Journal for the Study of Metropolitan John Zizioulas' Theology

VOLUME II № 2 AUTUMN 2026
ISSN 3067-1329 (Print)
ISSN 3067-1337 (Online)

John D. Zizioulas
The Logic of Identity (Handwritten notes)

Michalis Filippou
Identity, Otherness, and the Trinity: A Comment on Zizioulas's "Logic of Identity" Notes

Maxim Vasiljević
Identity Without Enmity. On the Metaphysical Intention of John Zizioulas's "Logic of Identity" Notes

Peter De Mey
Strengthening the Ecumenical Relevance of Zizioulas's Eschatological Hermeneutics through a Dialogue with Protestant and Roman Catholic Theologians

Augustin (Viorel) Coman
God *ad intra* and God *ad extra*: The Relationship Between the Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity as Reflected in the Works of John Zizioulas and Dumitru Stăniloae

Stavros Yangazoglou
John Zizioulas in Dialogue with Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac

Book Reviews

Alexei Nesteruk
What Is Man? Theology Encountering Biology and the Physical Sciences by John D. Zizioulas



Journal for the Study of Metropolitan John Zizioulas' Theology

OmegAlpha: Journal for the Study of Metropolitan John Zizioulas' Theology

Editor-in-Chief

Dr. **Nikolaos Asproulis**, Volos Academy for Theological Studies, Volos, Greece; Hellenic Open University, Patras, Greece

Editorial Board

Rev. Dr. **Alexis Torrance**, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, USA

Dr. Aristotle Papanikolaou, Fordham University, New York, NY, USA

Rev. Dr. **Brandon Gallaher**, University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

Dr. **Dionysios Skliris**, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece

Most Rev. Dr. **Ignatije Midić**, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia

Rt. Rev. Dr. **Maxim Vasiljević**, Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Brookline, MA, USA

Rev. Dr. **Vasilije Gavrilović**, Sts. Mardarije & Sebastian Institute, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Advisory Board

Rt. Rev. Dr. **Rowan Williams**, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

Rev. Dr. **Paul McPartlan**, St. Mary's University, London, UK

Dr. **Stavros Yangazoglou**, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece

Most Rev. Dr. **Maximos Vgenopoulos**, Metropolitan of Selybria, Ecumenical Patriarchate, Istanbul, Turkey

Rev. Dr. **John Chryssavgis**, Huffington Ecumenical Institute, Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Brookline, MA, USA

Dr. **Norman Russell**, St. Stephen's House, Oxford, UK

Dr. **Aikaterini Tsalambouni**, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece

Dr. **Katerina Pekridou**, Conference of European Churches, Brussels, Belgium

Dr. **Julija Naett Vidović**, Institut de théologie orthodoxe Saint-Serge, Paris, France

Dr. **Pantelis Kalaitzidis**, Volos Academy for Theological Studies, Volos, Greece

Copyeditor: Sigurd Lefsrud

Academic Publication Advisor: Maja Aćimović

Design & Graphic Editor: Denis Vikić

Digital Platform Manager: Vladimir Aćimović

Logo and Cover Artwork: Fr. Stamatis Skliris

Publishers

John Zizioulas Foundation

St. Sebastian Orthodox Press

Volos Academy for Theological Studies

Policies and guidelines:
https://omegalpha.zizioulas.org/journal/about

OmegAlpha is published in two issues per year; special issues may also appear.
ISSN 3067-1329 (Print),
ISSN 3067-1337 (Online)
Issue DOI: https://doi.org/10.63394/qmk94k70

Correspondence

St. Sebastian Orthodox Press

1621 West Garvey Avenue, Alhambra, California 91803, USA

omegalpha@zizioulas.org

https://omegalpha.zizioulas.org

Printing

Birograf COMP, Belgrade, Serbia

© 2026 John Zizioulas Foundation, St. Sebastian Orthodox Press, and Volos Academy for Theological Studies. All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Creative Commons licenses apply only to expressly marked material.

Journal for the Study of Metropolitan John Zizioulas' Theology

VOLUME II № 2 AUTUMN 2026
ISSN 3067-1329 (Print)
ISSN 3067-1337 (Online)

CONTENTS

Editorial 5

John D. Zizioulas
The Logic of Identity (Handwritten notes) 7

Michalis Filippou
Identity, Otherness, and the Trinity: A Comment on Zizioulas's "Logic of Identity" Notes 13

Maxim Vasiljević
Identity Without Enmity. On the Metaphysical Intention of John Zizioulas's "Logic of Identity" Notes 29

Peter De Mey
Strengthening the Ecumenical Relevance of Zizioulas's Eschatological Hermeneutics through a Dialogue with Protestant and Roman Catholic Theologians 37

Augustin (Viorel) Coman
God *ad intra* and God *ad extra*: The Relationship Between the Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity as Reflected in the Works of John Zizioulas and Dumitru Stăniloae 59

Stavros Yangazoglou
John Zizioulas in Dialogue with Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac ... 87

Book Reviews

Alexei Nesteruk
What Is Man? Theology Encountering Biology and the Physical Sciences by John D. Zizioulas 127

Appendices with Comments 133

Editorial

The current second issue of 2026 continues to explore Metropolitan John D. Zizioulas's interactions with contemporary thinkers from all major Christian traditions. Although he did not always engage in direct dialogue with figures such as the Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae or the French Roman Catholic Henri de Lubac, a background dialogue exists regarding certain key theological issues that have shaped the agenda of twentieth-century inter-Christian dialogue. This ongoing conversation is rooted in Zizioulas's fundamental assumption that his contributions are situated within the "neo-patristic synthesis" developed by his mentor, Fr. Georges Florovsky, to articulate a common language and vision that fosters Christian unity. These discussion topics primarily focus on the identity of the Church, but they also address themes related to God, the Trinity, and more.

Alongside original articles examining these encounters, this issue presents previously unpublished handwritten notes by Zizioulas entitled "The Logic of Identity." This topic may seem unfamiliar in an Orthodox theological context, where engagement with analytical philosophy of religion has been relatively limited. These exploratory pages offer a glimpse into his reflection on identity and otherness and their theological implications. Two accompanying commentaries examine the notes from different perspectives, attending to their philosophical questions and theological significance while recognizing their provisional character. The issue also includes archival material, including photographs, published here for the first time.

Nikolaos Asproulis
Editor-in-Chief

© 2026 The Editor(s). This is an open access editorial distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits use, distribution, reproduction, and adaptation in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

OmegAlpha II:2 Autumn 2026, 7–11
ISSN 3067-1329 (Print), ISSN 3067-1337 (Online)
https://doi.org/10.63394/2ss31f92
Theological Heritage
Published: 2026-11-10

The Logic of Identity

(Handwritten notes)

John D. Zizioulas

Editor's Note: The text published here is not a typical work of the late Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon. What survives is four handwritten leaves among his unpublished papers in the Archives of Metropolitan John—closer to a draft of working notes than to a finished essay. Fragmentary as they are, they record a sustained attempt to state the problem of identity in relation to the Triune God.

Readers familiar with Zizioulas may recognize in them an affinity, at least in outward form, with certain procedures of analytic philosophy: conceptual economy, schematic notation, and an attempt to expose the consequences of competing accounts of identity. A British teaching context is plausible, given his years in systematic theology at Glasgow (1973–1987), following Edinburgh from 1970 and alongside King's College London from 1984. The manuscript itself, however, establishes no such provenance.

Analytic philosophy of religion brings conceptual analysis and formal logic to bear on theological claims, seeking to establish with precision what a doctrine asserts and what follows from it. Within analytic theology, the formal logic of identity has been employed to ask how numerical sameness and difference bear upon doctrines such as the Trinity and the Incarnation. Its principal instrument is

© 2026 John Zizioulas Foundation. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits use, distribution, reproduction, and adaptation in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Leibniz's Law, the indiscernibility of identicals: if x is identical with y, then whatever is true of x is true of y.

Zizioulas had long regarded the bare logic of identity as theologically sterile. In *Being as Communion,* he said so without qualification:

> The tautology "God is God" says nothing about ontology, just as the logical affirmation A = A is a dead logic and consequently a denial of being which is life. It would be unthinkable to speak of the "one God" before speaking of the God who is "communion," that is to say, of the Holy Trinity. (John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985], 17.)

The objection is not that self-identity is invalid or logically useless, but that Zizioulas regards the bare formula as ontologically uninformative: by itself it gives no account of what God is or how God exists. Nor does it leave the equation form behind. In Communion and Otherness Zizioulas writes the alternative out in precisely that form: for Chalcedon "the equation 'man = man' is unacceptable; it is that of 'man = man-in-communion-with-God' that emerges from its Christology." The first, he adds, "corresponds to the ontology and the logic of the 'self-existent'"; the second is "logically conceivable only if what has been said here about the ontology of personhood is accepted." (John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan [London: T&T Clark, 2006], 248.) What is rejected, then, is not identity but identity whose terms are specified in advance of relation. Here the equality sign functions as metaphysical shorthand rather than as the identity predicate of a formal calculus.

The present leaves extend that operation from the human being to God. They are also, for that reason, more than a curiosity. Zizioulas concedes in the passage just quoted that his second equation becomes conceivable only once the ontology of personhood is granted—which leaves the logic resting on the ontology rather than securing it. Whether these pages attempt to close that gap is the question worth putting to them.

A note on the status of the text. These are archival working notes, not a treatise that Zizioulas published or is known to have prepared for publication. Their survival warrants neither the assumption that he endorsed every inference nor the reconstruction of a final position from unfinished material. They are better approached as exploratory notes: first thoughts toward a wider argument, preparation for a lecture or discussion, or an attempt to test a line of reasoning against an interlocutor. The published passages quoted above contain recognizable echoes of the same concern, but they do not establish that Zizioulas intended to return to these particular pages. The essay that follows therefore evaluates a promising metaphysical intention without treating the surviving logical sequence as a finished proof.

The notes break off. Even so, they open onto a line of inquiry that has received renewed attention in contemporary Orthodox theology: the relation between formal reasoning and the theological understanding of person, relation, and communion. Discursive reasoning should not simply be identified with the patristic nous, whose purification belongs to the ascetical knowledge of God. The two need not, however, be opposed. These pages may be read as an attempt to place conceptual reasoning in the service of a theological vision that exceeds it.

The Logic of Identity

John D. Zizioulas

1. A = A is a tautology without justification or explanation. If you ask why that is so, you are faced with either a dogmatic answer (it is so because it is so), or with the only possible explanation, namely that A is A because it is not B.

2. A = not B implies that in order to affirm something (A) you must negate something else (B). But if that which you wish to negate (B) is real, then it must have the same reason for its identity which we applied to A. Namely, B is B because it is not A. Thus the affirmation of both A and B rests upon their *mutual negation*. Their being rests upon the assumption of non-being (cf. Plato).

3. God has nothing next to Him to negate in order to affirm His identity. Hence, if only A and B existed, God could not affirm Himself. He must be understood only as *positively* affirming, since non-being is not an accompaniment of being for Him. But how can A and B affirm themselves *positively*?

There are two possibilities only:

(a) By the affirmation A = B (and not "not-B"), and B = A (and not "not-A"). These are affirmations, but they result in the disappearance of the identities. If A is B, then it is no longer A, and vice versa.

(b) By the existence of a C. This will lead to the affirmation: B is not A, not because it is A but because it is not C; and C is real [...]

[W]hat makes it difficult to accept 1 = 3 is our assumption that the ultimate affirmation is 1 = 1.

Yet the compulsory nature of being is revealed in the tautology A = A through the fact that the question *why* A = A is not answered; A = A because it is so.

Thus, why 1 = 1? There is no answer *unless* there is a 2 and a 3, etc. which are *not* 1. Thus the only explanation of 1 = 1 stems from the *possibility of the negation* of something else. But if this something else really *is* (so that it would make it possible for 1 to be 1),

it is, in turn, only because it can negate the 1: being depends on negation, since even the affirmation 1 = 1 rests upon the possibility of its negation.

This is totally inapplicable to God, for He is not affirming Himself by negating something else (what else is there outside Him to be negated?). How then can God affirm Himself?

The alternative to negation is affirmation. But affirmation, as we have seen, cannot rest on the tautology 1 = 1, since that implies negation. Thus we must depart from the logic of 1 = 1. If we replace 1 = 1 by God = God, we realize that we say nothing of the being of God. Yet, if we say God = Father, we do say something. What is it?

1. That 1 is 1 because there is something other than 1 *which should not be negated but affirmed*. (God = God rests upon the exclusion of non-God, but Father is a relational term and rests upon the *existence* of non-Father; if you do not affirm the Son you lose the Father, too.)

2. That 1 is not 2; i.e., it is not to be confused with 2, not by way of the negation of 2, but by way of the affirmation of 2. Hence the affirmation of 2 leads to the otherness and distinctiveness of both 1 and 2. *The affirmation 1 = 2 does not mean that 1 ceases to be 1 and becomes 2, but on the contrary that through the affirmation of 2 it becomes 1 and not 2*.

Conclusion: Looked upon from the side of the otherness, God is 3; and from the side of oneness He is *one substance*. [Next problem: oneness as caused by Person (Father).]

OmegAlpha II:2 Autumn 2026, 13–27
ISSN 3067-1329 (Print), ISSN 3067-1337 (Online)
https://doi.org/10.63394/b61rra96
Commentary
Published: 2026-11-10

Identity, Otherness, and the Trinity

A Comment on Zizioulas's "Logic of Identity" Notes

Michalis Filippou

Abstract
This article offers a tentative interpretation and reconstruction of John D. Zizioulas's difficult handwritten notes on divine identity and the Trinity. The notes argue that the identity of created beings is bound up with otherness and negation, whereas God's identity cannot be grounded in non-identity with anything else and therefore requires a positive account. I first clarify this argument and suggest a way of formulating it within the setting of classical theism. I then interpret Zizioulas's positive account as proceeding in two stages: divine identity is related specifically to the Person of the Father, while the identities of the divine Persons are understood through their mutual affirmation. Because the notes express this relation through apparently contradictory formulas such as 1 = 2 and 1 = 3, I propose a reconstruction using the distinction between identity and numerical sameness developed by Jeffrey Brower and Michael Rea. This distinction permits the Persons to remain genuinely distinct while being numerically the same God and clarifies Zizioulas's non-additive account of Trinitarian enumeration.

Michalis Filippou
Department of History and Philosophy of Science
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Athens, Greece
E-mail: mfilippou.filippou@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5978-374X

© 2026 The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits use, distribution, reproduction, and adaptation in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Keywords: Zizioulas; Trinity; divine Persons; identity; otherness; logic; numerical sameness

Introduction

Zizioulas's handwritten notes form a cryptic and at times elusive text. Many passages—especially those on pages 2 and 3—resist confident interpretation. I shall therefore make no attempt at a definitive decipherment of everything he says. My more modest aim is to offer a coherent reading that renders the text philosophically and theologically plausible without manifestly departing from the spirit of its author.

The notes are themselves somewhat erratically structured. Pages 1 and 4 present a comparatively clear line of argument concerning what Zizioulas calls the "logic of identity." The argument seems to turn on the contention that this logic, in its ordinary form, cannot be straightforwardly applied to God, since the statement *God = God* does not carry the same implications as ordinary identity statements. The expression "logic of identity" is, however, somewhat misleading since Zizioulas's argument is better understood as articulating a particular approach to the metaphysics of identity. His conclusion is that this approach, however adequate it may be in the case of created beings, must be modified when applied to God. Pages 2 and 3 offer some indication of the form that such a modification might take.

The Central Argument

Zizioulas begins by maintaining that an identity fact of the form $A = A$ is either inexplicable or explanatorily grounded in the "negation (or the possibility of the negation) of something else."[1] Since negation is standardly construed as an operation applying to predicates or propositions, I take his claim to be that identity facts of the form $A = A$ are explained by facts of non-identity of the form $A \neq B$.

[1] Zizioulas, unpublished handwritten notes, 1.

