

Leon Siwecki

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

ORCID 0000-0003-1489-0457

John Zizioulas' Trinitarian Ecclesiology

Abstract: The ideas of the Orthodox theologian Bishop John Zizioulas (1931–2023) particularly focus on trinitarian ecclesiology. For him, the Trinity consists of Persons in communion, and the nature of God himself is relational. Trinitarian unity is therefore the prototype, and the Church is its reflection. The essence of the Church is communion, which results from the fact that the Trinity is communion. Zizioulas' view of the Church is steeped in a trinitarian perspective. Zizioulas pointed out that the Church is based on the double divine economy: the work of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. The relationship of the Holy Trinity with the Church also has consequences for the structure of the Church. In this way, the Church becomes hierarchical in the sense in which the Holy Trinity itself is hierarchical: because of the specificity of the relationship. Becoming a person means breaking down the barriers of individualism and entering into communion life. This is realized in the Church through Baptism and Eucharist. The aim of the article is therefore an attempt to present and evaluate John Zizioulas' concept of trinitarian ecclesiology.

Keywords: Trinity, Christology, pneumatology, Church, trinitarian ecclesiology, communion, John Zizioulas

More than a year ago, on February 2, 2023, John Zizioulas, titular bishop of Pergamon, died in Athens at the age of 92.¹ He was widely recognized as one of the most influential Orthodox

¹ Greek Orthodox theologian Bishop John Zizioulas began teaching at the Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York, which gave him the opportunity to meet John Meyendorff and Alexander Schmemmann, both students of Nikolay Afanasiev. In 1966, he was appointed to the University of Athens as an assistant to Professor Konidaris. After teaching at King's College London, he returned to Greece in 1982 to lecture on dogmatic and pastoral theology in Thessaloniki. Soon, as the representative of the Patriarch of Constantinople, he entered into the ecumenical dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. In 1986, he was

Christian theologians of the 20th and early 21st centuries and a recognized advocate of ecumenism.² Yves Congar aptly called Zizioulas “one of the most original and profound theologians of our time” who presented “a penetrating and coherent reading of the tradition of the Greek fathers on the living reality that is the Church.”³ Kallistos Ware believes that he is “widely recognized as the most distinguished and creative theologian of the modern Orthodox Church.” Pope Francis once called him “the greatest Christian theologian of our generation.”⁴

Without a doubt, Zizioulas’ reputation as an influential Orthodox theologian is not undeserved. The theological idea of John Zizioulas may turn out to be the specific voice that will be important in Christian theology, especially ecclesiology. Orthodox thinker proposes an interesting understanding, based on the early Church Fathers and the Orthodox tradition, of the concept of the person, and therefore of the Church itself.⁵ Therefore, the aim of this article is

made Eastern Metropolitan of Pergamon. See Spiteris, *La Teologia*, 369–370; Baillargeon, *Perspectives*, 19.

² Meyendorff, “Foreword,” 11–13.

³ Congar, “Bulletin d’ecclésiologie,” 88; see also Williams, “Review,” 102, 105.

⁴ See Chryssavgis, “John Zizioulas.” It is worth knowing that Pope Francis asked Metropolitan Zizioulas for his contribution to the encyclical *Laudato si’* and the Orthodox theologian was present at the press conference presenting the papal document, which took place on June 18, 2015 (see Fernandes, “Remembering”). In J. Zizioulas’ posthumous book, *Remembering the Future* (2023), Pope Francis wrote a foreword (p. ix–x).

⁵ See Małecki, “John Zizioulas,” 379: “However, Zizioulas focuses primarily on ecclesiology, which he places within a broad Trinitarian-Christological-pneumatological context. The development of his ecclesiology is in relation to the eucharistic experience of the Church.” Zizioulas’ theological career has spanned both the East and the West. Besides the Russian theologians Afanasiev, Florovsky, and Lossky, who left Russia after the revolution to pursue theological work in the West, John Zizioulas is one of the very few orthodox theologians who have had the opportunity to teach theology outside of their own theological and ecclesial tradition. For this reason, he is sometimes labelled a “western theologian” by more conservative Orthodox circles. Zizioulas’ influence on the Western world has also been significant, as is evident in the growing list of students doing doctoral dissertations on Zizioulas’ theology in the West.

to show how Zizioulas understands and what contribution he makes to the idea of trinitarian ecclesiology.

1. Introduction to Zizioulas' Ecclesiology

John Zizioulas did not present a systematic ecclesiology. In any case, it can be said that the theological work of our thinker focuses on the twin threads of ecclesiology and theological ontology. It is Zizioulas' ontology of person, expressed from the perspective of trinitarian analysis, that gives his eucharistic thinking a special character, notes Croatian Protestant theologian Miroslav Volf.⁶ In other words, the concept of person, placed in the center of trinitarian theology, is at the heart of our theologian's entire theological system.

Zizioulas' ecclesiology was first developed in his doctoral dissertation in 1965, subsequently published in English under the title *Eucharist, Bishop, Church. The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries*.⁷ He generally accepts Afanasiev's main argument that the Church should be understood in terms of the Eucharist. Nevertheless, John Zizioulas is critical of some aspects of his eucharistic ecclesiology. Namely, Afanasiev's principle "wherever the Eucharist is, there is the Church" risks suggesting that each church could on its own be the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church." Zizioulas believes that no local church can be a Church if it is independent of other local churches. There could also easily be a misunderstanding of the priority of the local church over universal.⁸ Moreover, he criticizes Afanasiev's understanding as too congregational and not emphasized enough in the area of the bishop's ministry. Finally, Zizioulas argues for an episcopocentric understanding of the structure of the Church and recognition of the bishop primarily as the head of the Divine

⁶ Volf, *After*, 75.

⁷ *Ἡ ἐνότης τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἐν τῇ Θεΐᾳ Εὐχαριστίᾳ καὶ τῷ Ἐπισκόπῳ κατὰ τοὺς πρῶτους αἰῶνας* (Athens 1965). The doctoral dissertation was published in French translation in 1994; in English translation in 2001.

⁸ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 25, 133.

Liturgy and the Eucharistic community.⁹ The works of Zizioulas, in the light of the eucharistic experience, especially on the basis of his book *Being of Communion*, try to present an understanding of Christology conditioned by pneumatology (as we see below); an understanding of history in the light of eschatology and of anthropology in relation to theology.

Our theologian, in the article entitled *The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today: Suggestions for an Ecumenical Study*, lists three topics as “critical for theological reflection: the question of God’s being in relation to the world; the problem of God being in himself and the place of trinitarian theology in ecclesiology.”¹⁰ God, the Church and the world should be understood not separately, but in mutual relations. It follows that the being of God is the key to the theological understanding of the Church and the world. In other words, God, the Church, and the world are inextricably linked to the triune God, shown as the loadstar that holds the other two in relationship.

Without a doubt, the aspect of “history” occupies an important place in his theological writings. So to speak of Trinity therefore means to speak of His history. The doctrine of God, which emerges from God’s self-manifestation of God in history is the Trinity *pro nobis*. The manifestation of the trinitarian God in history is the history of salvation. The Metropolitan of Pergamon does not mention the history of salvation as the starting point of these theological considerations, but this results from his development of the concept of the Trinity, based on patristic theology. Zizioulas considers it obvious that both the man and the Church were considered “images of God”: “The fact that man in the Church is the «image of God» is due to the *economy* of the Holy Trinity, that is, the work of Christ and the Spirit in history.”¹¹

⁹ For Zizioulas’ criticism of Afanasiev, see *Being as Communion*, 23–25; Zizioulas, “Cristologia, pneumatologia,” 119.

¹⁰ Zizioulas, “The Doctrine of God,” 22–23.

