

teaching the total depravity of human beings? What has been the social and psychological cost of declaring that most of humanity is destined for hell?

The central theme of this book, as I say in the *Introduction* and the *Conclusion*, is: *Metaphysical Christianity is an authentic and distinct branch of the historic Christian church and that we are entering into the 3rd era in Christian history, which one day will be known as the Metaphysical Christian era.*

One characteristic of this new era will be a belief that Christ is incarnated in humanity so that we may *experience* joining Jesus in becoming God. Is now not the time to raise humankind so that we, individually and collectively, join with Jesus and enter into our rightful image and likeness of the 2nd person of the Trinity?

13. *Knowing Our Christ Within*

When people looking for a better way come to check out your church, they want to know: What do you teach about Jesus? We can respond with one of four possible answers.⁹⁵ The first two answers are from traditional Christianity and are known as low Christology and high Christology. The third answer is a classic metaphysical answer. The fourth, my choice, begins with metaphysical understanding but then expands to embrace the mystical experience. I hope this is helpful for you.

Answer 1: Jesus is raised up and appointed (a Christology from below).

Immediately coming up from the water, he saw the heavens parting, and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. A voice came out of the sky, "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mark 1:9-11)

The Church's earliest answer to questions about Jesus drew from Judaism, which recognized that from time to time, God raised up and appointed prophets, such as Moses and Elijah. Jesus, according to this tradition, was

⁹⁵ *What do you teach about Jesus?* <https://www.truthunity.net/unity-and-christianity/what-do-you-teach-about-jesus>

an exceptional human being but no more divine than any other human. Such special persons led the people through difficult times as prophets or “way-shower.” There was anticipation that God would raise and appoint an ultimate prophet, the Christ, or Messiah.

While this view of Jesus remained popular in some traditions, such as the Ebionites,⁹⁶ it was not accepted by St Paul and most of the Christian church until recent times.

Answer 2: Jesus descends and is incarnated (a Christology from above).

Have this in your mind, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, didn't consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:5-7)

Within a few decades of the resurrection of Jesus, members of the movement that formed around his life and teaching shifted from *following* Jesus to *worshipping* Jesus. Drawing again from Judaism, the early Church looked not to the Hebrew prophets but to the *Imago Dei*, the Image of God, as declared in Genesis 1:26-28. The Church affirmed that human beings are an image of God, but went further and declared that Jesus is the *very* image

⁹⁶ Ebionites. A Jewish sect lasting about five centuries that rejected Paul's epistles and accepted only the Gospel of Matthew.

of God, descended and incarnated from the heavenly realm. This shift is the first step in the development of the Church's teaching of the Trinity.

Answer 3: Jesus has always been (a Christology from beyond).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him. Without him was not anything made that has been made. (John 1:1-3)

Christianity expanded out of Palestine into modern-day Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Turkey, and Greece, encountering people with an entirely different worldview, something we will refer to later as “viewpoint” or “aspect.” The Church encountered Hellenistic Jews in the broader Mediterranean, referred to in the New Testament as “Greeks.” Their worldview or “aspect” was grounded in Stoic and Platonist philosophy, not Semitic Judaism. The church adopted and adapted several Greek philosophical concepts to attract these Hellenized Jews to the Christian faith.

The Church drew from Greek Stoicism a concept known as *oikonomia*, known in English as a “divine economy,” and understood *oikonomia* as a divine ordering of our planetary existence. This provided a new way to understand how salvation works in history. A traditional term for the *divine economy* is *God's providence*, the

protective care of God or nature as a spiritual power. But a modern-day term that best expresses our experience of *oikonomia* is the *Sacred Canopy*, from Peter Berger. I will elaborate on the Sacred Canopy at the *Conclusion* of this book.

The Church drew from Greek Platonism a concept known as *nous*, meaning “divine Mind.” A modern-day phrase that best captures our experience of *nous* is “one power, one presence.” Because the Church understood *nous* to be the source of all being, it was used to provide a new way to understand God the Father, the creator. The Church also drew from Platonism, a concept known as *logos*, meaning “the Word.” The church understood “*logos*” as the archetype or divine pattern of His expression. Because the “very image of God” was a concept from Judaism, the church used *logos* as a new way for Hellenistic Jews to understand Jesus as the perfect image or archetype of God the Father.

Because of the early Church adoption and adaptation of the concepts of *oikonomia*, *nous*, and *logos*, Christianity became, and in many ways remains today, a blend of Judaism and what we know as “metaphysics.” It was the beginning of a thread in the historic Christian church that I call “metaphysical Christianity.”

These new concepts changed what the early Church taught about Jesus. Judaism in Palestine did not draw a substantial distinction between the manifest world and “the heavens.” So whether Jesus is “from below” or “from above,” it was still Jesus who was “nearby.” But the Hellenistic Mediterranean saw the heavens as a transcendent world inaccessible to humanity’s reach. The

result was that Jesus was now “repositioned” as an eternal being, a being who was begotten and never created, and a being from the transcended realm beyond our accessible world.