Zizioulas frequently explicates the relevant notion of explanation in terms of "affirmation." "Affirmation" is an unusual term in this context and appears to be employed in at least three distinct senses. First, it denotes simply the opposite of negation: "the alternative of the negation is affirmation."[2] Second, it is used in connection with the semantic relation of reference to an object: "A = not B implies that in order to affirm something (A) you must negate something else (B)."[3] On this use, negation pertains to a semantic-epistemic criterion of identity: the capacity to distinguish *A* from what is not *A* is treated as a necessary condition for successfully identifying, and hence referring to, a substance.

Third, and more importantly for Zizioulas's argument, "affirmation" is employed in a distinctively ontological sense, as in the claim that "God has nothing next to him to negate in order to affirm his identity."[4] On this use, to "affirm" a substance is not merely to identify or refer to it, but to account for what makes it the particular substance that it is. Correspondingly, "negation" is itself construed ontologically: it denotes the principle (or one of the principles) in virtue of which a being possesses its determinate identity. I take this third, ontological sense to be predominant in the argument.

Having thus treated non-identity as the explanatory ground of the identity of created beings, Zizioulas's argument culminates in the claim that God's identity cannot be explained "negatively." Two considerations appear to underlie this conclusion. First, "God has nothing next to him to negate." Second, whereas the being of created substances rests upon negation and therefore "upon the assumption of non-being," in the case of God "non-being is not an accompaniment of being." He consequently concludes that "we must depart from the logic of 1 = 1," a logic that, on his account, is ultimately based on negation, and seek instead a "positive" explanation of God's identity.[5] Before attempting to interpret Ziziou-

[2] Zizioulas, notes, 4.
[3] Zizioulas, notes, 1, 4.
[4] Zizioulas, notes, 2.
[5] Zizioulas, notes, 1–2, 4.

las's sparse remarks concerning how such a positive account might proceed, however, I shall comment on the argument itself.

The argument, as it stands, leaves several crucial issues unresolved. First, the claim that "there is nothing next to God," which is presumably intended to express God's transcendence, is metaphorical and requires more precise formulation. Second, it is unclear how this claim is related to the further assertion that, in the case of God, "non-being is not an accompaniment of being." Are the two claims logically independent, or is the latter intended to follow from the former? More importantly, the attempt to explain facts of identity in terms of facts of non-identity appears circular. A fact of non-identity such as $A \neq B$ obtains between relata whose determinate identities must already be ontologically secured. The point can be put another way. Suppose that we are asked to explain why $A \neq B$. A natural explanation would be that A, which is trivially identical with itself, differs from B, which is likewise trivially identical with itself, with respect to one or more of its properties. Self-identity facts therefore figure in the explanans of non-identity. To invoke non-identity in turn to explain self-identity is consequently circular. Moreover, it is unclear why self-identity should imply non-identity. Non-identity implies plurality, and vice versa. It is not, however, incoherent to suppose that the domain of some possible world contains only a single object that is trivially self-identical.

Despite these difficulties, the argument can be modified without affecting its intended conclusion. Within the setting of classical theism, a created being cannot be the sole existent, since it has been created by God, who is necessarily distinct from it. Createdness therefore entails plurality and hence non-identity. Since createdness belongs to the nature of a created being, it follows from the very nature of such a being that there is at least one substance—namely God—that is non-identical with it. It is therefore a necessary condition for a created thing to be what it is that there exist another substance—namely God—upon which its existence depends. We are thus justified in agreeing with Zizioulas that otherness, and hence negation, pertains to the identity of created beings.

For God, however, the situation is different. Assuming that creation is contingent, there are possible worlds in which God does not create and hence exists alone. This, I suggest, is the simplest way to interpret the claim that "God has nothing next to Him to negate." In such worlds, there is nothing that is non-identical with God. It is therefore not a necessary condition for God to be what He is that there exist another substance distinct from Him. And what is not necessary to God can neither belong to nor be entailed by His essence. Hence otherness neither belongs to God's essence nor is entailed by it. God's identity cannot, therefore, be accounted for negatively, in terms of His non-identity with something else; it must be accounted for "positively."[6]

The claim that, in God, "non-being is not an accompaniment of being" may be read as a consequence of the preceding point: non-identity is not involved in God's essence. Zizioulas's immediate reference to Plato may help to clarify the point. The likely background is the *Sophist* (257b-258c), where the Stranger from Elea rejects the view that negation signifies the contrary of what is negated. "Not-being" is not absolute nothingness but otherness: to say that something is not *F* is to say that it is other than *F*. Similarly, to say that *A* is not *B* is to say that *A* is other than *B*. Thus, not-being, in the relevant sense, is understood as otherness rather than as the opposite of being.[7]

Read against this background, Zizioulas's claim becomes intelligible. In creatures, being is necessarily accompanied by "non-being" insofar as their identity involves otherness expressed through negation. This is not so in the case of God. His being does not pre-

[6] Compare Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* II.11–12. Aquinas argues that although relations to creatures are predicated of God, such relations do not really exist in God and hence do not belong to His essence. I broadly construe $God \neq B$, where *B* is a creature, as expressing such a relation. If so, God's essence cannot be accounted for in terms of His distinctness from created beings. Nor, given divine uniqueness, can His identity be accounted for through His distinctness from another divine being. The point is not that God cannot be known or described negatively, but that His identity cannot be metaphysically grounded, even partially, in His non-identity with something other than Himself.

[7] Plato, *Sophist*, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Hackett Publishing, 1997), 257b–258c,

suppose otherness in this sense. Accordingly, "non-being is not an accompaniment of being" in God.

The "Positive" Account of God's Identity

On pages 2 and 3 of the notes, Zizioulas appears to be developing, albeit tentatively, a "positive" account. Much of the discussion is obscure and plainly provisional, but its theological setting is unmistakably Trinitarian. He writes:

"God has nothing next to Him to negate. Hence if only A and B existed, God could not affirm Himself. … But how can A and B affirm themselves positively?"[8]

Two difficulties immediately arise. First, it is unclear what the terms *A* and *B* are intended to denote. Second, if A and B, as seems likely, are distinct, it is difficult to understand how they can exist given the claim that there is nothing "next to God."

I suggest that the passage be glossed in the following terms: since, in Zizioulas's theology, God is identified with the Father (see footnote 15), *A* and *B* may be taken to denote the other two Trinitarian Persons, the Son (S) and the Holy Spirit (HS). Zizioulas may then be entertaining provisionally the possibility that God could affirm Himself positively through the identities *God the Father* = *S* and *God the Father* = *HS*. The proposal, however, is immediately abandoned, since it would collapse the distinction between the Son and the Spirit: if both are identical with the Father, then, by the symmetry and transitivity of identity, *S* = *HS*. This would explain Zizioulas's apparently disapproving remark at point (a) on page 2 that the affirmations *A* = *B* and *B* = *A* (on the present reading, *S* = *HS* and *HS* = *S*) "result into the disappearance of their identities. If A is B it is no longer A and vice versa."[9]

The proposed identification of *A* and *B* with the Son and the Holy Spirit also clarifies their occurrence immediately after the claim that nothing exists "next to" God. The Trinitarian Persons are not beings external to God; they are themselves divine and

[8] Zizioulas, notes, 2.
[9] Zizioulas, notes, 2.

therefore do not stand alongside God in the manner of creatures. Point (b) at the end of page 2, however, remains opaque to me.

Page 3 confirms that the entire discussion is situated within a Trinitarian context. Zizioulas maintains that the identity *God = God*, unlike *God = Father*, is wholly uninformative with respect to God's essence. By contrast, *God = Father* says something substantive about God and, in doing so, implicitly introduces the Son.[10] The positive account of God's identity thus appears to be articulated primarily in terms of the Father and, secondarily, through His relations to the other two Persons.

The status of the identities of the Persons themselves, however, remains to be clarified. Zizioulas offers no explicit account, although the question seems to underlie his inquiry on page 2 into how *A* and *B* can "affirm themselves positively." A passage in *Communion and Otherness* suggests the direction in which his thought may be moving.

"If the three persons co-emerge and are not derived from anyone or from any Other, their unity must be sought in the very 'fact' of their co-emergence and co-existence."[11]

The picture that begins to emerge is therefore one in which God's identity is positively disclosed in the Father, while the identities of the Persons are themselves mutually affirmed.

This conception also offers a promising way of approaching a particularly difficult passage on page 3:

"That 1 is not 2, i.e., not to be confused with 2 not by way of negation of 2 but by way of affirmation of 2. Hence the affirmation of 2 leads to the otherness and distinctiveness of both 1 and 2. The affirmation 1 = 2 does not mean that it ceases to be 1 and becomes 2 but on the contrary through the affirmation it becomes 1 and not 2."[12]

Again, I take the numerals to designate the Trinitarian Persons. Zizioulas's point appears to be that their distinction is real—"1 is

[10] Zizioulas, notes, 3.

[11] John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan (T&T Clark, 2006), 135.

[12] Zizioulas, notes, 3.

not 2"—but is not grounded in negation in the manner characteristic of created beings. The identity of a creature involves its non-identity with God; the identity of a divine Person, by contrast, cannot be understood on this model, since the Persons possess one and the same divine essence that unites them with an intimacy incomparably greater than that obtaining among created beings. Their distinctness cannot therefore be adequately expressed through the negation of one another. The occurrence of negation in the expression "1 is not 2" in the passage above is consequently liable to mislead, since it reflects the limitations of the linguistic resources available to us for expressing divine otherness. In seeking to overcome, or at least mitigate, this limitation, Zizioulas appears to envisage that even the distinctness of each Person must receive a positive rather than a negative account: each is affirmed in and through the affirmation of the others. This may be what he intends by the claim that "the affirmation 1 = 2 does not mean that it ceases to be 1 and becomes 2 but on the contrary through the affirmation it becomes 1 and not 2." It remains difficult, however, to see how such a proposal can be rendered formally coherent.

The difficulty becomes especially acute at the level of Zizioulas's notation. He appears to express this reciprocal affirmation by means of formulas such as $1 = 2$ and $1 = 3$, with 1, 2, and 3 standing respectively for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Yet if these formulas are construed as ordinary statements of numerical identity, they efface precisely the personal distinctions they are intended to articulate: in Zizioulas's own words, they "result into the disappearance of the [persons'] identities." What his proposal therefore seems to require is a form of sameness that preserves rather than abolishes personal otherness—a relation in virtue of which the Persons may be affirmed as One without thereby being numerically identical with one another.

From Identity to Numerical Sameness: A Reconstruction of the Notes

One possible way forward is to distinguish identity from numerical sameness without identity. The distinction, together with its technical elaboration, is famously developed by Jeffrey Brower and Michael Rea in "Material Constitution and the Trinity."[13] Their central proposal is that the apparent inconsistency among the claims that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons, that each is God, and that there is only one God can be resolved by analogy with cases of material constitution. A statue and the lump of bronze that constitutes it may be non-identical because they possess different properties: the lump may survive being squashed whereas the statue does not—without thereby counting as two material objects. Brower and Rea characterize the relation between them as one of *numerical sameness without identity*. On their broadly Aristotelian analysis, substances are hylomorphic compounds of matter and form. Two such compounds are numerically the same material being if and only if they share the same matter; they are identical only if, in addition, that matter is organized by the same form.

Applied to the Trinity, the divine essence plays a role analogous to matter, while the distinguishing personal properties or forms (*hypostatic idiomata*)—unbegottenness, begottenness, and procession—play a role analogous to forms. The three Persons are therefore genuinely distinct; yet, since each involves one and the same divine essence, they are numerically the same God without being identical Persons.[14]

[13] Jeffrey E. Brower and Michael C. Rea, "Material Constitution and the Trinity," *Faith and Philosophy* 22, no. 1 (2005): 57–76, https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil200522134.

[14] A possible objection, particularly pertinent to the present discussion, is that the account threatens to generalize in an unacceptable way. Since two distinct human persons, *A* and *B*, share a common essence, the theory might seem to entail the counterintuitive conclusion that *A* and *B* are numerically the same human being without being identical persons. The analogy, however, is misleading in several respects. The divine essence is necessarily shared by only three Persons, whereas there is no corresponding upper limit to the number of persons who may instantiate the human essence. Moreover, whereas human essence is naturally understood as a *universal* instantiated by distinct human be-

This distinction is particularly pertinent to the present discussion. Brower and Rea's account is, of course, significantly different from Zizioulas's. They explain divine unity by means of a metaphysical relation modeled on material constitution, whereas Zizioulas appears to account for divine identity positively in terms of the Persons and their relations, rather than by appeal to anything analogous to an underlying constituent.

Despite these differences in their underlying metaphysics, Brower and Rea's distinction can nevertheless be adapted so as to provide a formally consistent interpretation of Zizioulas's claims. Before presenting that proposal, however, one point requires emphasis. Unlike Brower and Rea's philosophical account of the Trinity, Zizioulas's theology follows the conciliar Trinitarian tradition in assigning a distinctive theological primacy to the identity *God = Father*. This identification is especially prominent in the present notes, although its broader theological significance emerges still more clearly elsewhere in his writings.[15] Indeed, it is through

ings, the divine essence may more plausibly be conceived as analogous to a *module trope*: a particularized property that is itself characterized precisely by the character it confers upon the whole which it is a part of (a redness module trope, for example, not only confers redness to the whole it is part of but it is itself red). A trope of divinity of this kind may plausibly be shared by non-identical Persons. More importantly, the divine essence unites the Persons far more intimately than shared matter unites ordinary hylomorphic compounds. A given portion of matter may receive indefinitely many forms and thus enter successively into indefinitely many compounds; the divine essence, by contrast, admits only the three personal forms. If Brower and Rea's account applies to distinct compounds sharing the same matter, it therefore applies with even greater force to the Trinitarian Persons. Zizioulas discusses Gregory of Nyssa's response to a related objection in *Communion and Otherness*, 171–72. For the distinction between *modifier* and *module* tropes, see R. K. Garcia, "Two Ways to Particularize a Property," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1, no. 4 (2015): 635–652, https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2015.21.

[15] Zizioulas gives systematic expression to this conviction by locating the ultimate ground of divine unity, in accordance with the Greek patristic tradition, not in the divine essence considered in abstraction from the hypostases, but in the hypostasis of the Father, who is uniquely the causal principle of the Son's generation and the Spirit's procession. He observes that, "in the case of the Eastern creeds … the phrase 'one God the Father' seems to attach divine unity to the divine Fatherhood," and further remarks that "the East did not adopt the easy way of dissociating the 'One God' from 'God the Father,' and preferred to face the Arian challenge in a way that was faithful to the biblical *equation* [emphasis added] of God with the Father." He likewise maintains that "the *identification* [emphasis added] of God with the Father, which we find in the Bible and in the early

this identity that Zizioulas appears to understand both God and the Person of the Father as being positively "affirmed."

The obvious question, however, concerns the other two Trinitarian Persons. How are the Son and the Holy Spirit to "affirm themselves"? As we have seen, their identities cannot be positively secured by means of ordinary identity statements such as $S = HS$, $F = S$, or $F = HS$, since such identities would efface the personal otherness that Zizioulas seeks to preserve. Nor can they be secured "negatively," through relations of non-identity, since the mode of differentiation obtaining among the divine Persons is not of the same kind as that found among created individuals. It is precisely here that the distinction between identity and numerical sameness becomes useful.

Adapting Brower and Rea's distinction for the purposes of Zizioulas's account, let $\equiv_G$ denote the relation of *numerical God-sameness without identity*, that is, the relation expressed by "... is numerically the same God as ...". In the present adaptation, however, "God" is to be understood as referring specifically to God the Father; in this respect, the proposal departs from Brower and Rea's original account. We may then represent the positive mutual affirmation of the Son and the Holy Spirit not in terms of either identity or non-identity, but in terms of numerical God-sameness: $S \equiv_G HS$. Thus, the Son is numerically the same God as the Holy Spirit, although the Son is not identical with the Holy Spirit. The relation obtains in virtue of the fact that both the Son and the Holy Spirit possess the same divine essence as God the Father.[16]

creeds, survives in the Cappadocians," as evidenced by their understanding of divine *monarchia* as referring to the one *arche* of divine existence. This *arche*, on Zizioulas's reading, signifies not merely "rule" or "power"—which could be common to the three Persons and thus pertain to the one divine substance—but, more fundamentally, the personal ontological origin of divine existence. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 117–19. The identity *God = Father* thus occupies a distinctive theological place in Zizioulas's account: the Father is not merely one of the three divine Persons but the personal *arche* of divine existence.

