is a form of active participation where humans not only mirror God’s interactions but also engage in them. This participation is manifest in the way humans interact with each other and the world around them. Through these interactions, humans fulfill their role as the bridge between God and creation, facilitating a connection that allows for a deeper understanding and experience of God’s realm. This connection enables the free partnership and open engagement that is characteristic of God’s realm, and it is through this connection that humans can truly embody the counterpart that exists within God’s own being.

Being a whole human person is to be the Imago Dei. The phrase “in our likeness” implies that humans share certain qualities with God.¹⁹⁴ The “our” refers to the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. According to Barth, “Being made ‘in our likeness’ means we share certain qualities with God. Even though we are God’s creations, our nature is not completely

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 93-94.

¹⁹² Ibid., 93.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 94.

¹⁹⁴ St. Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” 76-77.

different.¹⁹⁵ We are made in a way that reflects God's own nature. In simpler terms, we are a reflection of God's image."¹⁹⁶ Our nature reflects the essence of God. As a result, we embody certain aspects of his character, such as love, compassion, and creativity. We were created to be unique among all other creatures, as we reflect God's image.¹⁹⁷ Thus, being a whole human person is to embody the "Imago Dei," reflecting God's essence and character.

Achieving Imago Dei through Community

We are called to love others as God loves us, to show compassion to those in need, and to use our creativity to bring healing and hope to the world.¹⁹⁸ Ultimately, by living in a way that reflects God's character, we fulfill our purpose and bring glory to God. Therefore, man is a counterpart to his fellow humans, experiencing "co-existence" and "cooperation" in a manner that mirrors God's relationships.¹⁹⁹ In essence, Barth suggests that while people are like God, we also embody the likeness of God in the relationships we have with each other.²⁰⁰

Jürgen Moltmann suggests that what makes us "Imago Dei" is not just the soul, but the body in community with one another.²⁰¹ God is in the community of people, not hidden away. Mary McClintock Fulkerson emphasizes "that our relationship to God is inextricably connected

¹⁹⁵ Barth, "Church Dogmatics," 93.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 93-94.

¹⁹⁷ St. Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," 76.

¹⁹⁸ Migliore, "Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology," 61.

¹⁹⁹ Barth, "Church Dogmatics," 94.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 94.

²⁰¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 94.

to our relation to the neighbor, a unique manifestation of the creation.”²⁰² Community and otherness are part of the Imago Dei. According to Moltmann, the experience of God “is the social experience of the self and the personal experience of sociality.”²⁰³ He explains that the Western psyche and its psychology are characterized by the suppression of the body and the subordination of nature to the domination of the human mind.²⁰⁴ This has resulted in Western individualism, which prioritizes the values of the human being over the values of human sociality.²⁰⁵

Christ as the “Fullest Expression of God”

According to de la Torre, there is only one individual that is the “fullest expression of God”: Christ.²⁰⁶ Similarly, Bantum describes Christ’s life as a human reflects human life.²⁰⁷ Christ, born of Mary through the Holy Spirit, is the fullness of the image of God; He crosses the line between time and eternity, creation and the uncreated.²⁰⁸ His life, filled with the Spirit, shows the perfection of creation and its possibilities. Christ’s presence is like a song of human

²⁰² Fulkerson, “The Imago Dei and a Reformed Logic For a Feminist/Womanist Critique,” 103.

²⁰³ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 94.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁰⁶ De La Torre, *The Politics of Jesus*, 126.

²⁰⁷ Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity*, 144.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 144.

life.²⁰⁹ Humanity becomes truly God's children through Christ, we are the people God intended from the beginning. We are the Imago Dei.

According to Barth, Christ's incarnation is humanity's response.²¹⁰ Christ's incarnation was a human response, deeply impacting human perception and interaction with the divine. This signifies God's intimate connection with humanity. This reaction is not separate from human beings, but rather, it comes from within us. This internal voice, the presence of Christ as a reaction, changes us.²¹¹ Athanasius describes how an artist takes a painting with stains and renews it, he does not throw it away, but redraws it.²¹² He explains Jesus's words to his people in John 3:3, "Except a man be born anew..." as not referring to birth from a mother, "but to the rebirth and recreation of the soul in the Image of God."²¹³ The concept of "Imago Dei" is not just about the soul, but also about the body in community with others. This reflects God's existence in the community of people.

Conclusion

The "Imago Dei" or "in the image of God" concept in theology and philosophy signifies that humans reflect God's image, enabling meaningful relationships with God and others. This image is not physical but lies in the enlightened, rational mind, according to St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. Karl Barth sees humans as a reflection and imitation of God, sharing

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 144.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 144.

²¹¹ Ibid., 144.

²¹² Saint Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (Apollo: Ichthus Publications, 2018), 18.

²¹³ Ibid., 18.

certain qualities with God. The concept extends to the community, with humans embodying the likeness of God in their relationships. Christ is highlighted as the “fullest expression of God,” reflecting human life, and showing the perfection of creation and its possibilities.

When bicultural individuals perceive themselves through the “Imago Dei,” we recognize that we can harbor two identities within a single body. Within the Christian tradition, the “Imago Dei” signifies the essence of being fully human and encompasses humanity and divinity. This perception reminds us of our dual ethnicity and spiritual kinship with the divine. Acknowledging this link can aid us in navigating life, appreciating, and embracing our bicultural identity's complexities. It also supports the notion that all individuals, irrespective of our ethnicity, are made in God's image and are, therefore, inherently valuable and deserving of respect. This viewpoint can encourage unity and acceptance among diverse communities, fostering a sense of belonging and reciprocal respect.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

As an individual with a unique cultural background, I have always been interested in understanding how my experiences have shaped my perspective and influenced the person I have become. I blend two distinct cultural backgrounds: Appalachian and Mexican American. Both these two cultures have each played a significant and integral role in shaping my identity and my view of the world. They have given me a dual lens through which I view society and my place.