¹¹ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 19. The other fundamental consideration in trinitarian theology concerns the relationship between the Economic Trinity and Immanent Trinity. According to Karl Rahner, the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity and vice versa. Zizioulas basically agrees with this thesis (*The One and*

Roman Catholic scholar P. McPartlan, who had the opportunity to participate in one of Zizioulas' lectures delivered in 1984 at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, notes that our thinker's emphasis on the Eucharist and ecclesial existence caused criticism from some circles emphasizing baptismal ecclesiology, among others his inadequate understanding of the value of Baptism. Let us recall two theologians here: J. Erickson and G. Baillargeon.¹² Summarizing their ideas, it can be said that the Church is an eucharistic organism, but only because the Church is a baptismal organism. A fuller study of Baptism would complement and correct his eucharistic ecclesiology at a number of points. It is true that Zizioulas focuses on the Eucharist in his ecclesiology, but it is also true that he bases his eucharistic ecclesiology on the people of God who are baptized in God's name. His concept of the ecclesial hypostasis is that obtained through Baptism. Only the baptized can participate in the Eucharist.¹³

It is worth noting that Zizioulas' ecclesiology seems to be consistent with the many ecclesiological accents of the Second Vatican Council.¹⁴ Understanding the mystery of humanity's participation in trinitarian life, the central place of the Eucharist in the mystery

Many, 204–205), but hastens to add that the Immanent Trinity is not exhausted in the Economic Trinity (*Communion and Otherness*, 201). In a certain sense, the Immanent Trinity still has an unknowable aspect and therefore one should resort to apophatic theology. We also need apophatic to move beyond the Economic and towards the Immanent Trinity (*The One and Many*, 9).

¹² Zizioulas, *The One and Many*, xvii–xviii, n. 30 (the introduction); Erickson, "The Local Church," 505–506; Baillargeon, *Perspectives*, 61.

¹³ See Zizioulas, *The One and Many*, 91–98.

¹⁴ It is important to remember that eucharistic ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church have their own distinct aspects, despite often the use of the same terminology. On the other hand, it is good to keep in mind John Paul II's indication from the apostolic letter *Orientalis lumen* no. 5: "In the study of revealed truth East and West have used different methods and approaches in understanding and confessing divine things. It is hardly surprising, then, if sometimes one tradition has come nearer to a full appreciation of some aspects of a mystery of revelation than the other, or has expressed them better. In such cases, these various theological formulations are often to be considered complementary rather than conflicting." See *UR* 17; Surówka, "Teologia," 1–13.

of the Church and the communion of local Churches also finds resonance in the Second Vatican Council.¹⁵ At the heart of Zizioulas' ecclesiology stands the Eucharist, which is "the sacrament of unity par excellence, and therefore, the expression of the mystery of the Church itself." He, in other place, reminds that "Orthodox ecclesiology is based on the idea that wherever there is the Eucharist, there is the Church in its fulness as the Body of Church itself."¹⁶ It should be emphasized here that John Zizioulas does not agree with the Western view that the Church makes the Eucharist. He states that "Church constitutes the Eucharist while being constituted by it."¹⁷ They are interdependent. The ecclesiological presuppositions of the Eucharist cannot be found outside the Eucharist. The nature of the Eucharist is linked to the nature of the Church which conditions the Eucharist.¹⁸

The universal Church exists as a communion of local Churches. The Council wanted to show that the universal Church should not be seen as a mere federation of local Churches, nor the local Churches as mere provinces of the universal Church administered from the center, i.e. Rome. In this way, the Second Vatican Council recognized the dignity and importance of local Churches and described them, as in the New Testament, as real Churches (under the direction of their bishops in communion with the Bishop

¹⁵ Lekan, "Eklezjologia," 65. The particular contribution of the Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, on the Church lies in its approach to the relationship between the Church and the Trinitarian mystery. Treating the Church in the light of the Trinity, the Second Vatican Council did not present anything new, but recalled the Biblical and traditional teaching of the Cappadocians, St. Athanasius, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine. See, for example, *LG* 2, 6, 8, 11, 12, 14, 26, 40, 42, 49, 53, 62, 64. Second Vatican Council emphasized the place of the Church in the history of salvation, the history of the Church, the gradual revelation of God and his plan love. Many conciliar documents begin by attributing to the Church her place in the economy of salvation, which itself flows from God's intratrinitarian life. The history of salvation is the history of the progressive revelation of the Trinity. See Siwecki, "Trinity and Church," 157.

¹⁶ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 59; Zizioulas, "The Bishop," 25; Zizioulas, "The doctrine of God," 22–23.

¹⁷ Zizioulas, "The Ecclesiological Presuppositions," 341.

¹⁸ Zizioulas, "Ecclesiological Presuppositions," 342.

of Rome). It is obvious that these Churches belong to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church (cf. *LG* 23). John Zizioulas states a similar thesis when, in the context of the collegiality of bishops, he speaks of the universal Church not as “unity in collegiality” but as “unity in identity.”¹⁹

2. Trinity: Persons in Communion

Trinitarian theology occupies an essential place in the Orthodox conception. The Trinity is the “holy of holies” of Christian revelation – what is well expressed by, for example, Nikolaos Nissiotis, Olivier Clement – Orthodox theologians.²⁰ Zizioulas’ theological works demonstrate that trinitarian theology is the central focus of his major studies.²¹ Furthermore, Zizioulas’ trinitarian vision centers around an ontology that perceives being as communion. The Orthodox theologian develops his trinitarian ecclesiology precisely in the communion of trinitarian Persons. He writes: “The substance of God has no ontological content, no true being, apart from communion.”²²

From our analysis of Zizioulas’ trinitarian ecclesiology, we can highlight that the “monarchy” of the Father finds resonance in his writings.²³ The Person of the Father appears as the source of the unity within the Trinity. The Person of the Father is “a principle without principle.” The Father is not only the source but also the cause of the Son and the Spirit. Our thinker underlines that nature is not the beginning of the Divine Persons in God. One being is not the beginning or source of God’s existence. It is the Person

¹⁹ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 168.

²⁰ Nissiotis, “The Importance,” 32; Clement, “Orthodox Ecclesiology,” 103.

²¹ Zizioulas, “Ordination,” 34. See also Dragas, “Orthodox Ecclesiology,” 184–192; Timiades, “The Trinitarian Structure,” 121–156.

²² Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 17.

²³ We should keep in mind that the concept of “monarchy” has a political origin. However, what theology means by this term does not mean absolute or a single power. Instead, it points to the unity of the ultimate principle, the unity of God. The Father is the source, the principle without principle in whom both the Son and the Holy Spirit have their origin, without any temporal succession. See Batut, “Three Pillars,” 303–304.

of the Father who is the “cause” of God’s being as Trinity – although Father has no meaning outside the relationship with the Son and the Spirit, which implies communion. Personal communion therefore lies at the heart of the essence of being God. This plurality and interdependence of Persons is the basis of the new ontology. Zizioulas is critical of the formula “one nature, three Persons,” which is dominant in Western theology, because from it one could conclude that God is essentially an impersonal being.

The primacy of the Father’s Person is a necessary condition for the unity of the Three and of Their distinction.²⁴ Without the monarchy of the Father, the unity of the trinitarian communion would be lost. The unity of God presupposes the one.²⁵ Since when a person can only exist in communion, and communion can never exist without the one, “the concept of hierarchy inheres in the idea of person.”²⁶ We need to know that Zizioulas has stressed repeatedly that the person cannot be conceived of without the essence and God’s essence cannot be conceived of “in a naked state,” without person.²⁷ Outside the Trinity there is no God, that is, no divine substance, because the ontological “principle” of God is the Father.

The Cappadocians’ trinitarian identification of “hypostasis” and “person” affirms that God’s essence coincides with His personality. Until then, “personality” was seen as something added to the substance. But with the identification of “person” and “hypostasis” (substance) in the Divine Trinity, the concept of person now became the very substance that constitutes the essence of man. Entity no longer connects its essence with being itself, but with the person, with what constitutes being. The person becomes the constitutive element of being.²⁸

²⁴ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 44; Zizioulas, “The Teaching,” 45; Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 50; Jagodziński, “Pneumatologiczny wymiar,” 13.