[16] Since the Father is identical with God the Father, and hence trivially numerically the same God as Himself, it follows, given that the Son and the Holy Spirit possess the same divine essence as the Father, that $F \equiv_G S$ and $F \equiv_G HS$ also obtain.

With the notation $\equiv_G$ now in place, we can give a more precise explication of Zizioulas's claim that "the affirmation 1 = 2 does not mean that it ceases to be 1 and becomes 2 but on the contrary through the affirmation it becomes 1 and not 2." If = in this passage is replaced by $\equiv_G$, the intended point becomes considerably clearer. Numerical God-sameness does not efface the distinct personal identities of the Persons. On the contrary, insofar as the Persons are mutually affirmed through this relation, it is precisely in and through their numerical sameness that each is positively established in its own particularity. In this sense, each Person "becomes" what it is, not through the negation of the others, but through the relation of numerical God-sameness that obtains among them.

This analysis also accords well with Zizioulas's claim that, "looked upon from the side of the otherness [that is, on the present reconstruction, from the side of distinct personal identities] God is 3, and from the side of oneness [that is, from the side of numerical sameness] it is one substance."[17] God is one substance because, on the present account, something x is a God—that is, a hylomorphic compound whose "matter" is the divine essence and whose form is "unbegottenness"—and every divine Person is numerically the same God as x, since each shares the same divine essence as x. On the other hand, "looked upon from the side of otherness," God is three because there are three non-identical divine Persons who are numerically the same God.

The present analysis may also shed light on another difficult passage in the notes, where Zizioulas observes that "what makes it difficult to accept 1 = 3 is the assumption that the ultimate affirmation is 1 = 1."[18] The expression $1 = 3$ may here be understood as a schematic representation of two distinct modes of counting operating simultaneously. Counted with respect to numerical sameness, the Persons (and God) are one; counted with respect to their distinct personal identities, they are three. The occurrence of

[17] Zizioulas, notes, 3.
[18] Zizioulas, notes, 4.

= in $1 = 3$ is therefore potentially misleading if it is read as the familiar sign of classical identity. On the present reconstruction, it is intended instead to express a hybrid relation combining classical identity with $\equiv_G$. Strictly speaking, such a relation would require a distinct symbol of its own, precisely in order to prevent its being conflated with identity proper.

The suggestion that $1 = 3$ involves two distinct modes of counting also provides a natural way of understanding the account of the enumeration of the divine Persons that Zizioulas attributes to the Cappadocians in *Communion and Otherness*.[19]

On his gloss, the Cappadocians permit the enumeration of the Persons only under considerable qualification. Number is necessary because human language possesses no other adequate means of expressing personal otherness; in this sense, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit must indeed be numbered. Such enumeration, however, must not be understood additively, as though the three Persons were discrete units whose aggregation produced a plurality within God. According to Zizioulas, it is precisely such an understanding that the Cappadocians reject. Gregory of Nyssa excludes addition and subtraction from God, while Basil insists that number be applied to the Trinity "reverently," that is, without conceiving the Persons as added to one another. The three hypostases are therefore numerically distinguishable without being numerically additive: their distinction entails neither composition nor aggregation into a whole composed of independently countable parts. In Zizioulas's view, this conception of Trinitarian plurality without addition is carried forward by John of Damascus, who describes the hypostases as mutually related and indwelling, but neither composed nor added together.

Read in the light of the present reconstruction of Zizioulas's notes, these remarks admit of a natural interpretation. When the Persons are counted with respect to their distinct identities, the result is three; from this perspective, the Persons are added to one another. Such addition, however, reflects an *ontologically* mislead-

[19] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 171–73.

ing mode of counting, according to which distinction implies both addition and negation (*A* is not *B*). Indeed, addition and negation are, in the present context, even more misleading than in cases of material coincidence, such as that of a statue and the lump of bronze that constitutes it, since the unity conferred upon the Persons by the divine essence is far more intimate than that conferred by shared matter upon two coincident hylomorphic compounds.

The mode of unity that renders negation inappropriate in the Trinitarian case is not fully intelligible. The mystery of the Trinity therefore remains irreducible, not least because the created order furnishes no instance of a unity of comparable strength. The available analogies can at most serve to domesticate the mystery; they cannot dissolve it.

To move beyond this perspective and represent the divine domain without such misleading implications,[20] the Persons must instead be counted with respect to Brower and Rea's relation of numerical sameness. The result is then one. The two counts are therefore not in conflict, since they proceed according to different criteria of enumeration. On this reading, the Cappadocian prohibition against additive numbering may be understood as also denying that the first mode of counting licenses the inference from three distinct Persons to three Gods. The point is not merely that one mode of counting yields three whereas another yields one, but that the enumeration of distinct Persons does not license ontological addition.

[20] The misleading implications at issue need not be strictly logical; they may instead arise at the level of conversational implicature, in something like the Gricean sense, insofar as the language of addition and negation may misleadingly suggest a degree of separation among the Persons that misrepresents the metaphysical intimacy of their unity. I do not have the space to develop this line of thought.

Conclusion

In this brief comment, I have sought to render Zizioulas's difficult and often obscure notes more intelligible by reconsidering them in light of the distinction between identity and numerical sameness. The reconstruction is deliberately modest: it does not claim that Zizioulas himself had this distinction in mind when composing the notes. Its purpose is rather to show that his remarks admit of a formally coherent reading that preserves their central theological and metaphysical commitments, clarifies the positive affirmation of divine identity, and gives a more precise sense to his rejection of additive enumeration in the Trinity. Whether Zizioulas would have accepted this reconstruction must, of course, remain an open question.

References

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa contra Gentiles*. Editio Leonina manualis. Apud Sedem Commissionis Leoninae et apud Librariam Vaticanam, Desclée and Herder, 1934.

Brower, Jeffrey E., and Michael C. Rea. "Material Constitution and the Trinity." *Faith and Philosophy* 22, no. 1 (2005): 57–76. https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil200522134.

Garcia, R. K. "Two Ways to Particularize a Property." *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1, no. 4 (2015): 635–652. https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2015.21.

Plato. "Sophist." Translated by Nicholas P. White. In *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. Hackett Publishing, 1997.

Zizioulas, John D. *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*. Edited by Paul McPartlan. T&T Clark, 2006.

Zizioulas, John D. Unpublished handwritten notes on the "logic of identity." n.d.

OmegAlpha II:2 Autumn 2026, 29–36
ISSN 3067-1329 (Print), ISSN 3067-1337 (Online)
https://doi.org/10.63394/fhxsmv53
Commentary
Published: 2026-11-10

Identity Without Enmity

On the Metaphysical Intention of John Zizioulas's "Logic of Identity" Notes

Maxim Vasiljević

I

On four leaves of paper, a theologian writes down the law of identity and asks why it holds. A = A. Why is that so? Within standard first-order logic with identity, self-identity requires no additional premise. This does not, however, settle the metaphysical question Zizioulas is exploring. A strictly formal assessment, applied without regard to the exploratory character of the notes, misses what may be taking shape on the page.

What is happening is that the tautology is being made to stand for something. Zizioulas need not be read as proposing to revise $\forall x\ (x = x)$; he never says he wishes to. He is treating A = A as shorthand for a metaphysical picture—one in which a being possesses its identity in itself, in which relations arrive afterwards, and in which the other appears only as the external limit of something already constituted. His symbols are not logical constants but experimental notation for an ontology. Read as deduction, the man-

Maxim Vasiljević
Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology
Brookline, MA, USA
E-mail: mvasiljevic@hchc.edu
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6890-6844

© 2026 The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits use, distribution, reproduction, and adaptation in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

uscript does not stand. Read as an ontological thought experiment, it is doing something else, and the something else is worth recovering.

Even so, the leaves do not stand alone. For nearly thirty years Zizioulas taught a course in Christian dogmatics—at Edinburgh, Glasgow, King's College London, and finally Thessaloniki—whose opening lectures treat theological epistemology as a problem of identification, and which his students recorded and transcribed. Read beside those lectures, the compressed steps on these pages are often abbreviations rather than lapses. I draw on them throughout.

II

The first thing to notice is that Zizioulas and a stringent logical critic such as Wittgenstein share a starting point. "To say of one thing that it is identical with itself is to say nothing at all," writes Wittgenstein at *Tractatus* 5.5303; and the manuscript's own conclusion is that "God = God … we say nothing of the being of God." Both hold that the tautology is empty. They disagree only about what follows from that. For Wittgenstein, the emptiness shows that the question was ill-formed. For Zizioulas it is a report about ontology: if you begin from self-identical substance, you will never arrive at a person. "For God to be God, he is so unique that he coexists with nothing else. Therefore, I cannot know God by excluding something else." This, therefore, is a philosophical disagreement rather than a logical error, and it sets the terms for everything after it.

III

The manuscript's first movement might be read as an argument and judged invalid. It reads better as a portrait. Zizioulas provisionally adopts the account he means to break—A is A because it is not B—and then does the one thing that tests such an account: he universalizes it. If B is real, then B must be B on the same terms, which is to say because it is not A. The grounding now runs both ways, and a grounding relation that runs both ways is no grounding at all. Worse, a two-term structure in which each term is nothing but "not the other" can have its terms exchanged without any

loss of content. Pure non-identity tells us that A and B differ. It cannot tell us which is which.

He says that being rests upon non-being, and read as a thesis this does not follow: difference presupposes the reality of both relata rather than the nothingness of either, as the *Sophist* had already established in separating the "is not" of otherness from the "is not" of non-existence. But the lectures show it was never offered as a thesis. There Zizioulas runs the same move as a reduction. Identification by exclusion means that "knowing A presupposes the existence of something else alongside it, which I exclude"; apply it to God and "we would therefore have to suppose that something always coexists with God, even if that something is nothingness" — a supposition he ascribes to Aquinas and to Barth, and rejects. The leaves compress an argument his students heard at length. What the immanent critique establishes stands either way: purely differential identity cannot ground concrete identity.

The vocabulary in which he conducts his experiment repays attention, though not where one might expect. He writes of "that which you wish to negate," a phrase that invites a reading in terms of contest; but negation is his ordinary term for identification throughout the lectures, and the word alone will not carry that weight. What carries it is where the lectures say such knowing ends: "there is always a latent utilitarian aspect to this knowledge derived from identifying an object's properties, because these properties immediately lend themselves to use." Identification by exclusion terminates in use. An ontology erected upon it will treat the other as a boundary first and a resource second — a picture with affinities to Hegel's struggle for recognition, Girard's mimetic rivalry, and Sartre's objectifying gaze, though Sartre served Zizioulas elsewhere for the opposite purpose, to show that a person may be present in absence. An older analogue lies in the framework Aristotle bequeathed, where πρός τι is treated as an accident and substance has ontological priority over relation. Zizioulas is describing an ontology of fallen individuality and asking whether being must be competitive. That is the real question of the first movement, and it is not a question about logic.

IV

"Thus, we must depart from the logic of 1 = 1." The manuscript marks its own turn, and what it departs from is not the formal law but a metaphysics erected upon it. Three positions are now in view. Identity without otherness, A = A, which is empty. Identity against the other, A ≠ B, which, when treated as the basis of identity, makes otherness external and potentially hostile. And identity through a positive, asymmetric relation R(A, B), from which A ≠ B follows: the other is not merely what I am not but is positively involved in who I am.

The theological form of the third is expressed in a sentence that even a critical reader might find compelling: "God = God" says nothing; "God = Father" says something. Fatherhood is not a property a complete individual might possess and afterwards deploy. It is a correlative: there is no father without a child, and Aristotle's own *Categories* say as much, correlatives being simultaneous by nature, so that to destroy one is to destroy the other. The text that made relation an accident supplies the argument that unmakes it. Athanasius had already drawn the consequence against Arius—if there was when the Son was not, then there was when God was not Father—and Zizioulas's formulation is exact: if you do not affirm the Son you lose the Father too. Zizioulas had put the same point to his students without the Arian framing: "if the Son ceases to exist, the Father ceases to exist. If the Father ceases to exist, the Son also ceases to exist."

From here the reconstruction is short. Let the relation be asymmetric: the Father begets the Son, and the Son does not beget the Father. Then, by the indiscernibility of identicals, the Father is not the Son. Difference has stopped being a premise and become a theorem, derived from a positive relation. And the relation that distinguishes them is the same relation that unites them. This reconstruction makes the inference to personal distinction formally valid, while leaving its theological premises to be established.

V

There is a further result, and it vindicates the intention more strongly than anything the manuscript states. Suppose three persons are to be distinguished within one being. Whatever distinguishes them must be unshared, or it fails to individuate; and it must not belong to the common nature, or it ranks them, and the derived persons are lesser. No perfection of the divine nature can serve, since these are held in common. A bare individuating thisness satisfies both conditions but does not itself explain communion, risking a picture of three individuals side by side. Relations of origin satisfy both conditions and, unlike a bare thisness, join what they distinguish.

Relations of origin offer a particularly compelling account within this theological framework. On this reading, the tradition's identification of unbegottenness, generation, and procession as the distinctive modes of personal existence is more than an inherited convention: it expresses the need to distinguish the divine persons without dividing their common being. A relational account of personal identity is not merely congenial to Trinitarian doctrine; it is indispensable to its articulation in these terms.

This also locates a tension within the manuscript's terminology. Zizioulas calls the Son "non-Father." The designation states a distinction but does not yet express the positive relation that constitutes the Son's personal identity. His own account of the Eunomian controversy supplies the clarification. "By identifying God's essence or nature with the Father," he told his students, "the Eunomians created the confusion that, since we can know God as Father, we can therefore know God's nature, insofar as the divine essence and the Father coincide completely in meaning." The distinction between essence and Father "upon which the Cappadocian Fathers insisted" ruled out that confusion. Were Father and divine substance identified, whatever is "non-Father" would fall outside the divine substance; the Cappadocian distinction removes the consequence and locates the cause of the Son's generation in the Father. "Non-Father" therefore need not imply exclusion from divinity, but it remains insufficient to say positively who the Son

is. "Begotten of the Father" expresses both his distinction from the Father and his constitutive relation to him. The repair lies in that substitution — and it accords both with the second movement of the manuscript and with Zizioulas's explicit theology in *Communion and Otherness*.

VI

One question remains open, and it is the one found in the manuscript's margin rather than in its text: oneness as caused by the Person of the Father. Unity so conceived is neither a generic nature instantiated three times nor an impersonal essence prior to the persons, but the one divine being eternally communicated from the Father. That answer escapes subordination only if the Father is never without Son and Spirit, if priority of origin is not priority of being, and if what is communicated is the whole and not a diminished portion—qualifications the tradition supplies and the manuscript assumes.

The manuscript leaves this account of freedom undeveloped. In *Knowing as Willing* he locates Trinitarian freedom in the person of the Father, distinguishing the willing person from the act of willing. If the Father begets by necessity of nature, then nature is prior to person, and the entire thesis reverts to what it was written against. If He might not have begotten, the Son is contingent. On this reading, the Father does not first exist and then decide; his personal being is his self-giving, and divine freedom is ecstatic rather than elective. This avoids construing generation as a decision made by an already constituted individual. Whether the term thereby designates something other than necessity, or furnishes necessity with a more congenial name, the manuscript does not say.

It is worth noting that this is the manuscript's own first question returning. Zizioulas began by calling the unanswerability of A = A "the compulsory nature of being." Taken alone the phrase looks like a confusion of logical necessity with coercion. In the lectures, however, "compulsory" is a term of art, and logical conviction is its chief instance: "To be convinced logically means compulsory knowledge: I do not know freely." Knowledge that

compels is knowledge that overrides freedom, and God "is neither known nor wishes to be known by compulsion." The phrase on the leaves is shorthand for a distinction he had been teaching for years, and it names something real: existence as given, unchosen, unable to offer a reason for itself. Created being is compulsory in that sense; divine being must be self-given. What looked like an equivocation at the argument's opening proves to be the very distinction the argument exists to establish. The notes stop at a question that this reconstruction leaves unresolved.