Today, we are confronted with prevalent individualism, categorization, and exclusion issues. These issues affect people from all walks of life, impacting their personal and professional experiences. In pondering these problems, I often reflect on how the teachings and Christology of Jesus can help not only inform my perspective but also enlighten the perspectives of others. I consider how these teachings can provide guidance and understanding in navigating these complex societal issues.

In chapter one, I explored the concept of biculturalism, particularly in the context of the U.S., and its implications for personal identity. I delved into the historical categorization of people into groups and the societal pressures to conform to a single racial identity. I also discussed the theological framework provided by the dual nature of Jesus, as both human and divine, to understand the experience of being bicultural. I raised questions about reconciling conflicting aspects of identity and the societal recognition of individual identities beyond traditional racial and ethnic classifications.

Then, I discussed how the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE significantly influenced Christian doctrines, particularly the belief in Jesus's dual nature as human and divine, known as the hypostatic union. This concept asserts that Jesus has two distinct natures inseparably united in one person. The Council's ruling allowed for the term 'persona,' which more precisely defined

the concept of Christ's dual nature. This understanding of Christology can help individuals with dual cultural identities navigate their sense of self and reinforce the belief that every person, regardless of ethnicity, is inherently valuable and deserving of respect.

Next, I discussed how the Church symbolizes unity in Christ and rejects individualism, which has been closely tied to the Eucharist from early times. Its existence should reflect the Holy Trinity, emphasizing relationships and communion. The Eucharist symbolizes union with God and shapes one's worldly relationships. The Greek term *koinonia* refers to Christian fellowship, highlighting the Church's unity. This fellowship involves God's communication with humans, humans communing with God and each other, and God reaching all of creation through humans, providing deeper communion with Him and others.

Lastly, the "Imago Dei" suggests that humans reflect God's image, enabling meaningful relationships with God and other beings. Thus, being a whole human person is to reflect God's essence and character. I explored "Imago Dei," emphasizing that it is not just about the soul but also the body in community with others. This reflects God's existence in the community of people. Christ is highlighted as the "fullest expression of God," with his life reflecting human life and showing the perfection of creation and its possibilities.

The Christology of Jesus presents Christ as human and divine and provides a theological framework for understanding my experiences as a bicultural woman. The Council of Chalcedon, the Eucharist Sacrament, and the Doctrine of Humanity assert that all humans are created in God's image with inherent dignity and worth. This perspective allows for the appreciation of both the human and divine aspects of identity and the value each culture brings. Interestingly, Christology addresses many of the same issues that arose in Jesus's time, such as discrimination, exclusion, and the importance of community fostering. The Christology of Jesus, as a timeless

source of wisdom and guidance, has the potential to provide profound insights for people of all backgrounds, regardless of their cultural or religious beliefs.

Christology and Diversity

The Council of Chalcedon states that, in Jesus, “both natures concur in one.”²¹⁴ This pronouncement sheds light on how human beings can possess two ethnicities or races within themselves without losing one or the other. The Chalcedon Declaration also added that

At no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person (prosopon/personam) and a single subsistent being (hypostasin/subsistentiam); he is not parted or divided into two persons but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ.²¹⁵

Bicultural people find themselves in the same position. They embody two ethnicities or races in one body. In my case, I am both White and Mexican. Therefore, when I claim that I am Imago Dei, I may be “different and alienated from God,” but as a “human being, I bear some likeness to the divine.”²¹⁶ I am not one without the other, just as Jesus is God alone and is not human alone. As stated above, Jesus is both. His two natures do not transform one another, and each nature resides together without separating or being put into a category.

When bicultural people view themselves through the lens of the Imago Dei, they begin to understand that they can embody two identities within one body. The Imago Dei, in the Christian tradition, signifies what it means to be fully human. This concept also encompasses both

²¹⁴ Roger W. Nutt, “Thomas Aquinas on Christ’s Unity: Revisiting the De Unione Debate,” *Harvard Theological Review* 114, no. 4 (October 2021): 495.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816021000328>

²¹⁵ Ibid., 495.

²¹⁶ Thieke, “Energies and Personhood,” 678; *T & T Clark Reader In Theological Anthropology* (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2018), 100.

humanity and God. This concept serves as a reminder of their dual ethnicities and their spiritual connection to the divine. Recognizing this connection can help them navigate life, understanding and embracing the complexities of their bicultural identity. It also reinforces the belief that every individual, regardless of ethnicity, is created in the image of God and, therefore, is inherently valuable and worthy of respect. This perspective can foster unity and acceptance among diverse communities, promoting a sense of belonging and mutual respect.

Through my experiences and study of Christology, I have truly come to appreciate the unique perspectives and valuable contributions that people from diverse cultural backgrounds can bring. We can strive towards achieving a more just, equitable, and inclusive society for everyone by embracing these differences and working together in a spirit of unity and mutual respect. I have realized that a deeper understanding of my bicultural identity strengthens my identity in Jesus. I have clarified the difference within me—blending the Appalachian and Mexican cultures—through better understanding Jesus’s human and divine natures. I aim to embrace this identity and acknowledge my place in both worlds while recognizing the common thread of humanity that binds us all.

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