²⁵ Zizioulas, “The Teaching,” 45.

²⁶ Zizioulas, “Die pneumatologische Dimension,” 141.

²⁷ See Zizioulas, *The One and Many*, 22.

²⁸ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 39. The criticism of Zizioulas’ theology came primarily from scholars following a historical-critical approach. The first criticism was made by the Belgian patristic scholar André de Halleux, as he claimed that no such existentialist/personalist ontology is to be found in the thought

So, when Zizioulas is accused of being an “anti-essence,” this is obviously not the case.²⁹ Moreover, he cannot be classified as an existentialist,³⁰ because this statement violates Zizioulas' concept of the person. What our thinker has done is to trace the “cause” of existence to the person, not to the substance.³¹ This is what he

of the Cappadocians. Thus, the first accusation brought against Zizioulas is that of anachronism, by reading modern existentialist ontology into the thought of the Cappadocian Fathers, especially by giving priority to the concept of person over the concept of nature (Bodea, “Existential Theology,” 343–344).

²⁹ Kowalczyk notes (“Dio esiste,” 91): “Il teologo ortodosso è ben consapevole delle critiche che gli vengono rivolte. Una di esse sostiene che gli tratti della Persona del Padre senza fare nessun riferimento all'essenza divina, come se la volontà della Persona precedesse l'essenza divina.” According to Zizioulas, such an accusation is a serious distortion of his position. It is worth quoting in full Zizioulas' position: “The basic ontological position of the theology of the Greek Fathers might be set out briefly as follows: No substance or nature exists without person or hypostasis or mode of existence. No person exists without substance or nature, *but* the ontological «principle» or «cause» of being – i.e. that which makes a thing to exist – is not the substance or nature but the *person* or hypostasis. Therefore, being is traced back not to substance but to person.” (*Being as Communion*, 41–42, n. 37).

³⁰ See, for example, two Greek Professors – Orthodox theologians: J. Panagopoulos (“Ontology,” 63–79) and Savas Agouridis (“Can the Persons,” 67–78); and Protestant theologians: T.F. Torrance and his uncle A.J. Torrance (*Persons in Communion*, 290). According to A.J. Torrance, Zizioulas is wrong to assume the “monarchia” of the Father. Such teaching risks projecting into God subordinationism which “begins to smack of a cosmological theology” (*Persons in Communion*, 289). Zizioulas explains that “the Father is shown to be «greater» than the Son (and the Spirit) *not in nature*, but in the way (the *how*) the nature exists, that is, in the hypostasization of nature. Trinitarian ordering (*taxis*) and causation protect rather than threaten the equality and fullness of each person's deity” (“Communion and Otherness,” 140). The Roman Catholic Church accepts the doctrine of tradition on the “monarchia” of the Father. The “monarchia” of the Father means that the Father is the sole cause/origin both of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This concept is generally rejected by Protestants such as M. Volf, P. Cumin. See Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 123, n. 37.

³¹ Panagopoulos and Agouridis oppose Zizioulas' attempt to link the meaning of person with the Being of God. They claim that what Zizioulas tried to do is wrong because of theological apophaticism. To support their thesis, they invoked the idea of theological apophaticism that “the meaning of person in reference to the being of God should remain an unapproachable mystery for theology.” Zizioulas' attempt to link the two is allegedly “philosophical «personalism» and smacks

calls the ontological revolution introduced by the Cappadocian Fathers.³²

Beings now are seen as having freedom. The existence of the world comes from personal freedom and the being of God. It should be emphasized once again that for the Greek Fathers, the cause of God's being does not consist in the one substance but in the Person of the Father. Here the ontological principle of God is derived from the person. His existence is his personal freedom, and his being is identified with the Person. God exists on account of the Father, not on account of a substance. Without communion there is no true being, and without communion there can be no person.

According to Zizioulas, in classical trinitarian theology, the final formulation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity speaks of "one substance, three persons." Either substance or persons are the most basic ontological concepts used to understand the Trinity. By making the Father the origin of the Trinity, our thinker expresses the opinion that the Cappadocian Fathers introduced freedom into ontology, because the Father as a Person, and not as a substance, can only exist freely and in relationship with other Persons.³³

of «existentialism»" (quoted by Zizioulas, *The One and Many*, 17–40). There is also Zizioulas' response to this criticism. Contestation of Zizioulas' ontology of the person have also come from some other quarters in recent years. A good introduction and discussion of some of Zizioulas' critics can be found in Roussel, "Modern Greek Theologians," 86–87.

³² The above-mentioned Panagopoulos finds nothing of a Copernican revolution effected by the Cappadocian Fathers as is claimed by Zizioulas, in identifying hypostasis with the person. He says that the Cappadocians designated "person" with the term "hypostasis" precisely to impede its absorption by "ousia," thus giving it an ontological content. It would not be correct to say, therefore, that the person precedes "ousia" and the ontological cause of entities is the Person of the Father. There is an enormous difference between trinitarian Persons and human persons, between the creating Person and the created person ("Ontology," 70–76).

³³ Zizioulas believes that this Greek thought was lost to the West as a result of Augustine's return to identifying the being of God with *ousia* understood in a monistic way (*Being as Communion*, 88). It should be noted here that our theologian includes very little of Augustine of Hippo's theology of the Trinity into his system. Zizioulas quotes relatively little from Augustine's works and when he does, he repeatedly asserts that Augustine is responsible for an individualistic understanding of the person who is merely a psychological being with a self-consciousness

The above reflections have important consequences. Man cannot have absolute ontological freedom because of his createdness. If God's freedom is inherent in his nature, we cannot hope to share in personhood as he does. However, if the basis of his freedom is personal existence, then the man can be an authentic person. God exercises his freedom by transcending the ontological necessity of the substance, being God as Father, "giving birth" to the Son and "giving forth" the Spirit. Therefore, his being is identical with the act of communion. Ontologically, the exercise of freedom is love. "God is love" implies that He is not a substance but a Person. Love is the essence of God. It is identified with his ontological freedom. A person therefore means freedom and the ability to love.

The relationships that exist in the Trinity are relationships of perichoresis. Each Person exists in the other, there is a mutual penetration and inhabitation. Let's put it in other words. The Persons of the Father, the Son and the Spirit inhabit each other in a perichoretic relationship. The unity in God is a perichoretic unity. The oneness, the intimate indwelling and permeation that is described by the term "perichoresis" is the principle of both unity and differentiation in the Trinity.

But doesn't the idea of God the Father as the reason for the Trinity lead to subordinationism and diminish the Divinity of the Son and the Spirit? Metropolitan of Pergamon convinces that it is not, because the condition of eternal Fatherhood is the community of the equally eternal Son, equal to the Father in the Divine nature. It is similar in the case of the Spirit, who is an eternal love in Person between the Father and the Son. This vision of God the Father as the reason of the Trinity has important implications in the fields of anthropology and ecclesiology.³⁴

(*Communion and Otherness*, 168). Augustine's thought would enrich Zizioulas' theology and make them more "catholic" and acceptable to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

³⁴ Kowalczyk, "Dio esiste," 100.

3. Christology and Pneumatology: Basis for the Church

Zizioulas underlines that God is a relational being by definition. Starting from the trinitarian relationships, he argues that the Church is an icon of the Trinity. Since Jesus Christ is united to the Father and to the Spirit, the whole of the Trinity can be considered as the head of the Church and its supreme principle. It is from the Trinity that all power and grace that the Church possesses and applies to the faithful, come. Therefore divine grace and divine salvation, distributed from high in all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ, is given by God Father through God Christ in the God Spirit. The consequence is that the whole Trinity, being the head of the Church, is in communion with all her members. Our thinker recognizes with absolute certainty the “paternal” origin of the Church.³⁵ Zizioulas’ idea shows that the believer’s belonging to the Eucharistic community leads to the acquisition of a new identification based on new relationships – such as those between the Father and the Son in the Trinity.