VII

The conclusion is not that an exploratory sketch shows Zizioulas to be good at theology but poor at logic. It is that these notes identify the right problem, and that their compression makes a worked position look like a stumble. Formal identity is ontologically empty; an ontology that takes self-sameness as its primitive notion risks making the other into a limit. A theology whose central doctrine requires an otherness that is neither division nor diminution cannot rest content with such an ontology. Where the page seems to break down, the lectures more often than not supply what it omits; what they do not supply is an answer to the question the notes end on, and that question is genuinely open. What the leaves show, in the end, is how a metaphysical proposal was being sought through a logical apparatus borrowed from the position under critique.

The Fathers, he told his students, had no need of an existential analysis of what it means to know "in a person" — "but this does not mean that it must never be undertaken." These leaves are an attempt to undertake it.

Because we do not know whether Zizioulas meant to revise, expand, debate, or abandon these pages, the reconstruction offered here must remain conditional. Their present publication does not turn notes into a completed doctrine; it does, however, make their metaphysical intention available for judgment. On that level the argument is valuable: the other is not the negation

of my identity, and the positive existence of the other can be understood as a condition of it. The notes should therefore be read neither as a failed formal proof nor as an authoritative final statement, but as the germ of an ontology of identity without enmity.

A note on sources. Quotations from the manuscript follow the text printed in this issue. Quotations from the dogmatics lectures are my own translations from the Greek transcript of the course, which remains in part unpublished; the published selection is John D. Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Douglas H. Knight and Katerina Nikolopulu (London: T&T Clark, 2009). Other references are to *Communion and Otherness* (London: T&T Clark, 2006) and *Knowing as Willing* (Los Angeles: Sebastian Press, 2025).

OmegAlpha II:2 Autumn 2026, 37–57
ISSN 3067-1329 (Print), ISSN 3067-1337 (Online)
https://doi.org/10.63394/x7s58c76
Original Paper
Received: 2026-08-14; Revised: 2026-09-22;
Accepted: 2026-09-28; Published: 2026-11-10

Strengthening the Ecumenical Relevance of Zizioulas's Eschatological Hermeneutics through a Dialogue with Protestant and Roman Catholic Theologians

Peter De Mey

Abstract
This article examines the ecumenical potential and challenges of John Zizioulas's eschatological ontology in *Remembering the Future*. It considers his critical engagement with Jürgen Moltmann, arguing that broader dialogue could enrich discussion of creation, ecology, and universal salvation. It then brings Zizioulas into conversation with Louis-Marie Chauvet, Johann Baptist Metz, Reimund Bieringer, and James Alison. Their approaches to sacramental mediation, apocalyptic expectation, biblical interpretation, and the Resurrection reveal convergences and differences with his thought. Finally, it explores eschatological themes in the international Orthodox–Catholic dialogue, whose relevance remains largely implicit in the book. These encounters can extend Zizioulas's future-oriented vision while preserving its Orthodox foundations. A common celebration of Easter is proposed as a concrete expression of this potential, linking theological reflection with the pursuit of Christian unity within the historical life of the churches.

Peter De Mey
Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven
Leuven, Belgium
E-mail: peter.demey@kuleuven.be
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5541-7266

© 2026 The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits use, distribution, reproduction, and adaptation in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Keywords: John Zizioulas; eschatological ontology; ecumenical dialogue; Jürgen Moltmann; Roman Catholic theology; future-oriented hermeneutics; Orthodox–Catholic dialogue; common celebration of Easter

Though I am focusing more on the ecumenical dialogue between churches[1] than on the work of the late Metropolitan of Pergamon John Zizioulas in my academic research, his work has been regularly discussed during scholarly colloquia organized by my university. This was the case, for example, when we invited Pantelis Kalaitzidis in 2016 to contribute to a colloquium on *The Spirit, Hermeneutics, and Dialogues*[2] and of course we also stimulate our doctoral students to explore the work of Zizioulas in greater depth.[3]

This article focuses exclusively on the posthumous magnum opus of the late Metropolitan Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology*[4] and is divided into three parts. Although Zizioulas explicitly states that "the present author operates under the influence of his own tradition,"[5] the Protestant theologian who is most frequently cited—albeit often in a critical manner—is Jürgen Moltmann. In the first part of my ar-

[1] See among others, Peter De Mey, "'Quanta est nobis via?' (*Ut Unum Sint*): A Plea to Accelerate Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue," in *Holding fast to the Mystery of the Faith: Festschrift for Patriarch Daniel of the Romanian Orthodox Church*. Eastern Church Identities, 10, ed. Sorin Șelaru & Daniel Munteanu (Brill, 2022), 474–89.

[2] Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *"Esc*hatology and Future-oriented Hermeneutics in Contemporary Orthodox Theology: The Case of Metropolitan John D. Zizioulas," in *The Spirit and Dialogues*, ed. Reimund Bieringer et al. (Peeters, 2019), 155–80.

[3] Cf. Aleksandre Gabunia, "Seeing from the Future: The Reverse Perspective and Eschatological Anthropology in John Zizioulas' Theology," *Dialogue* 9:18 (2025): 54–77; "Reverse Perspective as Hermeneutical Principle: Zizioulas' Ecclesiology and the *Russkiy Mir* Discourse," *Ecclesiology* [forthcoming].

[4] John D. Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology*, ed. Bishop Maxim Vasiljević (St. Sebastian Press, 2023). An earlier draft was presented during the panel "Why Theology still matters Today? The Public Witness of Metr. Zizioulas's Theology," organized on July 1, 2025 as part of the annual assembly of the European Academy of Religion by the Volos Academy for Theological Studies to honour two recent publications with posthumously published studies by Zizioulas.

[5] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 62.

ticle I shall demonstrate that Zizioulas has sought to engage with Moltmann's thought only selectively. Orthodox theologians in general have, to date, paid little attention to "receptive ecumenism." For Zizioulas, this is particularly striking with regard to Catholic theology, which apart from the work of Rahner and von Balthasar he does not seem to have intensively studied.[6] Therefore, in the second part of my article I shall briefly outline what the Greek theologian might have learnt from four Catholic theologians who show a certain affinity with his eschatological position: Johann Baptist Metz, Louis-Marie Chauvet, James Alison and Reimund Bieringer. Finally, it strikes me that the key role which the Metropolitan of Pergamon has had in several official dialogues at the international level[7] apparently had no significant influence on his systematic theological research. In *Remembering the Future* there is not a single citation from the ecumenical dialogues. Was ecumenism, then, for this leading Orthodox theologian, merely an "appendix" to his oeuvre, to quote the famous warning by Pope John Paul II in *Ut Unum Sint*? At the end of my article, I will briefly point to the contribution of the Orthodox-Catholic international dialogue on the topic of eschatology.

1. Zizioulas's Critical but Limited Interaction with Jürgen Moltmann

In a brief historical overview in the introduction of *Remembering the Future* Zizioulas contrasts the rediscovery of eschatology as "the heart of our Lord's teaching"[8] with Johannes Weiss and Al-

[6] Nikolaos Asproulis, *Theologically Reading Metropolitan of Pergamon John Zizioulas: Orthodox, Ecumenical and Modern* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2025), 31, also mentions his interest in the work of Yves Congar and Joseph Ratzinger, the late Pope Benedict.

[7] See Asproulis, *Theologically Reading*, 136–155 (ch. IV: "Zizioulas as an Ecumenist and Churchman") for an overview of Zizioulas's role in multilateral (Faith and Order) and bilateral (with the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church) ecumenical dialogues. A detailed study of the redaction of the documents of the Orthodox-Catholic international dialogue is found in Patrice Mahieu, *Se préparer au don de l'unité: la commission internationale catholique-orthodoxe 1975–2000* (Cerf, 2014).

[8] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 3.

brecht Schweitzer and the impact this has had on both Catholic and Protestant theology in the 1960s with Orthodox dogmatics which in that period still largely focused on the *eschata*. The Protestant theologians he most appreciates are Wolfhart Pannenberg—who is praised for having also developed an "eschatological ontology"[9]—and Jürgen Moltmann. Zizioulas relies especially on Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*, and welcomes as "particularly strong and successful"[10] the attention for "the victims of injustice and oppression in society."[11] In the same introduction, however, he also deplores "Moltmann's staurocentric perspective" in which Christ's sacrifice was exalted "to the point of making it even an attribute of God's very being." The Cross can, for Zizioulas, become "ontologically significant" only if it reveals at the same time Christ's resurrection, as the anastasis icon representing the descent into hell makes clear.[12]

In chapter one of *Remembering the Future*, references to Moltmann appear again in the section "From Teleology to Eschatology." According to Zizioulas, Moltmann had well understood that the teleological approach of Bloch, which understood the future as "a future of a past," had to be overcome. Moltmann's alternative solution, however, on the one hand puts too much emphasis on God's earlier promises and on the revelation of God's love on the Cross, while on the other hand insufficiently appreciates the epiphanic value of the Resurrection appearances and is almost exclusively oriented on the advent of God's kingdom in the future.[13]

Zizioulas turns to the opening volume of Moltmann's second dogmatics, *God in Creation*, when discussing the link between es-

[9] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 3. Sometimes Zizioulas also points to the differences between their views. Pannenberg prefers to take the critical questions of science to the Christian view on eschatology seriously, whereas for Zizioulas they "confirm the patristic view of creation." Ibid., 119–120, 147, 158. Asproulis, *Theologically Reading*, 54–55, offers a helpful summary of the similarities and differences between the two "pioneer theologians" who both agree that "eschatology must be at the core of theological discourse."

[10] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 24.

[11] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 24.

[12] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 26.

[13] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 106–109.

chatology and ecology in chapter two. In response to the famous thesis of Lynn White that the Judeo-Christian worldview has led to the ecological crisis, Moltmann pleads for a greater awareness that humans are "the product of nature" as well.[14] His humble awareness that "even without human beings the heavens declare the glory of God" is, however, declared invalid by his Orthodox interlocutor because of the Church Fathers' teaching that the limits of nature can only be overcome through personhood. In response to the critique of Lynn White, Zizioulas therefore proposes to substitute "an *anthropocentric*" for "an *anthropomonistic* conception of creation."[15] At this point Zizioulas's reflections on ecology reflect the same staurocentrism which he often reproaches in Moltmann. By offering the Eucharist, the Church repeats the work accomplished by Christ, "the priest of creation," on the Cross and assumes his role of "mediator" himself, "so that the whole creation may be deified in the eschata."[16] Here and throughout his magnum opus, the profound impact of the theology of St Maximus on the Metropolitan of Pergamon becomes clear. When reading his extreme anthropocentrism in the *Ambigua*, stating that "it is through me that the heavens declare the glory of God ... and all creation venerate God and give him glory,"[17] one wonders whether the advice given by Zizioulas at a later stage in his book, that it is not sufficient for theologians to repeat the words of the Church Fathers, but to "reflect on them,"[18] would in the light of the profound ecological crisis we continue to experience today not better have led to a more critical reflection.

[14] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 142.

[15] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 142. This distinction is welcomed by Asproulis, who also believes, however, that, "to address the current climate crisis, a new model of anthropology is required beyond any dated human exceptionalism or problematic *anthropomonism*, where attention is given to those parts of the *imago* that stress the *continuity* between humans and non-humans (e.g. animality) and not to those parts, which deepen or stress their *discontinuity* (e.g. mind/intellect, freedom)." See Asproulis, *Theologically Reading*, 198, including n. 158.

[16] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 142.

[17] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 142.

[18] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 218.

Since for Moltmann all aspects of his theology are interconnected and mutually reinforce one another, I found it difficult to understand why Zizioulas has not made the effort to also include references to the fifth and last volume of Moltmann's systematic theology—his book *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*.[19] My guess is that, already in 1995, the Greek theologian had largely lost his earlier interest in Moltmann and probably was never aware of this book.[20] Moltmann's interesting reflections in *God in Creation* on the kenotic "self-restriction" of God that was needed to create the world[21] have their counterpart in the eschatological "derestriction" that will allow the world to truly become God's dwelling place, since for him "the end of time is the converse of time's beginning."[22] In view of Moltmann's attention in *The Coming of God* to both "personal eschatology" and "historical eschatology" it is insufficient for Zizioulas to praise Moltmann's conviction that, "without a proper doctrine of creation, the ecological crisis cannot be tackled."[23] For Moltmann too, "outside an eschatological perspective, ecology is meaningless"[24] and hence he ends *The Coming of God* with a beautiful summary of the hoped for glorification of the cosmos: "The laughter of the universe is God's delight. It is the universal Easter laughter."[25]

I greatly appreciated the nuanced analysis by Zizioulas of the theologoumenon of the final restoration of all, or universal salvation, in chapter four of *Remembering the Future*.[26] Out of deep re-

[19] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Fortress Press, 1996).

[20] In his review of *Remembering the Future*, published in *Toronto Journal of Theology* 41 (2025), 187, Davor Džalto also deplores that Zizioulas "mostly relies on the same or similar sources he previously used. His ideas and references are only sporadically expanded by more recent research."

[21] Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (Fortress Press, 1993).

[22] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 294.

[23] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 157.

[24] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 144.

[25] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 339.

[26] An important study on this topic from an Orthodox perspective is David Bentley Hart, *That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell, and Universal Salvation* (Yale University Press, 2019).

spect for "the inviolable principle of *freedom*"[27] Zizioulas defends the condemnation of the Origenian teachings by the Fifth Ecumenical Council. It becomes quickly clear that his greatest source of inspiration is again St Maximus, who understands eternal life as the participation in the three forms of "being." Whereas "being" and "ever-being" are the divine gifts received at the creation and the eschaton, respectively, assisted by God's grace humans can grow in "truly being" or "well-being."[28] If the existence of hell was for St Maximus the consequence of "the free choice of nonbeing already in this life,"[29] Zizioulas, for his part, ends his first reflection on "Hell and Freedom" with an open question: "will there be anybody who will not want ever-being and will have freely chosen nonbeing?"[30]

This brings him to a quite sympathetic review of both the Syriac Fathers with their insistence on God's therapeutic punishment and the "modern theologians of chiefly the Russian tradition."[31] In reaction to advocates of universal salvation he is convinced that "none of us can erase hell completely in the name of divine love, but equally none of us can predict God's judgement."[32] If Zizioulas's main concern is "to annul any historical determinism which would make the eschaton the slave of our historical time,"[33] maybe he could subscribe to the careful conclusion by the late Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, one of the universalists mentioned by Zizioulas: "Our belief in human freedom means that we are not entitled to categorically affirm that everyone must be saved. But our faith in God's love implies that we dare to hope that everyone will be saved."[34] If Zizioulas had known Moltmann's reflections on this

[27] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 239.
[28] Zizioulas, Remembering the Future, 219–221.
[29] Zizioulas, Remembering the Future, 223.
[30] Zizioulas, Remembering the Future, 226.
[31] Zizioulas, Remembering the Future, 236–37.
[32] Zizioulas, Remembering the Future, 246.
[33] Zizioulas, Remembering the Future, 244.
[34] Kallistos Ware, "Dare We Hope for the Salvation of All? Origen, St Gregory of Nyssa and St Isaac the Syrian," in *The Inner Kingdom*. The Collected Works, 1 (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), 193–215, at 215.

topic in *The Coming of God* he would definitely again have blamed him of staurocentrism: "The Christian foundation for the hope of universal salvation is the theology of the cross, and the realistic consequence of the theology of the cross can only be the restoration of all things."[35] Zizioulas's response probably would have looked very similar to the concluding line of the chapter which returns to the normative teaching of the Orthodox Church: "Since the will cannot be forced, the 'restoration of all' in any of its forms cannot necessarily prevail. Hell must remain forever— alas! —a real choice for free existence."[36] His strong insistence on human freedom makes him in the end defend a position which remains close to that of the well-known opponent of universal salvation, John Meyendorff: "Freedom should be an inalienable element of every human being, and no one should be led into the kingdom of God against his free choice. Therefore apokatastasis must be rejected precisely because it presupposes an ultimate limitation of human freedom, the freedom to remain outside God."[37]

2. A Posthumous Dialogue with Selected Roman Catholic Theologians

There are at least four places in *Remembering the Future* that, in my opinion, deserve to be put in dialogue with the work of Roman Catholic theologians. Since the late Metropolitan either was not aware of these works or preferred for other reasons to explain only the Orthodox point of view, this is only a brief posthumous scholarly exercise.

