

1. ECTYPAL UNITY

Thesis: Christian oneness reflects God's triune essence and realizes His end for humanity.

I. Reflecting God's Essence

"Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one....that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us" (Jn. 17:12, 21).

*"The Triune God revealed in the Scriptures is the basis and model for the church and its unity....any attempt to understand or achieve unity among believers that doesn't begin with or ultimately find its basis in the doctrine of God is poorly grounded."*¹

*"...the unity of the Godhead [is] the ground for constraining the church's intrinsic tendencies toward fragmentation."*²

A. Unity in the Godhead (archetype/original)

"...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

*"Each is in each, all are in each, each is in all, all are in all, and all are one."*³

*"Did the Father and Son ever show such discord? We should never take our eyes off this pattern....If the Father and the Son had disagreed, no salvation would have been possible. Oh then that the ministers of the gospel would make this use of their unity, that they would all as one man endeavor for the conversion and edification of souls!"*⁴

B. Unity through the Godhead (ectype/copy)

"There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

*"It is union with God that creates the unity of God's people."*⁵

*"In the one case we speak of the invisible Church as catholic, because the bond of union among its members is the fellowship of one Spirit, embracing all, and co-extensive with all; in the other case we speak of the visible Church as catholic, because the bond of union among its members is a common public profession, and an outward federal relationship to Christ....The oneness of the invisible is the ideal, to which, amid all its breaches and divisions, the visible Church can only approximately approach."*⁶

¹ Luder G. Whitlock Jr., *Divided We Fall: Overcoming a History of Christian Disunity* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2017), 2.

² Richard Lints, *Uncommon Unity: Wisdom for the Church in an Age of Division* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2022), 146.

³ Augustine, *The Trinity*, vol. 45 of *The Fathers of the Church*, trans. Stephen McKenna (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 214.

⁴ Anthony Burgess, *Advancing Christian Unity*, ed. Matthew Vogan (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2019), 15, 17.

⁵ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), 79.

⁶ James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ: A Treatise on the Nature, Powers, Ordinances, Discipline, and Government of the Christian Church* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015), 48, 55.

II. Realizing God's End

"And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...' (Gen. 1:28).

*"Peaceful coexistence is of the very essence of our humanity."*⁷

A. Godward Unity

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'" (Gen. 1:26).

*"We are personal beings, created to live near our personal, fatherly Creator in loving fellowship. This gets to the heart of what it means to be image of God."*⁸

*"Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."*⁹

B. Humanward Unity

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them....Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone'" (Gen. 1:27; 2:18).

"And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26).

*"The human person is not an isolated being who is complete in himself or herself; he or she is a being who needs the fellowship of others, who is not complete apart from others."*¹⁰

*"All of us descended from the first two people—with a common ancestry, we are not different biological races."*¹¹

*"The two were created for a relationship of unity-in-diversity, which was effectively destroyed by the pursuit of their own self-interest."*¹²

C. Blessed Unity

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity....For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore" (Ps. 133:1, 3).

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9).

*"Behold how sad and destructive a thing it is for brethren to be at discord with one another!"*¹³

*"Next unto the pleasure and delight of immediate communion with God himself, and the shedding abroad of his love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, none like that which ariseth from the harmonious exercises of the graces of the saints, in their mutual duties and communion one with another. How are their spirits dilated and refreshed by it? What a lively emblem is here of heaven! The courts of princes affords no such delights."*¹⁴

⁷ Conrad Mbewe, *Unity: Striving Side by Side for the Gospel* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2024), 1.

⁸ Nick Thompson, *Growing Downward: The Path to Christ-Exalting Humility* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2022), 23.

⁹ *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, A. 1.

¹⁰ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 76.

¹¹ Ken Ham and A. Charles Ware, *One Race, One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2017), 95-96.

¹² Lints, *Uncommon Unity*, 26.

¹³ Burgess, *Advancing Christian Unity*, 53.

¹⁴ John Flavel, "A Sermon on Gospel Unity" in *Works* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1968), 3:597.