It is important to note that the relationship between Christology and pneumatology in the existence of the Church is fundamental to Orthodox theology. Eastern thinkers talk about the Church as the Body of Christ and fullness of the Spirit – emphasize J. Zizioulas and, among others, Vladimir Lossky, Ioannis Karmires.³⁶ In this

³⁵ Zizioulas, “The Church as Communion,” 104. A new communal and relational way of thinking is evident. The starting point and point of reference for thinking is no longer the self-existent substance of ancient philosophy or modern subjectivity. Instead, the relationship becomes the ultimate reality, defining everything. This approach to trinitarian ontology is present in Catholic theology (e.g. J. Ratzinger, K. Hemmerle, G. Greshake), Orthodox theology (e.g. J. Zizioulas, V. Solovyov, N. Berdyaev, S. Bulgakov), and the more recent direction of Anglican theology known as «radical orthodoxy» (e.g. R. Williams, J. Milbank).

³⁶ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 110–111, 132–133; Lossky, *The Mystical Theology*, 156–167; Karmires, *L'insegnamento*, 43. In the post-conciliar Catholic ecclesiology there has sometimes been an excessive tendency among theologians to describe the Church in terms of a single image (e.g., the concept of the People of God, etc.). The mystery of the Church transcends any conceptual or symbolic formulation, so that the reality of the Church can only be illustrated by a variety of images, never by a single description. The use of different formulations should suggest the transcendence of the mystery against any reductionism, be it conceptual or symbolic. The descriptions are complementary and speak of the intimacy

way, Zizioulas, following the Orthodox tradition, highlights the ecclesiological significance of Christologically conditioned pneumatology. In trinitarian theology, Christology cannot be separated from pneumatology. “The third Person of the Trinity who actually realizes in history that which we call Christ. In this case, our Christology is *essentially* conditioned by pneumatology. In fact it is *constituted* pneumatologically.”³⁷ In fact, the synthesis between Them is for Zizioulas absolutely necessary for a proper understanding of the Church: “The Mystery of the Church has its birth in the entire economy of the Trinity and in a pneumatologically constituted Christology. The Spirit as «power» or «giver of life» opens up our existence to become relational, so that he may at the same time be «communion» (*koinonia*, cf. 2 Cor 13:13). For this reason the mystery of the Church is essentially none other than that of the «One» who is simultaneously «many» – not «One» who exists first of all as «One» and *then* as «many», but «One» and «many» at the same time.”³⁸

In the New Testament, Christology is never depicted apart from the Spirit. Biblical Christology is pneumatological. Pneumatology is Christological. The mutual relation between the Son and the Spirit is manifested in that just as the Son comes down to earth and accomplishes his work through the Spirit, so the Spirit comes into the world, being sent by the Son (John 15:26). As a result of the mutual work of the Son and the Spirit, the catholicity of the Church means two things: the unity of the Church and the diversity of the Church. The first comes as a result of being the Body of Christ; the second is revealed by being the fullness of the Spirit. The Christological dimension guarantees stability, while in the pneumatological aspect the Church is dynamic.

Consequently, for Zizioulas, the Church is instituted by Christ and constituted by the Spirit. “The Spirit makes the

of the Church. The images, each from its own point of view, naturally point to the whole, to the mystery. Ecclesiological reflection today must take place within a Trinitarian framework if it is to be productive and rigorous.

³⁷ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 110–111.

³⁸ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 112.

Church *be*” – underlines Zizioulas.³⁹ The Spirit gives Christ a “communal personality.” However, his reflections are important here: “ecclesiology is not a matter of either Christ or the Spirit, but of all the persons of the Trinity in indivisible unity. When we emphasize the Spirit we must be clear that we are speaking of the realization of that recapitulation of all things *in the Son*. The choice is not between a Christological ecclesiology on one hand and a pneumatological ecclesiology on the other, but between a christo-*monist* ecclesiology and a fully *trinitarian* ecclesiology in which all the persons of God are at work. The proper basis of ecclesiology is the trinitarian doctrine of God. The role of the Holy Spirit should never lead into an ecclesiology not founded in Christ; ecclesiology cannot be *Spirit*-centered because the Church *is* the recapitulation of everything *in Christ*.”⁴⁰

In conclusion, pneumatology deals the very existence of the Church. Pneumatology is an ontological category in ecclesiology. The only way to build a real pneumatological ecclesiology is to consider very carefully the relationship between Christ and the Spirit on the one hand and the relationship of the Spirit to the Church on the other. This pneumatologically conditioned Christology, according to Zizioulas, helps to avoid an excessively hierarchical, excessively institutional and excessively centralized conception of the Church. In this way, the Church is what she really is and what she can do in the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, through his constant and endless presence in the Church, realizes unity with the Father and the Son and destroys barriers between people. Ultimately, we can say that the presence of the Spirit leads to the unity and community of people in the Church. The role of the Spirit is not

³⁹ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 131. The Orthodox theologian reminds us that the action of the Spirit is not subordinated to the work of the Son, nor is Pentecost a “continuation” of the incarnation, but rather its continuation, its effect. The Christological aspect creates the objective and unchangeable features of the Church, while the pneumatological aspect brings into being the subjective side of the Church.

⁴⁰ Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 150.

only a dimension of ecclesiology, but pneumatology is as constitutive of it as Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity.⁴¹

4. Human Person and Ecclesial Person

It should be accentuated that in Zizioulas' concept "being a person is basically different from being an individual or «personality» in that the person cannot be conceived in itself as a static identity, but only as it *relates to*." A person cannot exist without communion, but any form of communion that denies or suppresses him is unacceptable. Moreover, a person is free because he transcends the limits of himself and is not determined casually by a given natural and historical reality. The person is not a closed entity, but rather an open relational being. A person is also "hypostasis," therefore a special identity.⁴²

The personhood implies "the openness of being." It is "the mode in which nature exists in its *ekstatic* movement of communion in which it is hypostasized in its catholicity." In this regard, Zizioulas points out that "ecstasis" (being or standing outside oneself, being transferred to another place) and "hypostasis" represent two basic

⁴¹ It is worth recalling here that the Second Vatican Council did not devote much attention to pneumatological Christology. In fact, the Council was criticized for its lack of adequate pneumatology. The dominant view in catholic theology in recent centuries has been characterized by what Yves Congar called "Christomonism." See Congar, *Saggi ecumenici*, 82; Congar, *La Parola*, 144. Congar accepts, with due reservation, this tendency expressed by Nissiotis ("Rapport," 190–206) and Clement ("Orthodox Ecclésiologie," 91–106). See Evdokimov, *Prawosławna wizja*, 144: „Tajemnica zbawienia jest chrystologiczna, jednak nie panchrystyczna” [“The mystery of salvation is christological, but not pan-Christic”].

⁴² Zizioulas, "Human Capacity," 407–408. I think it is worth referring to Roland Millare's article "Towards a Common Communion" on the anthropology of Karol Wojtyła and Zizioulas. Millare writes ("Towards a Common Communion," 599): "Pope Saint John Paul II and Metropolitan John Zizioulas share a common relational approach to theological anthropology. The Roman Catholic pope-philosopher and the Eastern Orthodox theologian place an emphasis on the person's call to communion through and in a complete gift of self. Both thinkers reflect the leitmotivs of the theological anthropology envisioned by the Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et spes* no. 22 and 24. Saint John Paul II did this conscientiously, whereas Zizioulas' writings happen to overlap with these conciliar themes."

aspects of personality.⁴³ The person of Christ, according to the Chalcedonian doctrine, is “one” and is identified with “the hypostasis of the Son in the Trinity.” In Jesus Christ there is a hypostatic union of two natures – divine and human. The identification of the person of Christ with person of the Son makes possible the personality of man. Zizioulas distinguishes two types of Christology. In the first type of Christology, we can understand Jesus Christ as an individual, while in the second category we can comprehend Christ as a whole personal being in relationship with his Body, i.e. the Church. Therefore, in the first case we speak of Christ as an “individual,” in the second as a “person.”