Right from the introduction of this work Zizioulas identifies the key biblical texts that support his eschatological ontology. He is convinced that there is no aspect of the life of Jesus as described in the four gospels that does not find its origin in "the encounter of the risen Christ with his disciples in his appearances after the

[35] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 251.

[36] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 251.

[37] John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology. Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (Fordham University Press, 1974), 163.

Resurrection."[38] Zizioulas focuses especially on the story of the encounter of two disciples with the Risen Lord on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. The encounter helped them "to 'interpret' the Christ of the past and to foretaste the gifts of the future Kingdom."[39] The encounter is also characterized as a vision and as "an epiphany of the future"[40] or as "a 'visit' or 'intrusion' of the eschata."[41] In view of his critique of postmodern thinkers like Jean-Luc Marion[42] one understands that Zizioulas perhaps did not feel the need to consult the famous book *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, which Louis-Marie Chauvet, a former professor of Catholic sacramentology at the Institut Catholique de Paris, published in French in 1987.[43] If we take Heidegger's critique of classical metaphysics seriously, Chauvet argues, an immediate presence of ourselves, of things or persons outside us, or of the divine has become an impossibility. Therefore, in chapter five, relying on the same biblical story commented on by Zizioulas, he reflects on the threefold symbolic mediation of Christ in the sacramental life of the Church, "rereading the Scriptures with him in mind, repeating his gestures in memory of him, living the sharing between brothers and sisters in his name."[44] The real body of Christ is gone, but His symbolised body is present in the Church's "interpretation of Scripture, its liturgical celebrations, and its ethical engagement."[45] Chauvet is also convinced that the sacramentality of the Church receives its primordial manifestation in the liturgical assembly (*ecclesia*) as the sym-

[38] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 11.

[39] Zizioulas, Remembering the Future, 13.

[40] Zizioulas, Remembering the Future, 27; see also 107.

[41] Zizioulas, Remembering the Future, 110; see also 60.

[42] Zizioulas, Remembering the Future, 35.

[43] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament. A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Liturgical Press, 1995). Originally published as *Symbole et sacrement. Une relecture sacramentelle de l'existence chrétienne* (Cerf, 1987). See also De Mey, "Church as Sacrament. A Conciliar Concept and Its Reception in Contemporary Theology," in *The Presence of Transcendence. Thinking 'Sacrament' in a Postmodern Age.* Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia, 42, ed. Lieven Boeve & John Ries (Peeters, 2001), 181–196.

[44] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 163.

[45] Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 171.

bolic body of Christ.[46] It is here that the individual believer recognises Jesus as Christ and Lord. Despite their different philosophical presuppositions there are many similarities between Chauvet's analysis and chapter five on 'Eschatology and Liturgical Time' in Zizioulas's book.[47] In an excursus to chapter two Zizioulas also explains his iconic ontology.[48] The theology of icons has made him aware that the believer can experience the presence of the saints even if they are separated from us by the laws of nature. "If the icon involves a presence of hypostasis without the presence of nature, then we are talking, it seems to me, of a 'presence-in-absence' ontology."[49] His iconic ontology is at the same time future-oriented. "Iconic ontology means the filling of the present with reality borrowed or drawn from the future" and this is experienced especially in the sacramental life of the Church.[50]

Johann Baptist Metz was a German Catholic theologian famous for his rehabilitation of the apocalyptic tradition in Judaism and Christianity. His name is only mentioned once by Zizioulas as Johann Metz[51] which maybe was the consequence of his lack of familiarity with his work. The chapter on eschatology in his 1977 masterpiece *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* is entitled: "Hope as Imminent Expectation, or, The Struggle for Lost Time: Untimely Theses on Apocalyptic Symptoms of Timelessness."[52] In his opinion, theology must reappropriate the apocalyptic narratives of the imminent end of the world. Correctly conceived, they are prohibition signs, leading the Christian from the wrong path of self-interest back to the ethics of discipleship. As Metz explains in thesis XXVI, "the Christian idea of imitation and the apocalyptical idea of imminent ex-

[46] Symbol and Sacrament, 180-89.
[47] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 253–318.
[48] Zizioulas, Remembering the Future, 159–169.
[49] Zizioulas, Remembering the Future, 167.
[50] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 168-169.
[51] Zizioulas, Remembering the Future, 3.
[52] Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* (Seabury Press, 1980), 169-79. Originally published as: *Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft: Studien zu einer praktischen Fundamentaltheologie* (Grünewald, 1977).

pectation belong together. ... Imminent expectation does not allow the imitation of Christ to be postponed. ... It introduces the pressure of time and activity into Christian life. It does not deprive responsibility of its power, but rather provides it with motivation."[53] While appreciating "the importance of the apocalyptic for the understanding of the Gospel and the essence of Christianity,"[54] Zizioulas believes the terminology is "too anthropomorphic to be applied to God."[55]

At my own Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies biblical scholar Reimund Bieringer has since 1997 developed a future-oriented hermeneutics of biblical texts that has much in common with Zizioulas's eschatological ontology, though it is more critical of the limitations of some biblical texts.[56] The point of departure for his approach is Ricoeur's notion of "the world of the text."[57] A future-oriented hermeneutics looks for the world projected by the biblical text. For Christian readers, God reveals himself in Scripture. But in which sense are biblical texts that, for example, have misogynist, anti-Jewish or violent undertones, part of the same divine revelation? With Ricoeur, he is convinced that the world that is projected by the Biblical text contains an eschatological and prophetic vision of solidarity, relationality and inclusion.[58] This resonates with the conviction of Zizioulas that especially in the texts of the Prophets a "future-oriented attitude is manifested. It is in the *last* acts of God that the past

[53] Metz, *Faith in History and Society,* 176.

[54] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 197.

[55] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 197.

[56] Cf. Reimund Bieringer, "The Normativity of the Future. The Authority of the Bible for Theology," *ET Bulletin. Zeitschrift für Theologie in Europa* 8 (1997): 52–67. For collected essays on the normativity of the future approach, see *Normativity of the Future: Reading Biblical and Other Authoritative Texts in an Eschatological Perspective.* Annua Nuntia Lovanienses, 61, ed. Bieringer and Mary Elsbernd (Peeters, 2010).

[57] Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Du texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique II* (Seuil, 1986), 114.

[58] When looking for implicit points of contact to Bieringer's future-oriented hermeneutics in Zizioulas's oeuvre, Pantelis Kalaitzidis points to his moderate position on the ordination of women, "even leaving the whole question open while moving to the field of eschatology." Kalaitzidis, *"Esc*hatology and Future-oriented Hermeneutics," 171.

events receive their meaning. … History receives its meaning only with its consummation."[59]

How this hermeneutical method concretely works can be illustrated with a reference to the work of Laura Tack, a former doctoral student of Reimund Bieringer who has applied this method to John 14:6, a potentially anti-Jewish text describing Jesus as being the way, the truth and the life.[60] At first sight the verse seems rather exclusivist: the *ego eimi* verses seem to imitate the divine speech in the Old Testament; the definite article indicates that Jesus does not represent one amongst other valuable ways and the line is followed by a second part stating that "No one comes to the Father except through me." When interpreting this verse within the context of the Farewell Discourses, the passage can however also be read as an "ethical exhortation to form a universally oriented and loving communion." If one also pays attention to John 10:10—"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly"—then it becomes clear that God's ultimate concern is life and salvation for the world in an all-inclusive sense.

The fourth and final Catholic scholar I want to introduce as a valuable interlocutor for people studying Zizioulas's work is the British systematic theologian James Alison, already through his 1996 monograph *Raising Abel: The Recovery of the Eschatological Imagination,*[61] but especially through his 1998 study *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin Through Easter Eyes*.[62] Alison was heavily influenced by the scapegoat theory of the French anthropologist René Girard. Through his study of many great classics in the world literature, Girard had discovered that violence—based on mimetic desire—seems to be omnipresent and is in different cultures only temporarily solved by bringing sacrifices. By accepting his

[59] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 90.

[60] Cf. Laura Tack, *John 14:6 in Light of Jewish-Christian Dialogue. Sharing Truth on the Way to Life*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament II, 557 (Mohr Siebeck, 2021), partim.

[61] James Alison, *Raising Abel: The Recovery of the Eschatological Imagination* (Crossroad, 1996).

[62] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin Through Easter Eyes* (Crossroad, 1998).

sacrifice freely Jesus unmasked the world of violence and sacrifice from within. The apostles understood this only gradually after Easter. In Alison's words which resemble those of Zizioulas: "The epistemological starting point for any understanding of Christianity is the presence to the disciples of the crucified and risen Lord."[63] At the start of his chapter "Original Sin Known in Its Ecclesial Overcoming" Alison is inspired by the important distinction between the "biological" and the "ecclesial hypostasis" in *Being as Communion*.[64] Alison accepts Zizioulas's discovery "that it is from the eschatological notion of the ecclesial hypostasis—what we are becoming through ecclesial life—that what we were is to be understood."[65] It is for him one step further to understand "that original sin is precisely being locked into the an-ecclesial hypostasis."[66] Discovering this is a liberating and joyful insight. In chapter three of *Remembering the Future*, dealing with "Eschatology and the Fall," Zizioulas develops a similar position in dialogue with St Maximus: "How can we 'know' (that is, have gnoseological access to) our origin, the state in which we issued from the hands of God? ... For St Maximus, there is only one way by which we can know our original state, and that is *by looking at our end*."[67]

3. Eschatology in the Ecumenical Dialogues

As already indicated in the introduction, there is no single reference to the fruits of ecumenical dialogues in *Remembering the Future*. Even if none of the agreed statements in the international dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox has an explicit focus on eschatology, it is often present as a subtheme, especially in the first three dialogue statements of 1982, 1987 and 1988.

Since "remembrance of the future Parousia"[68] is a key theme in *Remembering the Future*, it could have been useful to include a

[63] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong,* 115.
[64] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 162.
[65] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong,* 162.
[66] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 163.
[67] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong,* 180.
[68] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 7.

reference to the phrase found both in the Munich Document and the Valamo Document that Christ is present in a sacramental mode in history, "from Pentecost to the Parousia."[69] The title of the first dialogue statement, *The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity*, has been beautifully explained in a key phrase in the second part of the document: "This mystery of the unity in love of many persons constitutes the real newness of the Trinitarian *koinonia* communicated to men in the church through the eucharist."[70] The document realizes, however, that the Church is only able to realize this communion in an imperfect way in the course of history and hence it insists that "The *koinonia* is eschatological. It is the newness which comes in the last times."[71]

In the excursus of chapter II entitled "Historization of the Eschaton: The Significance of Iconic Ontology," the Metropolitan of Pergamon refers to "the extraordinary statement" in Hebrews 11:1 that "faith is the subsistence (hypostasis = reality) of things hoped for."[72] In his opinion only one of two interpretations of this

[69] Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, *The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity*, I.1: "This is the mode (*tropos*) in which the unique person and the unique event of Christ exists and operates in history starting from Pentecost and reaching to the Parousia."

Cf. https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese4.html. *The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church with Particular Reference to the Importance of Apostolic Succession for the Sanctification and Unity of the People of God*, §9: "It is according to this sacramental way that one must understand the work of Christ in history from Pentecost to the Parousia."

Cf. https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese2.html.

[70] Munich Document, II.1. Cf. Myroslaw Tataryn, "The Munich Document and the Language of Unity," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26 (1989): 648–663, at 657: "The nature of the Church as a eucharistic and trinitarian koinonia is obviously of great concern in the Munich document, which again mirrors much of the work of the two theologians under study [Jean-Marie Roger Tillard and John Zizioulas]."

[71] Munich Document, II.2.

[72] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 167.

line allows for an "iconic ontology." If faith would only be the psychological assurance "that God's promises will be fulfilled in the future" then "there would be no room for a presence of the future" and thus for an "iconic ontology." The present should rather be filled "with reality borrowed or drawn from the future."[73] In my opinion Zizioulas has here improved or deepened the explanation of the same verse in the Bari statement *Faith, Sacraments, and the Unity of the Church*, which holds that in Hebrews 1:11 faith is "understood in terms of an existential confidence in the power and love of God, in acceptance of the eschatological promises as fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ."[74] A reference to this dialogue statement thus would have been very relevant here.

When dealing with the relationship between Zizioulas and Moltmann I explained Zizioulas's nuanced view on *apokatastasis* already. Maybe during the preparation he remembered a line from the famous—or infamous, in some Orthodox local churches—Balamand statement dealing with "Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion."[75] The reality of the "persecutions and sufferings" in the often painful history between our churches is not forgotten, but is followed by the recommendation no longer "to accuse or disparage the other Church."[76] Then follows a beautiful statement which is echoed in *Remembering the Future* by Zizioulas's conviction that "none of us can predict God's judgement"[77]: "God alone knows his own witnesses. Whatever may have been the past, it must be left to the mercy of God, and all the energies of the Churches should be di-

[73] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 168.

[74] *Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church,* §10.

Cf. https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese3.html.

[75] *Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion*.

Cf. https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-lingua-inglese.html.

[76] *Uniatism, Method of Union* §23.

[77] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 247.

rected towards obtaining that the present and the future conform better to the will of Christ for his own."[78]

At one point in Zizioulas's *magnum opus* I would have appreciated a more explicit treatment of the implications for the ecumenical relations between the Churches. In the section on "Eschatology and Ecclesia" in chapter four it is mentioned that the axiom *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* "was translated into practice by participation in the Divine Eucharist. Those who cut themselves off (or are cut off by the Church itself) from eucharistic communion are deprived of the 'communion of the saints,' within which alone they can hope to be saved."[79]

[78] *Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion*, §23. Jaroslav Z. Skira, "The Balamand Document on Uniatism in the Context of the International Orthodox-Catholic Ecumenical Dialogue," in *The Catholic Church and Its Orthodox Sister Churches Twenty-five Years after Balamand.* Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 326, ed. Jaroslav Z. Skira, Peter De Mey and Herman G. Teule (Peeters, 2022), 27–48, at 47 is aware that the Balamand document insists on "a correct and comprehensive knowledge of history aiming at a historiography of the two churches which is in agreement and even may be common" (§30) but is afraid that in §23 "Balamand seems to want to gloss over history and to leave it to the 'mercy of God.'" He repeats the strong statement by Robert F. Taft, "The Problem of 'Uniatism' and the 'Healing of Memories': Anamnesis, not Amnesia," *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 41-42 (2000–2001), 155–196, at 191: "Until the phenomenon of 'Uniatism,' in its origins and the factors behind those origins, in its history, and in its present reality, comes to be viewed with more respect for historical trust, I see little hope for any lasting substantial progress in Catholic-Orthodox ecumenism." A more positive assessment is found in Waclaw Hryniewicz, "Labour and Hope. Fifteen Years of Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 39 (1995), 339–360, at 350–356 (III. 'The Past must be left to God').

[79] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 245. Though written much earlier, fine comments on Zizioulas's position are found in Scott MacDougall, *More than Communion: Imagining an Eschatological Ecclesiology* (Bloomsbury, 2015), 71: "In Zizioulas' theology, church could hardly be given a higher position. It is the exclusive site of salvation for people individually and collectively and, indeed, for creation as a whole." In the opinion of MacDougall the ecumenical consequences for Zizioulas are crystal clear: "He consistently argues that eucharistic sharing reflects ecclesial consensus on matters of theological, and so, ontological, import. Doctrinal orthodoxy, remember, is required for the unity in which the eucharistic table is to be approached. Until ecumenical efforts to heal the rifts within the Christian family succeed, Zizioulas supports the practice of barring non-Orthodox from communing among the Orthodox, non-Roman Catholics among Roman Catholics, and so on." Ibid., 99 n. 202.