Many people were troubled by the adoption of Greek philosophical notions, and their concerns led to the Church’s pushback against the influence of Greek philosophy. This pushback led to the divisive Church councils in 325 and 381 CE, known respectively as Nicaea and Constantinople. Most church histories say that the main issue was the “subordination” of Jesus to God the Father, but there is more to the story.

The earliest and most persistent objections were reactions to the draining influence of a belief system known as Gnosticism, which saw the world in dualistic terms as an illusion detached from reality and incessantly criticized human beings’ egos as corrupt and evil. Gnostics were spiritual elitists who infiltrated many religions, attacked their gods, and worked to push out the existing leadership. Much of the inauthentic letters of St. Paul and the pastoral epistles (Timothy and Titus) reflect conflict with the Gnostics. After nearly 300 years of conflict, the Church leaders were fed up with the spiritual elitism of the Gnostics. The widespread adoption of Greek philosophical notions seemed to be more of the same. It was too much for a Semitic faith rooted in Judaism.

The unfortunate reaction of the church fathers was the adoption of a doctrine written into the Nicene creed: God is of one substance but expressed as three persons (refuting dualism), and Jesus is of one person expressed

as two natures (denying the evil nature of ego). The final result was a theological declaration that remains today too incomprehensible to be of any use in spiritual understanding.

Answer 4: Jesus is who we are (a Christology from within).

The mystery which has been hidden for ages and generations. But now it has been revealed to his saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
(Colossians 1:26-27)

The effect of the 4th-century councils was that “metaphysical Christianity,” to adopt the phrase of Eric Butterworth, “went underground.” It remains underground to a large extent today. However, this blend of Christianity with Greek philosophical ideas never wholly died out. References in the Gospels and Paul’s letters in the New Testament were not easily gotten rid of, regardless of the councils’ declarations. In Unity and other metaphysical movements, we see a new understanding of human nature emerging in today’s post-modern era. Let me describe how that is so by way of an analogy, one that portrays metaphysical Christianity as a parade:

Picture yourself as a news reporter who is reporting on a parade. You might fly in a helicopter and film the parade

from a distance, showing the entire event in one image, giving your viewers an objective view, front to start. But there is another way you might describe the parade. You might stand along the street and film the parade close-up, showing divinely inspired floats, bands, or performers one after another as they pass along your way, giving your viewers an experiential or inside view filled with an ongoing series of various sounds and images, providing a very subjective opinion, moment by moment.

The difference between these two options is known in Greek grammar as “aspect.” One New Testament scholar describes aspect as “viewpoint,” the view from a helicopter outside, from a distance, and the view from the street being close-up, inside the parade.⁹⁷ It is no surprise that much of this new understanding of the mystical nature of metaphysical Christianity comes from the Greek Orthodox Church.

From the outside, distant point of view, we get our first three answers to the question, What do you teach about Jesus? We see Jesus as our raised-up way-shower, Jesus as descended incarnate God, Jesus as a mediator to an inaccessible, transcendent God. Each of these three answers reveals to us Jesus as an object.

However, when the parade is seen from the inside, from the close-up and nearby viewpoint of the street, we see things from what Martin Buber calls an “I-Thou” relationship. From that point of view, we no longer see objects. Instead, we see subjects. We see Jesus through

⁹⁷ Constantine R. Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek*, p.19

the lens of our relationship to Him, as the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, “Christ in me, my hope of glory.”

Our close-up metaphysical awareness of the ever-present reality of Jesus Christ will eventually lead us to an even closer, mystical experience. We will no longer be content to stand along the street, observing. Amid the excitement of confetti and cheers, we will leave our close-up observations and jump into the parade, joining Jesus in becoming Godlike. Such is the movement from metaphysics to mysticism.

Our inner Trinity.

For the metaphysical Christian, God is what Jesus called “the Father.” We know God the Father as Divine Mind because, as Hypatia Hasbrouck has said, our mind and the Mind of God are one.

Jesus, the Christ, is the *Imago Dei*, the very image of God the Father. We have personal awareness of the presence of Jesus, the Christ, as the Word, or *logos*, because the *logos* of God is embedded in the only place such an image can find awareness and life, in the soul of every human being.

God the Father is reflected in each of us according to our awareness of the embedded image of the Christ within. That is our hope of glory. Our glory is not Jesus but rather the greatness of our experience of the embedded image, reflecting the glory of God the Father from each of us.

You and I are Spirit, but we are expressed as human beings, demonstrating the two natures of Jesus Christ.

While our expressed body may pass away, our individual expressed soul is inseparably bound to Spirit. As Emilie Cady has written, “God is, Man exists.”

I find profound significance in that the translation for “I am” in my Greek grammar, *ego eimi*, is a series of four possible English translations arranged in descending spiritual quality: “I am; I exist; I live; I am present.” As Max Ehrmann wrote in his *Desiderata*, we are present, and we have a right to be here. Never allow anyone to diminish your ego.

The Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is alive for metaphysical Christians. It is no longer a metaphysical doctrine; it is a mystical experience of the eternal process of the Divine Economy, the *oikonomia*, the ordering of our experience of all good. We know this eternal process in metaphysical Christianity as “Mind, Idea, and Expression.”

You and I, and every human being, are a part of that Trinity. We reflect the glory of God the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.