Full personhood is realized only in God. According to the Bishop of Pergamon, salvation must consist in an ontological deindividuation that realizes personhood. Salvation is participation in the life of the Triune God. The purpose of salvation is that personal life, which is realized in God, is also realized at the level of personal existence. Zizioulas expresses the above reflections as follows: “The eternal survival of the person as a unique, unrepeatable and free «hypostasis», as loving and being loved, constitutes the quintessence of salvation, the bringing of the Gospel to man. In the language of the Fathers this is called «divinization» (*theosis*), which means participation not in the nature or substance of God, but in His personal existence. The goal of salvation is that the personal life which is realized in God should also be realized on the level of human existence. Consequently, salvation is identified with the realization of personhood in man.”⁴⁴ Zizioulas suggests that the concept of a person was born during the search for a language to articulate the concept of God. A person is not an addition to being, but is being itself, a constitutive element of being.

God as Mystery expresses itself most fully as the three Divine Persons in an eternal, dynamic communion of love. The biblical and patristic roots of communion (*κοινωνία*) reveal that this concept does not come from the experience of sociology or ethics, but from faith in God, whose essence is *koinonia*. Because the God

⁴³ Zizioulas, “Human Capacity,” 442; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 18, 236.

⁴⁴ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 49–50.

revealed by Jesus and the Holy Spirit is trinitarian, any authentic theology of the Church must be based on the doctrine of the Trinity. This is the theological principle that forms the basis of Zizioulas' methodology.

Our theologian underlines that outside the Church, the concept of the Trinity is “a stumbling block and a scandal.”⁴⁵ So if we want to know and to experience the Triune God, we must go to the Church to experience Him. In the ecclesiology, just as there is one God, there is one Church, but this one Church is manifested in the communion of many local Churches.⁴⁶ Communion and oneness are therefore simultaneous in ecclesiology. The unity of the Persons of the Holy Trinity is given as the highest model and principle of the mystery of the unity of the Church.

The Church itself is relational and communal.⁴⁷ In the New Testament *ekklesia* is usually followed by the genitive “of.” For example, Paul speaks of the Church “of God,” “Christ,” or “of Corinthian.” The Church is always in relationship to something. The Church “of God” reveals that the Church derives its identity from its relationship with the Triune God. The Church cannot be reconciled with individualism. The Church is not an instrument of personal perfection, but a community of relationships in the Holy Spirit. Through Baptism in the Holy Spirit every Christian receives a new identity and relationship with God and other people.

This assumption raises a number of questions. This was expressed in his article *The Church as Communion: A Presentation on the World Conference Theme*: “If the very being of God in

⁴⁵ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 170.

⁴⁶ In general, the perichoretic relationship between the “gathered communities” stems from the trinitarian conception of Protestant ecclesiology. The unity of the churches is to be understood as a relationship of mutual conditioning and interpenetration. The doctrine of the Trinity constitutes the Church as community free from dominion. The trinitarian principle replaces the principle of authority with the principle of consent. Accordingly, the presbyterial and synodal church order and the leadership based on the fraternal advice are the forms of organization that best correspond to the doctrine of the social Trinity.

⁴⁷ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 8–15; Zizioulas, “The Early Christian Community,” 23–43.

whom we believe is koinonia, and if the person of Christ, in whose name we human beings and all creation are in koinonia, then what consequences does this faith entail for our understanding of the Church? How does the concept of koinonia affect the Church's identity, structure, and ministry in the world? How can this understanding of the Church as koinonia influence our efforts to maintain visible unity and overcome the scandal of division? Finally, how might an understanding of the Church as koinonia influence its mission in the world, including its relationship with all of creation?"⁴⁸

As we mentioned earlier, Zizioulas emphasizes that the Church is the place where the "individual" becomes a "person." The concrete realization of this deindividualization and personalization takes place in the Church because it is the pneumatologically constituted Body of Christ. There is no doubt that the concept of "person" is crucial to Zizioulas' trinitarian ecclesiology, because according to him, only persons can be in communion. The main difficulty for human beings, immersed in sin, is to experience their existence as individualized, ego-centered entities. By accepting the person of Jesus Christ, individuals are transformed and affirmed in a new relational context.

Zizioulas alludes to the patristic distinction between *biological* and *ecclesial* existence.⁴⁹ Biological existence is given in birth. This existence is subject to death. But we have the other side of the coin. In the ecclesial existence, in the new birth of Baptism where one takes on Christ's nature, we can be fully realized. Through Baptism the individual becomes a person, a relational being (he is born "anew" or "from above" (cf. John 3:3, 7), "new birth, birth "from on high") and that we define our personhood in Eucharist. In Baptism the individual dies and the person is born.⁵⁰ In the Church, and only in the Church, people actually become persons, and these relationships determine personhood, hence the title of Zizioulas' book which became the heart of his lectures: *Being as communion*.

⁴⁸ Zizioulas, "The Church," 104.

⁴⁹ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 51–65.

⁵⁰ See Leśniewski, "Misterium osoby," 92; Knight, "The Spirit," 191–193.

5. Church: Hierarchical Structure and Primacy

The concept of monarchy of the Father in the Trinity has, as Zizioulas points out, ecclesiological consequences. Zizioulas does not oppose any corresponding hierarchical conception in ecclesiology. Indeed, he allows for a corresponding hierarchical Church ministerial order: “Thus the Church becomes *hierarchical* in the sense in which the Holy Trinity itself is hierarchical: by reason of the *specificity of relationships*. The ministry, viewed in this way, creates degree of honor, respect and true authority precisely in the way we see this in trinitarian theology. Being a reflection of the very love of God in the world, the Church reflects precisely this kind of authority through and in her ministry. Hierarchy and authority are thus born out of relationship and not out of power (*auctoritas et potestas*) – be it «ontological» or a «moral» kind of power.”⁵¹

In trinitarian ecclesiology, the Eucharist is closely related to the bishop. Zizioulas notes this connection in early Christian communities. He states: “The role of the bishop as the visible center of unity of the eucharistic community is precisely what has made

⁵¹ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 224. The concept of perichoresis, which is used to explain the structure of the church in Protestantism thought has significant implications for ecclesiastical ministry and authority. Jurgen Moltmann’s idea emphasizes that in Western churches, the emphasis in ecclesiology has always been on ministry, with the community of God’s people playing a secondary role. The gathered church was seen as merely the effect of ministry. Moltmann argues that this has led to the devaluation of the charismata of the Holy Spirit, resulting in the reduction of the charismatic church to the charisma of a single church office. See Moltmann, “The Fellowship,” 293–294. The unity of the church corresponds to the perichoretic unity of the three divine Persons and not to a single Person of the Trinity. According to him, the stress on any one Person of the Trinity has led to a one-sided development of ecclesiology. The emphasis of the Father has led to the concept of one God, one Christ, one bishop, and one church. This concept developed into a universal episcopate of the pope in catholic Church. In the Reformation Churches the stress was on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the First-born among many brethren. The ecclesiological emphasis was then on the brotherliness and sisterliness, rather than of obedience to the bishop, which ensured unity. The emphasis on the third Person of the Trinity of many Pentecostal Churches makes presence of the Holy Spirit the one who guarantees unity in diversity. See Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology*, 328–329.

him so vital for the unity of the Churches both in space and time.”⁵² Moreover, the bishop, as the head of the eucharistic community, represents the unity within the local Church and the universal Church.