Finally, given that the resurrection of Jesus occupies such a central place in this book, I found it a pity that not even once a case was made for the introduction of a common Easter date. As we know, the late Pope Francis, who wrote a beautiful foreword to *Remembering the Future,* during the Vesper service concluding the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January 2025, repeated that the Catholic Church was open to accepting a common date for Easter "that everyone wants."[80] The Commission on Faith and Order organized a webinar on the same topic one month later and asked for renewed attention to the so-called Aleppo Statement of 1997, *Towards a Common Date of Easter*, which it included once again in the conclusions.[81] May the dream of both Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew not be forgotten!

Conclusions

The late Metropolitan of Pergamon's posthumous *magnum opus* is a stimulating and much-awaited theological contribution that complements his oeuvre and offers the ultimate key to understanding his theological thinking, namely eschatology. Without a doubt, Zizioulas presents scholars and theologians, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox, with fresh food for thought. Notwithstanding Zizioulas's merits and influence, this article aimed to follow a more critical path and did not shy away from highlighting the book's limitations and the areas that require additional attention from theologians interested in Zizioulas's thought.

The shortcomings of Zizioulas's monograph, its selective interaction with the Protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann, its limited interaction with Roman Catholic theologians who also developed eschatological hermeneutics to various extents, as well

[80] https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/papa-francesco/2025/Omelie/vesperi-San-Paolo-Fuori-le-Mura-conclusione-Settimana-Preghiera.html.

[81] Towards a Common Date for Easter. Faith and Order Paper, 241, ed. Sandra Beardsall and Martin Illert (WCC, 2025). Cf. https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/towards-a-common-date-for-easter See however also the section on "A Common Celebration of Pascha" in Metropolitan Job (Getcha), "The Actuality of the Council of Nicaea," *The Ecumenical Review* 75 (2023), 185–202, at 194–197.

as its disregard for an explicit engagement with the achievements of the ecumenical dialogue, are important gaps that the current and the next generations of Orthodox scholars and theologians need to address. As I have demonstrated in my brief comparative analysis, Zizioulas's theology can offer many more points of convergence and dialogue with key theologians from non-Orthodox traditions who also rely on and construct an eschatological theological vision. The absence of an explicit discussion of the results of the ecumenical dialogues in *Remembering the Future* must be treated as an invitation to expand Zizioulas's eschatological ontology to such an ecumenical endeavour by finding common ways to concretely *remember* the upcoming eschatological *future* within the boundaries of history. A common celebration of Easter can be a promising beginning in this sense.

References

Alison, James. *Raising Abel: The Recovery of the Eschatological Imagination*. Crossroad, 1996.

Alison, James. *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin Through Easter Eyes*. Crossroad, 1998.

Asproulis, Nikolaos. *Theologically Reading Metropolitan of Pergamon John Zizioulas: Orthodox, Ecumenical and Modern*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2025.

Beardsall, Sandra, and Martin Illert, eds. *Towards a Common Date for Easter*. Faith and Order Paper, 241. Geneva: WCC, 2025. https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/towards-a-common-date-for-easter.

Bentley Hart, David. *That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell, and Universal Salvation*. Yale University Press, 2019.

Bieringer, Reimund and Mary Elsbernd, eds. *Normativity of the Future: Reading Biblical and Other Authoritative Texts in an Eschatological Perspective.* Annua Nuntia Lovanienses, 61. Peeters, 2010.

Bieringer, Reimund and Mary Elsbernd. "The Normativity of the Future. The Authority of the Bible for Theology." *ET Bulletin. Zeitschrift für Theologie in Europa* 8 (1997): 52–67.

Chauvet, Louis-Marie. *Symbol and Sacrament. A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*. Liturgical Press, 1995.

Chauvet, Louis-Marie. *Symbole et sacrement. Une relecture sacramentelle de l'existence chrétienne*. Cerf, 1987.

De Mey, Peter. "'Quanta est nobis via?' (*Ut Unum Sint*): A Plea to Accelerate Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue." In *Holding Fast to the Mystery of the Faith: Festschrift for Patriarch Daniel of the Romanian Orthodox Church*. Eastern Church Identities, 10, edited by Sorin Șelaru & Daniel Munteanu, 474–489. Brill, 2022.

De Mey, Peter. "Church as Sacrament. A Conciliar Concept and Its Reception in Contemporary Theology." In *The Presence of Transcendence. Thinking 'Sacrament' in a Postmodern Age.* Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia, 42, edited by Lieven Boeve & John Ries, 181–196. Peeters, 2001.

Džalto, Davor. "Review of *Remembering the Future*." *Toronto Journal of Theology* 41 (2025): 186–187.

Gabunia, Aleksandre. "Reverse Perspective as Hermeneutical Principle: Zizioulas' Ecclesiology and the *Russkiy Mir* Discourse." *Ecclesiology* [forthcoming].

Gabunia, Aleksandre. "Seeing from the Future: The Reverse Perspective and Eschatological Anthropology in John Zizioulas' Theology." *Dialogue* 9:18 (2025): 54–77.

Hryniewicz, Waclaw. "Labour and Hope. Fifteen Years of Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 39 (1995): 339–360.

Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. *The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity*. https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese4.html.

Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. *The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church with Particular Reference to the Importance of Apostolic Succession for the Sanctification and Unity of the People of God*. https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-orto

dosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese2.html.

Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. *Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church*. https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese3.html.

Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. *Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion*. https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-lingua-inglese.html.

Kalaitzidis, Pantelis. *"Esc*hatology and Future-oriented Hermeneutics in Contemporary Orthodox Theology: The Case of Metropolitan John D. Zizioulas." In *The Spirit and Dialogues*, edited by Reimund Bieringer et al., 155–180. Peeters, 2019.

MacDougall, Scott. *More than Communion: Imagining an Eschatological Ecclesiology*. Bloomsbury, 2015.

Mahieu, Patrice. *Se préparer au don de l'unité: la commission internationale catholique-orthodoxe 1975–2000*. Cerf, 2014.

Metropolitan Job (Getcha). "The Actuality of the Council of Nicaea." *The Ecumenical Review* 75 (2023): 185–202.

Metz, Johann Baptist. *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*. Seabury Press, 1980.

Metz, Johann Baptist. *Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft: Studien zu einer praktischen Fundamentaltheologie*. Grünewald, 1977.

Meyendorff, John. *Byzantine Theology. Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. Fordham University Press, 1974.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. Fortress Press, 1993.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*. Fortress Press, 1996.

Pope Francis. "Solemnity of the Conversion of Saint Paul the Apostle." https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/papa-francesco/2025/Omelie/vesperi-San-Paolo-Fuori-le-Mura-conclusione-Settimana-Preghiera.html.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Du texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique II*. Seuil, 1986.

Skira, Jaroslav Z. "The Balamand Document on Uniatism in the Context of the International Orthodox-Catholic Ecumenical Dialogue." In *The Catholic Church and Its Orthodox Sister Churches Twenty-five Years after Balamand*. Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 326, edited by Jaroslav Z. Skira, Peter De Mey and Herman G. Teule, 27–48. Peeters, 2022.

Tack, Laura. *John 14:6 in Light of Jewish-Christian Dialogue. Sharing Truth on the Way to Life*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament II, 557. Mohr Siebeck, 2021.

Taft, Robert F. "The Problem of 'Uniatism' and the 'Healing of Memories': Anamnesis, not Amnesia." *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 41–42 (2000–2001): 155–196.

Tataryn, Myroslaw. "The Munich Document and the Language of Unity." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26 (1989): 648–663.

Ware, Kallistos. "Dare We Hope for the Salvation of All? Origen, St Gregory of Nyssa and St Isaac the Syrian." In *The Inner Kingdom*. The Collected Works, 1. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000.

Zizioulas, John D. *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology*. Edited by Bishop Maxim Vasiljević. St. Sebastian Press, 2023.

OmegAlpha II:2 Autumn 2026, 59–85
ISSN 3067-1329 (Print), ISSN 3067-1337 (Online)
https://doi.org/10.63394/6cafyv14
Original Paper
Received: 2026-02-21; Revised: 2026-09-16;
Accepted: 2026-09-24; Published: 2026-11-10

God *ad intra* and God *ad extra*: The Relationship Between the Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity as Reflected in the Works of John Zizioulas and Dumitru Stăniloae

Augustin (Viorel) Coman

Abstract
This article compares the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity in John Zizioulas and Dumitru Stăniloae. Although they did not explicitly engage one another's work, their approaches share a patristic inheritance while revealing distinctive emphases. After outlining the Orthodox distinction between God ad intra and God ad extra, the article examines divine transcendence, freedom, and communion. Zizioulas stresses the irreducibility of God's eternal life to salvation history, safeguarding divine freedom against historical necessity. Stăniloae maintains this distinction while exploring how eternal Trinitarian communion is manifested in history, particularly through the relationship between the Son and the Spirit. Their difference concerns theological priorities rather than an opposition between separation and identity. Both affirm that the God revealed in history is the eternal Triune God, whose mystery revelation discloses without exhausting.

Augustin (Viorel) Coman
Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven
Leuven, Belgium
E-mail: viorel.coman@kuleuven.be
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7934-0654

© 2026 The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits use, distribution, reproduction, and adaptation in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Keywords: John Zizioulas; Dumitru Stăniloae; theologia and oikonomia; monarchy of the Father; relations of origin; Filioque; apophatic theology; self-revelation; salvation history; deification; Orthodox–Catholic dialogue

Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–1993)[1] and John Zizioulas (1931–2023)[2] are giant figures of modern Orthodox theology and emblematic representatives of the Neo-patristic movement in Eastern Christianity. Both significantly contributed to the development of 20th-century Orthodox theology and exerted a lasting influence upon contemporary reflections on the central themes of Eastern Christian faith and their relevance for the modern world. Surprisingly, despite shared theological concerns and partial chronological contemporaneity, their theological works remain disconnected: they neither entered explicit dialogue with one another nor offered sustained engagement or critique of each other's thought. This absence of interaction is all the more striking given the proximity of their theological interests: the revival of patristic thought, Trinitarian theology, ecclesiology, anthropology, personhood, communion, etc.[3]

[1] See Petre Maican, "Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–1993)," in *T&T Clark Handbook of Modern Theology,* ed. Philip E. Ziegler and R. David Nelson (T&T Clark, 2026), 673–676; Calinic Berger, "Dumitru Stăniloae," in *Key Theological Thinkers: From Modern to Postmodern,* ed. Staale Johannes Kristiansen and Svein Rise (Ashgate, 2013), 393–402; Lucian Turcescu, ed., *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology* (Center for Romanian Studies, 2003); Ioan Ică Jr., "Stăniloae, Dumitru (1903–1993)," in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology,* ed. Trevor A. Hart (Pater Noster Press – William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 527–531.

[2] See Andrew Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers: From the Philokalia to the Present* (SPCK, 2015), 214–225; Nikolaos Asproulis, "John Zizioulas," in *Orthodox Handbook for Ecumenism: Recourses for Theological Education,* eds. Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Cyril Hovorun, et. al. (Volos Academy Publications in cooperation with WCC Publications and Regnum Books International, 2014), 254–257; Lars Erik Rikheim, "Johannes Zizioulas," in *Key Theological Thinkers,* eds. Staale Johannes Kristiansen and Svein Rise (Routledge, 2013) 435–447; Douglas H. Knight, ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church* (Ashgate 2007).

[3] Their most representative books are: Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă*, vols. I-III (Ed. IBMOBOR, 1st ed. 1978; 3rd ed. 2003) [English translation: *The Experience*

Even though academic attempts at comparing their theological projects are not completely missing,[4] there are areas of mutual interest, especially in the field of Trinitarian theology, that deserve to be brought into dialogue and direct conversation in order to emphasize both the commonalities and the divergent perspectives between these two towering figures of 20th-century Orthodox Christianity. A major example in this regard is Stăniloae's and Zizioulas's respective approaches to the relationship between the immanent Trinity (*God ad intra*) and the economic Trinity (*God ad extra*). Whereas both of them rejected Karl Rahner's notion of a perfect identity between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, thus remaining faithful to the Greek patristic tradition, the way in which Stăniloae and Zizioulas articulated the relationship between *God ad intra* and *God ad extra* diverged to a certain extent. As this article shows, Zizioulas was reluctant to read the economic Trinity back into the immanent Trinity. Stăniloae, by contrast, was open to the idea that the relationships between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in history could be indicative of their eternal communion or *perichoresis*. Behind their

of God, vols. 1–6 (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998–2013)]; Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu* (1st ed. Craiova, 1987; 3rd edition Basilica, 2013); Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia ortodoxă* (1st ed. Craiova, 1986; 2nd ed. Ed. IBMBOR, 2004) [English translation: *Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2025)]; Stăniloae, *Ascetica și mistica Bisericii Ortodoxe* (1st ed. Ed. IBMBOR, 1981; 4th ed. Basilica, 2019) [English translation: *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical Guide for the Faithful* (St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary Press, 2002); Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos și restaurarea omului* (1st ed. Sibiu, 1943; 3rd ed. Basilica, 2013); John Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology* (Sebastian Press, 2023); Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World* (T&T Clark, 2011); Zizioulas, *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today* (Sebastian Press, 2010); Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics* (T&T Clark, 2009); Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (T&T Clark, 2006); Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

[4] See, for example, Maxym Lysack, *Asceticism and the Eucharist*: *Exploring Orthodox Spirituality with Metropolitan John Zizioulas* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2023); Viorel Coman, "Orthodox Neo-Patristic Theology and the West: Dumitru Stăniloae on the Holy Spirit in the Church," *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 74:3–4 (2022): 262–278; Calinic Berger, "Does the Eucharist Make the Church? An Ecclesiological Comparison of Stăniloae and Zizioulas," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 51:1 (2007): 23–70.

divergent approaches lie distinct theological concerns that this article explores in order to explain the underlying reasons for their different approaches to the relationship between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity.

The article is divided into three main sections. The first section offers a brief presentation of the relationship between the immanent Trinity and economic Trinity in Eastern Christianity. The second section analyses John Zizioulas's understanding of the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity. The third section investigates Dumitru Stăniloae's views on the link between the two.

Eastern Christianity on the Relationship Between the Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity: A Sketch

A key question in the Christian doctrine of God concerns the relationship between the immanent Trinity and economic Trinity, that is, between the way God exists eternally (*sub specie aeternitatis*) and the way God reveals himself in the history of salvation (*sub specie temporis*). Theological discourse draws a nuanced distinction between *Deus ad intra* and *Deus ad extra*: between God as he exists in himself, apart from his relation to creation (*theologia*), and God as he manifests himself in his actions within the world, history, and time (*oikonomia*). Therefore, to articulate and distinguish these two dimensions (the eternal and the temporal), Christian theology conventionally speaks of the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity.

In Roman Catholic theology, Karl Rahner's *Grundaxiom*, articulated in his work *The Trinity* (1970),[5] asserts a perfect identity and symmetry between the immanent and the economic Trinity: *the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity.*[6] Orthodox theology, however, sub-

[5] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (Herder and Herder, 1970).

[6] *The Trinity*, 22. For a detailed analysis of Rahner's Grundaxiom, see the following works: Godefroid Mukenge Kabuya, *Le « Grundaxiom » de Karl Rahner comme paradigme du renouveau trinitaire au XXe siècle. Une relecture interdisciplinaire* (Peter Lang, 2019); Emmanuel Durand, « L'identité rahnérienne entre la Trinité économique et la

scribes to Rahner's insight only partially. Orthodox theology affirms a real distinction, yet not a separation, between *Deus ad intra* and *Deus ad extra*, between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity. Orthodox theology proposes a qualified reformulation of Rahner's axiom: *the economic Trinity is truly the immanent Trinity, but the immanent Trinity is not reducible to the economic Trinity*. This reformulation follows from the following convictions.

First, it follows from the conviction that history, time, and space cannot adequately encompass the fullness of divine life and mystery. In this regard, it is a strong belief of modern Orthodox theology,[7] inspired by the Greek patristic doctrine of the Trinity and Christology, that the manner in which God (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) "exists within the eternal life of the Trinity surpasses what has been revealed to humanity in the economy of salvation. While God truly manifests himself and acts within history, these salvific actions do not exhaust the fullness of his eternal and glorious mystery."[8] But, even though the fullness of God's inner divine life transcends the limits of historical manifestation, Orthodox theology acknowledges the fact that the God

Trinité immanente à l'épreuve de ses applications », *Revue Thomiste* 103:1 (2003): 75–92; Fred Sanders, "Entangled in the Trinity: Economic and Immanent Trinity in Recent Theology," *Dialog* 40 (Fall, 2001): 175–182.

[7] For an Orthodox approach to the relationship between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, see the following two publications: Ioan Moga, «Treimea imanent» și «Treimea iconomică». Probleme și perspective ale unei distincții teologice" [«Immanent Trinity» and «Economic Trinity». Problems and Perspectives of A Theological Distinction], *Studii Teologice*, new series, 7:3 (2011): 21–56; Sorin Șelaru, "Eternal Intra-Trinitarian Relations and their Economic Consequences. An Approach according to Father Dumitru Stăniloae's Theological Perspective," *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 2:1 (2011): 83–93.

[8] Augustin (Viorel) Coman, "Hristologia Sinodului I Ecumenic de la Niceea (325): *Theologia & Oikonomia*" [The Christology of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325): *Theologia & Oikonomia*], in *Sinodul I Ecumenic de la Niceea (325): Credința ortodoxă – baza unității Bisericii* [The First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325): Christian Faith – the basis of the Church's Unity], ed. Sorin Șelaru, Nicușor Beldiman, George Grigoriță, and Augustin (Viorel) Coman (Basilica, 2025), 263–281, here at 266. See also, Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of the Trinity Today: Suggestions for an Ecumenical Study," in *The One and the Many,* 3–16, especially at 24.

who reveals himself within time is none other than the eternal God and that there is no discontinuity or separation between *Deus ad intra* and *Deus ad extra*.

Second, the reformulation of Rahner's *Grundaxiom* by Orthodox theology follows from the conviction that God reveals himself in history freely and kenotically, without necessarily replicating the eternal mode of intra-Trinitarian life. A paradigmatic example in this sense is the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who took on human nature and entered history through a voluntary act of kenosis. It is true that in humbling himself and in adapting to the conditions of the created world, Christ did not relinquish or diminish his divinity. However, as Dumitru Stăniloae pointed out, in Christ the divinity remained unchanged in the act of incarnation and *kenosis*; yet it "was adapted to the measures of human nature, so that this nature may be able to be assumed by the Son of God."[9] Without the act of kenosis, the human nature could not receive all the glory and power of the Son. Based on these observations, Orthodox theology considers the economy of salvation as defined by divine humbleness and self-emptying, whereas the inner life of God is characterized by eternal glory, thereby allowing for the distinction between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity.

Third, Orthodox theology's refusal to fully endorse Rahner's *Grundaxiom* also stems from the conviction that the economic Trinity is dependent upon the immanent Trinity, while the immanent Trinity remains independent of the economic Trinity. In other words, the economic Trinity presupposes the immanent Trinity, whereas the converse does not hold. A similar observation underlies the critique of Rahner's *Grundaxiom* by the French Dominican theologian Yves Congar,[10] which shows that not all modern Catholic theologians fully equate the immanent Trinity with the economic Trinity and vice-versa, thus preserving the Eastern and Western classical distinction between the two.

[9] Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Experience of God*. Vol. 3: *The Person of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2011), 57.

[10] Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. III (Seabury Press, 1983), 13–18.

Fourth, Orthodox theology's reformulation of Rahner's *Grundaxiom* is shaped by St Gregory Palamas's distinction in God between the divine essence and the divine energies.[11] For Palamas, this distinction is real, not merely epistemological. On this account, the identity between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity lies in the fact that the same divine persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) who exist in the Trinity *ad intra* are the very ones who act in the history of salvation. Accordingly, there is a personal identity between the immanent Trinity and economic Trinity. The distinction, however, arises from the fact that the immanent Trinity is centred upon the divine essence at its centre, whereas the economic Trinity is centred upon the uncreated energies. This is to say that the divine essence, which remains in itself inaccessible, incommunicable, and wholly apophatic, is communicated to creation through its divine energies.[12]

Having briefly outlined the Orthodox theological account of the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity, the following sections demonstrate that, even within Eastern Christianity, notable differences can be observed in the ways modern theologians such as Zizioulas and Stăniloae have articulated the connection between God *ad intra* and God *ad extra*, particularly with regard to the extent to which the economic Trinity reveals the immanent Trinity.

John Zizioulas: Preserving Divine Freedom

Although Zizioulas turned explicitly to the mystery of God at a later stage of his career, he made the doctrine of the Trinity a foundational pillar of his theology, alongside ecclesiology, anthropology, eschatology, and ecumenism. For Zizioulas, a constitutive el-

[11] For a comprehensive introduction to the theme of the Palamite distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies, see Tikhon Pino, *Essence and Energies: Being and Naming God in St Gregory Palamas* (Routledge, 2024); Norman Russell, *Gregory Palamas and the Making of Palamism in the Modern Age* (Oxford University Press, 2019); John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (SPCK, 1964).

[12] Cf. Dumitru Popescu, *Iisus Hristos Pantocrator* [Jesus Christ Pantokrator] (Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2005), 135.

ement of Christianity's central truth is that the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—entails: (i) a relational ontology, in which God's very being is communion; (ii) the monarchy of the Father, who eternally begets the Son and brings forth the Spirit and thus constitutes the source and cause (*aitia*) of God's Trinitarian being as relational; (iii) the grounding of this relational being in the person of the Father, such that God's Trinitarian existence is not a product of necessity but an event of freedom, fundamentally personal rather than substance-based; and (iv) the claim that the doctrine of the Trinity, understood as communion and freedom, decisively shapes both ecclesiology and Christian anthropology.[13]

The question of the relationship between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity did not receive extensive treatment in Zizioulas's theology. Much of what he had to say on this topic is primarily confined to brief sections in the following works: the article "The Teaching of the Second Ecumenical Council on the Holy Spirit in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective" (1983);[14] the article "The Doctrine of the Trinity Today: Suggestions for an Ecumenical Study" (1991);[15] and the book *Lectures in Christian Dog-*

[13] For a comprehensive introduction to Zizioulas's Trinitarian theology, see: Dario Chiapetti, *The Father's Eternal Freedom: The Personalist Trinitarian Ontology of John Zizioulas* (James Clarke & Co., 2022); Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Contemporary Orthodox Currents on the Trinity," in *Oxford Handbook on the Trinity,* ed. Gilles Emery OP and Matthew Levering (Oxford University Press, 2011), 328–338, especially 334–338; Papanikolaou, *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); Paul M. Collins, *Trinitarian theology, West and East: Karl Barth, the Cappadocian Fathers, and John Zizioulas* (Oxford University Press, 2001); Patricia Fox, *God as Communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson, and the Retrieval of the Symbol of the Triune God* (Liturgical Press, 2001).

[14] Zizioulas, "The Teaching of the Second Ecumenical Council on the Holy Spirit in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective," in *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum*, Atti del Congresso Teologico Internazionale di Pneumatologia, Vol. I, ed. J. Martins (Libreria Editrice Vaticano, 1983), 29–54. The article has been republished as "Pneumatology and the Importance of the Person," in Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 178–205 [references in this article are based on the version published in *Communion and Otherness*].

[15] Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today: Suggestions for an Ecumenical Study" was first published in Alisdair I. C. Heron, ed., *The Forgotten Trinity: A Selection of Papers Presented to the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today* (British Council of Churches, 1991), 19–32. This article has been republished in Zizioulas, *The*

matics (2009),[16] which gathers material from his lectures in Dogmatics given across three decades to students in Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, and Thessaloniki. We will begin with the last two works as they reflect on Rahner's *Grundaxiom* in quite similar terms, which preserves God's freedom and transcendence.

The article "The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today" (1991) offers a brief but solid critique of Rahner's assertion that "the God of history and God in His eternal being are one and the same."[17] Zizioulas argues that this theological identification reflects an accommodation to a post-Enlightenment and post-Kantian worldview that is reluctant to engage with transcendence and instead seeks to explain reality entirely in terms of immanence. Within this framework, theologians who wish to remain relevant face a strong temptation to demonstrate the significance of Trinitarian doctrine by presenting it as an essential dimension of human experience.[18] Zizioulas maintains that although Rahner's *Grundaxiom* holds considerable appeal for many contemporary theologians, it ultimately generates as many difficulties as it seeks to resolve. The identification creates insurmountable obstacles as follows.

To begin with, it represents a return to the classical monism of ancient Greek philosophy, in which the being of God was conflated with the being of the world. The Fathers of the Church, as Zizioulas emphasizes, devoted significant effort to moving away from monism in order to safeguard God's freedom in relation to the world. As he notes, "It took the early Fathers (Irenaeus, Athanasius, etc.) a great deal of effort to break down this Greek monism which they thought—and rightly so— endangered the absolute ontological *freedom of God*, i.e., His transcendence."[19] The patristic doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* stands thus as a decisive theological affirmation of God's absolute freedom and transcen-

One and the Many, 3–16 [references in this article are based on the version published in *The One and the Many*].

[16] Zizioulas, "Chapter 2: The Doctrine of God," in *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, especially 69–75 [hereinafter quoted as Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*].

[17] Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today," 8.

[18] Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today," 8.

[19] Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today," 8 [emphasis mine].

dence, underscoring the radical distinction between God's being and the being of the world.[20] According to Zizioulas, if the doctrine of the Trinity is construed simply on the basis of the economy of salvation, any distinction between ontology and epistemology or between being and revelation collapses, marking a return to the classical Greek thought. This is why Zizioulas claims that apophatic theology allows us to say that even if "the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity, the Immanent Trinity is not exhausted in the Economic Trinity."[21]

In addition, Zizioulas states that if no distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity is preserved, then the Incarnation and the Cross are projected into God's eternal being, rendering suffering a dimension of the immanent Trinity, something that the Fathers of the Church always resisted.[22] If God does not transcend suffering, no hope is offered to humanity in the face of violence, conflicts, and the brokenness of the world. For this reason, Zizioulas concludes by saying that "what we can say about God from God's acts in history is different from what we can say looking at God as He is eternally."[23]

In *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, Zizioulas's engagement with the relationship between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity once again—though in a new way—reflects his concern to protect God's freedom. As Zizioulas stated, if we affirm that the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity and vice-versa, "this way we would turn the economic into a necessity to which God was bound rather than God's own act made in

[20] "They [the Fathers of the Church] produced the doctrine of creatio *ex nihilo* precisely in order to show that God existed *before* and *regardless of the world*, and thus that it is imperative to be able to refer to God without implicitly or explicitly referring at the same time to the world." Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today," 8.

[21] Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today," 8.

[22] Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today," 8. Jürgen Moltmann's theology, following Rahner's *Grundaxiom*, claimed that suffering is central to the Trinity, departing from patristic views on the impassibility of God. See Jürgen Moltmann's book, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God,* trans. Margaret Kohl (Harper & Row, 1981). Other theologians followed in the footsteps by Moltmann.

[23] Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today," 9.

freedom."[24] In other words, if the economy of God's relationship with us reproduces God's eternal existence, then it looks like God cannot act freely in history but must always act in a fixed and necessary way determined by the manner in which God exists eternally. Therefore, for Zizioulas, it is crucial to emphasize that the economic Trinity does not exhaust the immanent Trinity, for only by maintaining this distinction does the divine mystery remain irreducible to God's revelation in history and God's freedom remains untouched. This apophatic approach to God, which does not entirely identify the economic Trinity with the immanent Trinity, shows that "we are always unable to possess and control God."[25] If God's eternal way of being can be entirely construed based on God's disclosure in history, this would allow a totalising and exhaustive comprehension of God, which could no longer escape our attempt to define and control the divine.[26] Zizioulas considers that, in this case, God's freedom would be compromised beyond remedy.

To exemplify the distinction in the relationship between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, Zizioulas appeals to the way the Greek Fathers avoided attributing the economy to unique and particular characteristics of the persons of the eternal Trinity. In Zizioulas's words, "though the Son is the revelation of the Father ('He who has seen me has seen the Father'), this does not necessarily mean that the Son has this function and attribute in the eternal Trinity."[27] And he continues by saying that "if the Spirit signifies love and creates communion for us, this does not mean this is due to a specific attribute of the Spirit in the eternal Trinity."[28] In other words, when it comes to the immanent Trinity,

[24] Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics,* 71.

[25] Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics,* 70.

[26] Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics,* 70.

[27] Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 72

[28] Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics,* 72. Zizioulas argues that in Western theology, beginning with Augustine, the Son came to be identified with knowledge and the Spirit with love or communion, both within the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, a move that ultimately gave rise to the doctrine of the *Filioque*, which continues to be a point of debate between Eastern Christianity and Western Christianity. For a

it is inaccurate to identify the Son with knowledge and the Spirit with love or communion. According to Zizioulas, "whatever the differentiated actions of God in the economy, they are not extensions or differentiations within the eternal Trinity."[29] Within the immanent Trinity, all action is one, common, and eternal; yet in the economy of salvation, this unified action is manifested in distinct ways, so the persons do not all perform the same tasks.

In the article "The Teaching of the Second Ecumenical Council on the Holy Spirit in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective," Zizioulas illustrates the distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity by referring to the Palamite distinction in God between the essence and the uncreated energies. According to Zizioulas, such a distinction is useful to safeguard both the absolute transcendence of God without alienating him from the world and the connection between *theologia* and *oikonomia*. As he says, "'*Energy*', by being *uncreated*, involves in history and creation the very being of God; yet, by being distinct from God's '*essence*', it allows for God's immanent being to be 'incomprehensible' and truly *beyond* history and creation."[30] That being the case, the distinction between the essence and the uncreated energies preserves the link between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity because the energies, which are addressed *ad extra*, stem from God's being and cannot be dissociated from it. At the same time, the same distinction affirms simultaneously the transcendence of *theologia*, because the essence, by not being identical with the energies, remains beyond history.[31]

To conclude this section, it is relevant to say that if there is a theme that runs like a thread throughout Zizioulas's reflections

detailed presentation of Augustine's understanding of the Son as knowledge and the Spirit as love and communion, see the following monograph by Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 251–318.

[29] Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics,* 72.

[30] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 202.

[31] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 202. For a detailed discussion on the topic of "energy/essence" and "economic/immanent Trinity," see Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology* (Scholars Press, 1997).

on the subtle distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, which should never collapse into a separation, then this theme would be the insistence on God's freedom in relation to creation and the world. The idea of freedom occupies a central place in Zizioulas's theology to the extent that all other topics he addresses (the doctrine of the Trinity, anthropology, ecclesiology, eschatology) are largely ordered around it and receive their coherence from it. Even if freedom is not the sole structuring principle of Zizioulas's theology, it plays a decisive role in shaping and integrating his thoughts.[32]

When it comes to the relationship between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, Zizioulas's main concern is to affirm that *Deus ad intra* is constrained neither by history nor by anything else. *Deus ad intra* is irreducible to *Deus ad extra*. This does not introduce a gap between the two but aims at safeguarding the apophatic nature, transcendence, and the freedom of God's eternal existence.[33]

[32] Given the centrality of the freedom–necessity dialectic in Zizioulas's theology, many scholars characterize him as a theologian shaped by an existentialist concern. See, for example, Lucian Turcescu's article, "'Person' versus 'Individual,' and Other Modern Misreadings of Gregory of Nyssa," *Modern Theology* 18:4 (2002): 527–539. For a response to Turcescu's article, see Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Is Zizioulas an Existentialist in Disguise? Response to Lucian Turcescu," *Modern Theology* 20:4 (2004): 601–607. The topic of freedom in Zizioulas's theology is also discussed by Douglas Farrow in his article "Person and Nature: The Necessity-Freedom Dialectic in John Zizioulas," in *The Theology of John Zizioulas*, ed. Douglas Knight, 109–123.