For Zizioulas, Eucharist and the bishop go together. In other words, the bishop is constitutive of the Church and the mystery of the Eucharist. The concept of the local Church derives from the catholic and geographical nature of the Eucharist.⁵³ Zizioulas’ ecclesiology of communion flows from his ontology of personhood and its relationship with the Eucharist. The Eucharist forms the structure of the Church as a community which includes all the faithful under the headship of the bishop, surrounded by the college of presbyters and assisted by the deacons. Zizioulas emphasizes that it was the “fundamental assumption in the early church that only one Eucharist and only one bishop could exist in the same place.”⁵⁴

The bishop is the president of the Eucharistic assembly.⁵⁵ It should also be noted that in Zizioulas’ concept of the Church “all the fundamental elements which constituted her historical existence and structure had, by necessity, to pass through the eucharistic community to be «sure» (according to Ignatius of Antioch) or «valid» and «canonical» (according to the terminology of contemporary canon law), that is, to be ecclesologically true. Thus, the Eucharist was not the act of a pre-existing Church; it was an event *constitutive* of the being of the Church, enabling the Church to *be*. The eucharist *constituted* the Church’s being.”⁵⁶ For Orthodoxy, the Church is in the Eucharist and through the Eucharist. In the Eucharist there is an identification of Christ and the Church. During the eucharistic celebration, everyone becomes one Body of Christ, and does so in such a way that Christ takes them to himself. Therefore, in the Eucharist, the body of the one (Christ) and the body of many (the Church) are identical.⁵⁷ This is one of the basic ideas of Eucharistic ecclesiology.

⁵² Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 238.

⁵³ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 247.

⁵⁴ Zizioulas, “The Early Christian Community,” 34.

⁵⁵ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 250.

⁵⁶ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 21.

⁵⁷ Zizioulas, “The Ecclesiological Presuppositions,” 342.

According to Zizioulas, speaking about the apostolic succession of bishops does not mean narrowing down the charism of the people and their various other ministries, but is precisely “the charismatic identification of the various communities in time.” This is so because the bishop represents the community. Orthodox theologian points out that “being ordained to be the heads of their eucharistic communities, they were successors of the apostles precisely as spokesmen of these communities.”⁵⁸

The idea of primacy⁵⁹ as such is not alien to Orthodox thought and is acceptable, but it differs from the Catholic vision. In Catholic theology, the Pope as successor of Peter, is the “lasting and visible source and foundation of the unity both of faith and of communion” (LG 18). The ministry of promoting and sustaining the unity of the communion of Churches is a characteristic of the Petrine office (cf. LG 23). The notion of the universal Church as the communion of local Churches, modelled on the communion that exists in the Trinity, has contributed to a fuller theological understanding of the ministry of Peter. As the successor of Peter, the bishop of Rome is head of the college of bishops and exercises universal primacy in the communion of local Churches. The bishop, the true shepherd of the local Church, exercised his ministry as a representative of and dependent on the universal Church, in communion with all those who have received the task of ministry in the Church. The episcopate, as a service in a Church, which is structurally a communion, is also an essentially collegial ministry. The pope is therefore seen as a reference point for the unity of faith and communion.

Zizioulas' theological achievements do not include systematic research on the concept and meaning of primacy *per se*, which does not mean that this question is alien to him. Moreover, Zizioulas recognizes the necessity of primacy. He writes that “it is not only

⁵⁸ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 240.

⁵⁹ In ecumenical dialogue the ministry of primacy at the service of the unity of the Church has been reevaluated and is highly valued. Many the inter-church documents address the issue of primacy. On Catholic, Lutheran and Anglican dialogue and the resulting documents, see Sgarbossa, “Il primato,” 89–104.

useful to the Church but an ecclesiological necessity in a unified Church.”⁶⁰ He addressed this in his reflection on the collegiality and conciliarity of bishop, and it is present in his ontology of personhood, which supports his theology of communion.

John Zizioulas affirms, not only the existence of primacy, but also its necessity: “Can there be unity of the church without primacy on the local, the regional and the universal level in an ecclesiology of communion? We believe not. For it is through a «head», some kind of «primus», that the «many», be it individual Christians or local churches, can speak with one voice. But a «primus» must be a part a community; not a self-defined, but a truly relational ministry. Such a ministry can only act together with the heads of the rest of the local churches whose consensus it would express.”⁶¹ Elsewhere he expresses similarly: “it is impossible to move outside the context of local churches in dealing with the idea of primacy.”⁶²

However, there are differences in the exercise of this primacy. According to him, Orthodox ecclesiology requires an institution which expresses the oneness of the Church precisely because the Church is not a confederation of local Churches.⁶³ He emphasizes that “on the universal level this means that the local Churches constitute one Church through a ministry or an institution which composes *simultaneously* a *primus* and a synod of which he is a *primus*.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Zizioulas, “Primacy,” 124. The starting point in his explanation of primacy is conciliarity. This does not mean that synodality take precedence over primacy. According to him, both institutions are simultaneous. Synodality contextualizes primacy, makes it truly ecclesial, and concretely regulates the exercise of this primacy. The Orthodox theologian bases the theological foundations of conciliarity on the idea that communion is an ontological category in ecclesiology. See Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 134. It is important to note that while Catholic theology employs the term “collegiality,” Orthodox theology is more in line with the concept of “synodality.” Both concepts have in common that synods or councils are assemblies of bishops, with the possibility of lay participation and interaction, without the right to vote.

⁶¹ Zizioulas, “The Church as Communion,” 11.

⁶² Zizioulas, “The Institution,” 380.

⁶³ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 136.

⁶⁴ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 139.

The necessity of primacy is a logical conclusion of Zizioulas' ecclesiology of communion. In other words, for him, the communion of local Churches "does not exclude but necessitates primacy."⁶⁵ This primacy, however, has conciliarity as its starting point, though it is not over against primacy. Both primacy and conciliarity are simultaneous. Moreover, according to Zizioulas, in all forms of conciliarity there is a ministry of primacy.

Our Orthodox thinker sets the following conditions that would make Petrine primacy acceptable to an Orthodox theologian. The first of these conditions is that primacy should not be a primacy of jurisdiction, because it would mean interference in the affairs of other local Churches, which would mean the destruction or negation of catholicity and ecclesial integrity. The second condition is that primacy should not be the prerogative of an individual, but of the local Church. He emphasizes that in the ecclesiology of communion we do not have a communion of individuals but a communion of Churches. Third, primacy should be exercised synodally, both locally, regionally as well as universally. Universal primacy, which respects all of the above conditions "is not only useful to the Church, but is an ecclesiological necessity in the unified Church."⁶⁶

It is also important to have in mind that the Orthodox theology, even though a primate is not alien to it, prefers first and foremost a conciliar form of communion as the most effective way of living out this perichoretic relationship. The Reformation tradition, even when it admits of the value of ministry of unity on the universal level, adopts a conciliar fellowship of the gathered congregations; the presbyterian structure is the accepted form. The theological motive for the unity of the gathered congregations (churches) is the unity of the Trinity. For Catholic theology, in addition to collegiality, primacy is one of the main forms of living out this perichoretic relationship. In other words, the perichoretic relationship is manifested in episcopal collegiality, with the Roman Pontiff as head of the college.

⁶⁵ Zizioulas, "The Ecclesiology," 52.

⁶⁶ Zizioulas, "Primacy," 124.

Conclusions

First of all, it should be noted that in Zizioulas' thought the doctrine of the Trinity entered deeply into the ecclesiological world to illuminate the nature and unity of the Church and the way in which unity is to be understood and realized. The monarchical concept of the Trinity is the basis of the hierarchical structure of the Church. Starting from the Eucharistic character of the Church and the theological foundations of the Holy Trinity, Zizioulas argues that communion and unity overlap in ecclesiology.

Our theologian speaks of the unity of the one and the many in the Trinity. It can therefore be said that Zizioulas wanted the communion of the Church to be modelled on the perichoretic communion of the Holy Trinity. Moreover, he prefers above all the conciliar form of communion as the most effective way of experiencing this perichoretic relationship. This communion is experienced in a harmonious, perichoretic way, analogous to the relationship between the Persons of the Holy Trinity. For Zizioulas, the concept of communion becomes a central idea in his theology and ontology – *being as communion*.

This principle of “one” and “many” is fundamental also in the Eucharist. The personalization of human beings, which took place in Jesus Christ and was transferred to individual people in Baptism, finds its concrete and historical realization in the Eucharist. Zizioulas' eucharistic ecclesiology ensures the integration of the Eucharist and ministry. The very structure of the Church's ministry is found in the Eucharist and derived from it. This is a very important and appropriate concept, because all Church ministry is an extension of the worship of the trinitarian God. However, Zizioulas also emphasizes that the *sine qua non* condition for the Eucharist is Baptism.

In the face of the institutionalization and individualization of Christ in the Church, Zizioulas' rightful emphasis on the Holy Spirit who de-individualizes Christ and in a sense deinstitutionalizes Christ, creates space for the non-institutional dimensions of the Church to become more visible. This does not mean that the Church is merely a charismatic society without a definite form. Zizioulas constantly reminds that the Church is pneumatologically

conditioned when it is the Body of Christ modelled on the eschatological Kingdom of God.

The ontology of personhood illustrates Zizioulas' approach to ecclesial communion. Zizioulas himself grounds his theology of communion on the ontology of personhood and being. The substance of God has no ontological content, no true being, apart from communion. This means that the personal existence of the Father constitutes the divine substance. God as person – as the hypostasis of the Father – makes the one divine substance to be that which is the one God. In other words, God's ontological principle is a person, and God's being is identified with a person. The three Persons of the Trinity are distinguished from each other because they co-exist so that each Person may not exist without the other.

It is precisely because man is a "person" that he is called to communion in the Church. The ontology of person is the basis of his ecclesiology. It is in this connection that he calls on the Greek Fathers. Patristic theology constitutes the basic source in Zizioulas' trinitarian ecclesiology. His approach to studying the Church is characterized by a return to the sources. He goes beyond the too systematic, ahistorical and ideological presentation of Christianity to recover the dynamic and living vision that shaped Christian consciousness in the centuries of its birth.

Zizioulas explains brilliantly and rightly that in the Church the distance that separates and divides the individual believers and Christ is overcome through the hypostatic union between the Person of the Son of God with His Body. The Church is hypostasized through its completion in the Person of Christ as her head. In the Church each member undergoes "theosis" so that many persons can become one Christ (not in nature, but in person).

The bishop represents both the oneness of the community and its interconnectedness with all other eucharistic communities. In Zizioulas' ecclesiological thought, the bishop is a symbol of unity in the local Church and the universal Church. In other words, in the bishop's ministry all the ministries of the Church cooperate in unity. It is around the person of the bishop that he envisages the catholicity of the local Church. Our reflections

show that Zizioulas is disposed to accept a Roman primacy, not as a jurisdictional primacy and not as the primacy of the individual, but as the primacy of the local Church, exercised synodally.

It should be noted, however, that the patristic, or more precisely Cappadocian, approach may be the reason for Zizioulas' criticism. He seems to be reducing the entire Christian tradition to the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocians. One might therefore be tempted to say that he impoverishes the Orthodox tradition, ignoring others of the important Alexandrian School. It can therefore be concluded that Zizioulas has interpreted unilaterally and selectively the thought of the Cappadocians in an exclusively personalistic manner.

For example, in detail, Zizioulas' reliance on Gregory Nazianzen for his conception of the monarchy of the Father makes him particularly vulnerable to criticism. In particular, an over-emphasis on God the Father can lead to hierarchical structures with an air of domination in the church. Gregory describes the mystery of the Trinity as a movement initiated by the Person of God the Father. It makes Him to be the "cause" of being, which includes also the being of God the Son and God the Spirit through the "monarchia" of the Father.

Zizioulas' frequent use of the Cappadocian Fathers' concept of causal relations in the Trinity may suggest a form of subordination of the Son and the Spirit to the Father. This could lead to the belief that the Father is ontologically prior to the Son and the Spirit. A form of monism would then arise. It seems advisable to tone down of the emphasis on the monarchy of the Father. If Zizioulas stresses overly on the "monarchia" of the Father, he could be suspect of an excessive monotheism of the Father. However, as mentioned above, Zizioulas personally defended that the causation in God does not destroy ontological equality.

Moreover, we believe that a certain weakness of Zizioulas' conception is probably an overly one-sided reading of the Church Fathers on the question of "ousia" in ontology. However, being overly focused on the person, he has overlooked some significant advantages of conceiving being as "essence." The fact that Zizioulas rarely uses the term "homoousion" in his trinitarian theology is certainly true. The Orthodox theologian emphasizes "person" in his ontology to the neglect of "ousia." It is clear from his conception

that he seeks to replace a substance ontology with an ontology of the person and of love and communion. By doing so, he may well be one-sided in his emphasis on persons who, he insists are not individuals.

Finally, it is worth noting that Bishop John Zizioulas was able to carry out a self-critique of his scientific research. In fact, Zizioulas raised two key points of criticism of his early work. The first concerns the lack of pneumatology in his doctoral dissertation. He came to believe that a proper synthesis of Christology and pneumatology in ecclesiology is what is needed in theology. The second question concerns the structure of the Church. Our Theologian concedes that his doctoral dissertation did not examine conciliarity and primacy, concepts that Zizioulas later identifies as crucial for the being of the Church.⁶⁷ In his later scientific publications, he addressed the noted deficiencies. It also testifies to his scientific self-criticism, to his maturity and responsibility in exploring the mystery of God.

Eklezjologia trynitarna Jana Zizioulasa

Abstrakt: Myśl prawosławnego teologa biskupa Jana Zizioulasa (1931–2023) dotycząca Kościoła jest przeniknięta perspektywą trynitarną. Osoby w Trójcy pozostają we wzajemnej komunii, zaś natura samego Boga jest relacyjna. Cechą istotną Kościoła jest komunია, co wynika z faktu, że Trójca stanowi komunię Osób. Tylko wiara w Boga Trójcę pozwala zrozumieć tak naprawdę, czym jest Kościół. Jedność trynitarna jest więc prototypem, zaś Kościół jest jej odbiciem. Zizioulas wskazywał, że Kościół jest ukonstytuowany poprzez dwuaspektową zbawczą ekonomię: dzieło Jezusa Chrystusa i dzieło Ducha Świętego. Kościół staje się hierarchiczny w takim sensie, w jakim sama Trójca Święta jest hierarchiczna: ze względu na specyfikę relacji. Aby stać się osobą, należy przełamać bariery indywidualizmu i wejść w życie komunii, co się urzeczywistnia w Kościele poprzez sakramenty Chrztu i Eucharystii. Celem artykułu jest zatem próba prezentacji i oceny koncepcji trynitarniej Jana Zizioulasa.

Słowa kluczowe: Trójca, chrystologia, pneumatologia, Kościół, eklezjologia trynitarna, komunია, Jan Zizioulas

⁶⁷ Bathrellos, "Church," 139–140.

Bibliography

- Agouridis, S., "Can the Persons of the Holy Trinity provide the Basis for Personalistic Views of Man?" *Synaxis* 33 (1990) 67–78.
- Baillargeon, G., *Perspectives Orthodoxes sur l'Eglise-communion: L'oeuvre de Jean Zizioulas* (Montréal: Editions Paulines 1989).
- Bathrellos, D., "Church, Eucharist, Bishop: The Early Church in the Ecclesiology of John Zizioulas," *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company 2007) 133–145.
- Batut, J.P., "Three Pillars of Trinitarian Faith," *Communio* 27 (2000) 300–311.
- Bodea, R.O., "Existential Theology as a Challenge to a Patristic-Based Methodology in Orthodox Christianity from Georges Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky to John Zizioulas," *Louvain Studies* 43 (2020) 335–351.
- Chryssavgis, J., "John Zizioulas and the eagerness for encounter," *La Croix International* 8.08.2023, <https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/john-zizioulas-and-the-eagerness-for-encounter/17320> (access 11.03.2024).
- Clement, O., "Ecclésiologie orthodoxe et dialogue oecumenique," *Contacts* 42 (1963) 91–106.
- Clement, O., "Orthodox Ecclesiology as an Ecclesiology of Communion," *One in Christ* 6 (1970) 101–122.
- Congar, Y., „Bulletin d'ecclésiologie," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et théologiques* 66 (1982) 87–119.
- Congar, Y., *La Parola e il Soffio* (Roma: Borla 1985).
- Congar, Y., *Saggi ecumenici. Il movimento, gli uomini, i problemi* (Roma: Città Nuova 1986).
- Dragas, G., "Orthodox Ecclesiology in outline," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 24 (1981) 184–192.
- Erickson, J.H., "The Local Churches and Catholicity. An Orthodox Perspective," *The Jurist* 52 (1992) 490–508.
- Evdokimov, P., *Prawosławna wizja teologii moralnej. Bóg w życiu ludzi* (trans. W. Szymona; Kraków: Homo Dei 2012).
- Fernandes, I., "Remembering Metropolitan John Zizioulas, acclaimed Orthodox theologian," *La Croix International* 6.02.2023, <https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/remembering-metropolitan-ioannis-zizioulas-acclaimed-orthodox-theologian/17271> (access 11.03.2024).
- Jagodziński, M., "Pneumatologiczny wymiar Kościoła i teologii według Johna D. Zizioulasa," *Studia Teologii Dogmatycznej* 6 (2020) 9–23. DOI <https://doi.org/10.15290/std.2020.06.02>.
- John Paul II, *The Apostolic Letter Orientale lumen* (1995).
- Karmires, I., *L'insegnamento dogmatico ortodosso intorno alla Chiesa* (Milano: Istituto di studi teologici ortodossi s. Gregorio Palamas 1970).

- Knight, D.H., "The Spirit and Persons in the Liturgy," *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company 2007) 183–196.
- Kowalczyk, D., "Dio esiste perché il Padre esiste. L'ontologia della Persona in Joannis Zizioulas," *Studia Wroclawskie* 23 (2021) 81–102. DOI <https://doi.org/10.52404/ttnwloc.stwl.23.4>.
- Lekan, J., "Eklezjologia *Sponsa Christi* – odpowiedź na współczesne kryzysy Kościoła?," *Roczniki Teologiczne* 70/4 (2023) 53–78. DOI <https://doi.org/10.18290/rt2023.25>.
- Leśniewski, K., "Misterium osoby w teologii Metropolity Johna Zizioulasa," *Roczniki Teologii Ekumenicznej* 56/1 (2009) 77–92.
- Lossky, V., *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (New York, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1976).
- Małecki, R., "John Zizioulas," *Leksykon wielkich teologów XX/XXI wieku* (ed. J. Majewski – J. Makowski; Warszawa: T. Bąk Spółka Jawna 2004) II, 372–388.
- Meyendorff, J., "Foreword," in J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1985) 11–13.
- Moltmann, J., *Experiences in Theology. Ways and Forms of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press 2000).
- Moltmann, J., "The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit: Trinitarian Pneumatology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37/3 (1984) 287–300.
- Nissiotis, N.A., "The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity for Church Life and Theology," *The Orthodox Ethos, Essays in Honor of the Century of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America* (ed. A.J. Philippou; Oxford: Holywell Press 1964) 33–69.
- Nissiotis, N.A., "Rapport on the Second Vatican Council," *The Ecumenical Review* 2 (1966) 190–206.
- Panagopoulos, J., "Ontology or Theology of Person?" *Synaxis* 13 (1985) 63–79.
- Roussel, N., "Modern Greek Theologians and the Greek Fathers," *Philosophy&Theology* 18/1 (2006) 77–92.
- Sgarbossa, R., "Il primato del papa nel dialogo con i luterani e con gli anglicani," *Credere oggi* 103 (1998) 89–104.
- Siwecki, L., "Trinity and Church in the Light of Vatican II's Constitution *Lumen gentium*," *Roczniki Teologiczne* 62/2 (2015) 153–173.
- Spiteris, Y., *La Teologia Ortodossa Neo-Greca* (Collana di Studi Religiosi; Bologna: EDB 1992).
- Surówka, W., "Teologia Mikołaja Afanasjewa a Sobór Watykański II," *Przeгляд Tomistyczny* 16 (2010) 1–13.

- Timiades, E., "The Trinitarian Structure of the Church and its Authority," *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox and Reformed Churches* (ed. T.F. Torrance; Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press 1985) 121–156.
- Torrance, A.J., *Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1996).
- Vaticanum II, The Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* (1964) (= LG).
- Vaticanum II, The Decree *Unitatis redintegratio* (1964) (= UR).
- Volf, M., *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Cambridge – Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans 1998).
- Williams, R., "Review of *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church* by John Zizioulas," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989) 101–105.
- Zizioulas, J., *Being as Communion, Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1985).
- Zizioulas, J., "The Bishop in the Theological Doctrine of the Orthodox Church," *Kanon* 7 (1985) 23–35.
- Zizioulas, J., "The Church as Communion," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 38 (1993) 3–16.
- Zizioulas, J., "The Church as Communion: A Presentation on the World Conference Theme," *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*. Faith and Order Paper no. 166 (ed. T. Best – G. Gassmann; Genova: WCC Publications 1994) 103–111.
- Zizioulas, J., *Communion and Otherness. Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (ed. P. McPartlan; London: T&T Clark 2006).
- Zizioulas, J., "Cristologia, pneumatologia e istituzioni ecclesiastiche: un punto di vista ortodosso," *L'ecceologia del Vaticano II: Dinamismi e prospettive* (G. Alberigo; Bologna: EDB 1981) 111–127.
- Zizioulas, J., "The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today: Suggestions for an Ecumenical Study," *The Forgotten Trinity*. III. *A Selection of Papers Presented to the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today* (ed. A.I.C. Heron; London: BCC/CCBI 1991) 19–32.
- Zizioulas, J., "The Early Christian Community," *Christian Spirituality*. I. *Origins to the Twelfth Century* (ed. B. McGinn – J. Meyendorff – J. Leclercq; New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company 1985) 23–43.
- Zizioulas, J., "The Ecclesiological Presuppositions of the Holy Eucharist," *Nicolaus* 10 (1982) 333–349.
- Zizioulas, J., "The Ecclesiology of the Orthodox Tradition," *Search* 7 (1984) 42–53.
- Zizioulas, J., "Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975) 401–448.
- Zizioulas, J., "The Institution of Episcopal Conferences: An Orthodox Reflection," *The Jurist* 48 (1988) 376–383.

- Zizioulas, J., *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics* (London – New York, NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark 2009).
- Zizioulas J., *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today* (Los Angeles, CA: Sebastian Press 2010).
- Zizioulas, J., “Ordination – A Sacrament? An Orthodox Replay,” *Concilium* 4 (1972) 33–40.
- Zizioulas, J., “Die pneumatologische Dimension der Kirche,” *Communio* 2 (1972) 133–147.
- Zizioulas, J., “Primacy in the Church: An Orthodox Approach,” *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church: Toward a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue. A Symposium celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Society of the Atonement, Rome, December 4–6, 1997* (ed. J.F. Puglisi; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1999) 115–125.
- Zizioulas, J., *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology* (ed. M. Vasiljević; Alhambra, CA: St. Sebastian Press 2023).
- Zizioulas, J., “The Teaching of the Second Ecumenical Council on the Holy Spirit in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective,” *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum: Atti del Congresso Teologico di Pneumatologia, Roma 22–26, Marzo 1982* (ed. J.S. Martins; Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1983) I, 29–54.
- Zizioulas, J., *L'uno e molti. Saggi su Dio, l'uomo, la Chiesa e il mondo di oggi* (Roma: Aletti 2018).
- Zizioulas, J., *Ἡ ἐνότης τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἐν τῇ Θεῷ Ἐὐχαριστία καὶ τῷ Ἐπισκόπῳ κατὰ τοὺς τρεῖς πρώτους αἰῶνας* (Athens: Holy Cross Orthodox Press 1965).