[33] However, theologians such as Aristotle Papanikolaou interpret Zizioulas as rejecting both a strict separation and an exhaustive identification between the economic and immanent Trinity. According to Papanikolaou, for Zizioulas, the economic Trinity genuinely reveals who God is eternally: what is manifested in Christ and experienced in the Spirit is not merely a created representation of God but a real participation in God's own Trinitarian mode of existence. At the same time, the economic manifestation does not exhaust the immanent Trinity. God's eternal being remains transcendent and cannot simply be deduced from everything that occurs in salvation history—for example, Christ's suffering in the economy should not be understood as implying suffering in God's eternal being. Thus, Papanikolaou sees Zizioulas as offering a *qualified identification* between the economic and immanent Trinity. For Zizioulas, this relationship is understood primarily through *personhood and communion* rather than through an essence–energies distinction or any other distinction. The Church, particularly in the Eucharist through the Holy Spirit, genuinely participates in the eternal relational life of Father, Son, and Spirit; therefore, the Trinity encountered in the economy is genuinely the immanent

Dumitru Stăniloae: An Orthodox Attempt at Linking the Two

Like John Zizioulas, Dumitru Stăniloae turned his sustained attention to Trinitarian theology relatively late in his academic journey. Before 1964, the theme of the Trinity did not occupy a central place in his work. In the decades that followed, however, Trinitarian doctrine came to function as a foundational axis of his theological framework, shaping his thought in a decisive way, particularly in relation to ecclesiology.[34] In contrast to many 20th-century Orthodox theologians, who tended to avoid detailed reflection on the inner structure of the immanent Trinity, Dumitru Stăniloae stands out for articulating an intricate account of the divine communion shared by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.[35] His approach drew significantly on the theological contributions of Byzantine thinkers such as Gregory II of Cyprus (1241–1290), Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), and Joseph Bryennios (1359–1438).

Trinity, even though God's essence remains beyond comprehension. See Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), especially 99–101.

[34] See, for example, Viorel Coman, *Dumitru Stăniloae's Trinitarian Ecclesiology: Orthodoxy and the Filioque* (Lexington Press/Fortress Academic, 2019), 167; Coman, "Different Orthodox Perspectives on the Ecclesiological Ramifications of the Filioque: Trinitarian Ecclesiology vs. Eucharistic Ecclesiology," *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 58:1–4 (2017): 1–22, here at 8.

[35] In this respect, Dumitru Stăniloae differs markedly from Vladimir Lossky, who adopted a strongly apophatic stance toward the inner life of the Trinity, emphasizing the ultimate incomprehensibility of God's immanent being. In Stăniloae's theology, the immanent Trinity is approached through a more deliberate equilibrium between apophatic reserve and cataphatic affirmation, allowing for both reverent acknowledgment of divine mystery and carefully articulated theological insight. See Viorel Coman, "Unity and Diversity in the Church: Vladimir Lossky's Reflection on the Roles of Christ and the Spirit in the Church, and Its Critical Reception in Dumitru Stăniloae's Theology," in *Umstrittene Katholizität: Von der zwiespältigen Beziehung zwischen Vielfalt und Einheit – Catholicity under Pressure: The Ambiguous Relationship between Diversity and Unity : Tagungsbericht der 18. Wissenschaftlichen Konsultation der Societas Oecumenica | Proceedings of the 18th Academic Consultation of the Societas Oecumenica*, Beihefte zur Ökumenischen Rundschau, 105, ed. Dagmar Heller, Peter Szentpétery (Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016), 303–322; see also Silviu-Eugen Rogobete, "Mystical Existentialism or Communitarian Participation?: Vladimir Lossky and Dumitru Stăniloae," in *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology,* ed. L. Turcescu, 167–206.

Regarding the relation between the immanent and the economic Trinity, Dumitru Stăniloae did not provide a systematic treatment of their interconnection in his published writings. Nevertheless, his broader Trinitarian reflections contain ample material that allows one to discern how he implicitly understands the dynamic correlation between God's inner life and God's self-revelation in history. Several publications by Stăniloae illuminate this implicit perspective, even if they do not frame the issue in strictly technical terms. His most relevant article on the topic is "Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii" [Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church], published in 1964.[36] Before examining how Stăniloae articulates his understanding of the immanent Trinity in relation to the economic Trinity and *vice-versa*, it is necessary to outline the theological context within which his Trinitarian thought initially took shape.

Early 20th-century debates concerning the ecclesiological consequences of the doctrine of the *Filioque* sparked Stăniloae's interest in the doctrine of the Trinity. Until the 20th century, the theological controversy between Eastern and Western Christianity surrounding the *Filioque* remained largely confined to the strictly intra-Trinitarian dimension of the issue. With the emergence of the writings of Russian theologians in the Parisian diaspora, particularly Lev Karsavine and Vladimir Lossky, the *Filioque* also came to be interpreted as an ecclesiological issue, in the sense that it was seen to carry implications not only for Trinitarian doctrine but also for the Church's structure, unity, and mode of communion.[37] For example, in Lossky's opinion, the *Filioque* is to be blamed for what he perceived as the development of a deficient Roman Catholic ecclesiology: the lack of solid pneumatology;

[36] Dumitru Stăniloae, "Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii," *Ortodoxia* 16:4 (1964): 503–525. English translation in: Dumitru Stăniloae, "Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church," in *Theology and the Church* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 11–44.

[37] For a detailed analysis of the debates on the ecclesiological consequences of the *Filioque*, see: Coman, *Dumitru Stăniloae's Trinitarian Ecclesiology,* especially 24–34; Coman, "Dumitru Stăniloae on the Filioque: The Trinitarian Relationship Between the Son and the Spirit, and Its Relevance for the Ecclesiological Synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 49:4 (2014): 553–576, especially 554–558.

ecclesiological Christomonism; over-institutionalism; Papal primacy and infallibility.[38] The response of Catholic and Protestant theologians was swift to follow. According to Karl Barth,[39] Marie-Joseph Le Guillou[40] and others, it is precisely a Trinitarian theology without the *Filioque* that has negative ecclesiological reverberations: a separation between pneumatology and Christology in ecclesiology as a result of a clear relation between the Spirit and the Son in the immanent Trinity; and a split between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity as a consequence of the fact that the relation between the Son and the Spirit in the history of salvation (the Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son) is not taken as an indicative of their eternal relation (the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son).[41]

In response to critiques advanced by Western theologians, Dumitru Stăniloae—relying on the theological insights of the Byzantine tradition—formulated a Trinitarian model that more precisely articulated the relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit within the immanent life of the Trinity in terms of

[38] Lossky's criticism is scarcely developed in his works; however, his disciple Olivier Clément, who edited some of Lossky's unpublished works, unpacked and amplified his ideas. See Olivier Clément, "Vladimir Lossky, un théologien de la personne et du Saint Esprit," *Messager de l'Exarchat du Patriarche Russe en Europe Occidentale* 8 (1959): 137–206.

[39] Karl Barth, *The Gottingen Dogmatics: Instructions in the Christian Religion* (Eerdmans, 1991), 129; Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, Vol. I, Part I (T&T Clark, 1975), 548–551.

[40] Marie-Joseph Le Guillou, "La critique du *filioque* de L.P. Karsavine," *Istina* 17:3–4 (1972): 304–307.

[41] Not all Eastern and Western theologians accepted the view that the filioque—or its omission—entails serious ecclesiological consequences. For example, Sergius Bulgakov pointed out that "It would have been natural to expect that the existence of such grave heresy, of such fundamental divergence, would permeate the entire life of the two churches and their entire doctrine. Over the course of many years, I have sought traces of this influence, and I have attempted to comprehend the *life*-significance of this divergence and to find out *where* and *in what* it is manifested *in practice*. And I must admit that I have not been able to find this practical life significance; and, more than that, I deny that there is any such significance." See Sergius Bulgakov, *The Comforter* (William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 131. The French Dominican theologian Yves Congar also said that "the quarrel about the ecclesiological consequences of the filioque is of doubtful value." See Yves Congar, *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint: vol. III, Le fleuve de vie qui coule en Orient et en Occident* (Éditions du Cerf, 1980), 276.

manifestation, while simultaneously underscoring the intrinsic link between *Deus ad intra* and *Deus ad extra*.

Drawing on the pneumatological motif of Augustinian inspiration found in the theology of Gregory Palamas, Dumitru Stăniloae described the Holy Spirit as the eternal love between the Father and the Son. Yet he did so without embracing the *Filioque* doctrine traditionally associated with this Augustinian framework, carefully preserving the Orthodox affirmation of the Father as the sole source (*archē*) within the Trinity.[42] In addition, appealing to the distinction articulated by Gregory II of Cyprus between the Spirit's eternal procession from the Father and His eternal manifestation through the Son,[43] Stăniloae further clarified how one may speak of an eternal relation of the Spirit to the Son without compromising the monarchy of the Father.

Stăniloae's Trinitarian model can be concisely outlined as follows, particularly with regard to the eternal relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit.

First, the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and comes to rest in the Son, who is thus revealed as the Spirit's everlasting dwelling place. In this eternal movement from the Father toward the Son, the Spirit communicates to the Son the Father's love. Such procession—whereby the Spirit originates from the Father and abides in the Son—constitutes an eternal act of origination grounded in the Father's monarchy.[44]

[42] See Viorel Coman, "Le Saint-Esprit comme liaison de l'amour éternel entre le Père et le Fils : un cas de 'sobornicité ouverte' dans la théologie orthodoxe moderne," *Irénikon* 89:1 (2016): 25–51.

[43] See Aristeides Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium: The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (1283–1289)* (Fordham University Press, 1986); Joost van Rossum, "Gregory Of Cyprus and Palamism," *Studia Patristica* vol. 37 (Peeters, 2001), 626–630; and Olivier Clément, "Grégoire de Cypre: 'De l'exorèse du Saint Esprit," *Istina* 17: 3–4 (1972): 443–456.

[44] Dumitru Stăniloae, "Purcederea Duhului Sfânt de la Tatăl și relația lui cu Fiul, ca temei al îndumnezeirii și înfierii noastre," *Ortodoxia* 31:3–4 (1979): 583–592, here at 588. [English translation: "The Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and His Relation to the Son, as the Basis of Our Deification and Adoption," in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy,* Faith and Order Paper no. 103, ed. Lukas Vischer (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981), 174–186, here at 181.]

Second, the Spirit, who rests in the Son, also shines forth toward the Father from the beloved Son. This shining forth expresses the loving response of the Logos to the Father's loving initiative in causing the Spirit to proceed. Within this Trinitarian exchange of love, the Son does not "possess" the Spirit as the Father does, since He is not the Spirit's cause or source of existence. Consequently, the Spirit's shining forth from the Son is not an act of origination but one of eternal manifestation.[45]

Third, the Holy Spirit preserves the distinctness of the Father and the Son, preventing their communion of love from collapsing into an indistinguishable unity. In this way, the Spirit safeguards personal differentiation within the Trinity. At the same time, He is the bond of love uniting the Father and the Son, and thus is intrinsically linked to the very reality of divine communion.[46]

Fourth, by resting in the Son and joyfully shining forth toward the Father, the Spirit and the Son exist in a perichoretic unity so profound that neither is conceived apart from the other. The hypostasis of the Son is marked eternally by the presence of the Spirit, just as the Spirit's personal identity is revealed in relation to the Son.

It is clear from what has been said so far that Stăniloae holds on to a distinction within the immanent Trinity between relationships of origin (begetting and procession) and relationships of perichoresis or communion, understood as manifestation. To link the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, Stăniloae pointed out that the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in the economy of salvation reflects their relations of communion within the inner life of God. In other words, the economy of salvation does not reproduce the relations of origins but the dynamics of eternal communion between the Trinitarian

[45] Stăniloae, "Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii," 508–509; "Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church," 30–31.

[46] Stăniloae, *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă*, Vol. I, 323; *The Experience of God: Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God,* vol. I, trans. Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer (Holy Cross Orthodox Pres, 1998), 268–269. See also the book by Dumitru Stăniloae on the Holy Trinity: *Sfânta Treime sau la început a fost iubirea* [The Holy Trinity: In the Beginning There Was Love], 2nd ed. (Ed. I.B.M.B.O.R, 2005), 70, 72.

persons to the extent that "the indissoluble union between Christ and the Holy Spirit who truly constitutes the Church and sustains the life of the Christian within the Church has its profound roots in that indissoluble union which according to Orthodox teaching exists between them within the sphere of their inner Trinitarian relations."[47]

To clarify his claim, Stăniloae contended that the circle of Trinitarian love existing *ad intra* between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit extends *ad extra*—that is, to the Church and the entire creation. The same Spirit who proceeds eternally from the Father and rests eternally upon the Son also abides upon the threefold body of Christ in history.[48] The Spirit descends upon Christ's physical body at Baptism to confirm and sanctify His mission in the world. At Pentecost, the Spirit likewise descends upon the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, to extend it throughout history and to incorporate all those who believe in Christ as adoptive children of the Father. In the Liturgy, the Spirit also descends upon the gifts of bread and wine to transform them into the Body and Blood of Christ. In so doing, the Spirit includes each time the Church and all its members into the Trinitarian circle of love.[49]

At the same time, the same Spirit who eternally shines forth from the Son toward the Father also manifests Himself through the threefold body of Christ and orients everything toward the love of the Father. Thus, the same Spirit who eternally moves between the Father and the Son operates a similar movement in the history of salvation, drawing the Church and the entire creation into the dynamic exchange of Trinitarian life. That being so, Stă-

[47] Stăniloae, "Relaţiile Treimice şi viaţa Bisericii," 506; "Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church," 15.

[48] Stăniloae, "Relaţiile Treimice şi viaţa Bisericii," 510; "Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church," 21.

[49] Stăniloae, "Relaţiile Treimice şi viaţa Bisericii," 514; "Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church," 27. For a detaled analysis of the Spirit's eternal and temporal rest upon the Son/Christ, see Radu Bordeianu, *Dumitru Stăniloae: An Ecumenical Ecclesiology* (Bloomsbury, 2011), 125–129; Coman, *Dumitru Stăniloae's Trinitarian Ecclesiology*, 186–194.

niloae does not hesitate to point out that the movement of the Spirit *ad extra* informs us about the movement of the Spirit *ad intra*.[50]

To conclude this section, Stăniloae's Trinitarian theology represents one of the most sophisticated Orthodox attempts to articulate the inner life of the Trinity in close correlation with the life of the Church. Without collapsing the distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinity, he nevertheless insisted on their profound coherence. By distinguishing carefully between relations of origin and relations of manifestation, he safeguarded both the transcendence of God and the connection between the immanent and the economic Trinity. Drawing creatively on Byzantine sources, Stăniloae formulated a model in which the Spirit is eternally the love resting in the Son and shining forth toward the Father. This eternal dynamism of communion becomes, in history, the very structure of salvation. Thus, ecclesiology and the history of salvation are grounded not in abstraction but in the living mystery of God's own life.

Conclusions

This article sheds light upon the Trinitarian approach of two major Orthodox theologians of the past century: John Zizioulas and Dumitru Stăniloae. It is true that Zizioulas and Stăniloae never explicitly engaged one another; yet it is also true that the way they reflected on the relationship between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity reveals both a shared patristic inheritance and theological differences. In their treatment of the relationship between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, their common concern and the distinctiveness of their theological approach come most clearly into view.

Both theologians firmly reject any unqualified identification of the immanent Trinity with the economic Trinity, such as that proposed by Karl Rahner in modern Catholic theology. In continuity with the Greek patristic tradition, they maintain that while

[50] Stăniloae, "Relaţiile Treimice şi viaţa Bisericii," 517; "Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church," 31.

the economic Trinity truly reveals the immanent Trinity, it does not exhaust or circumscribe the mystery of God's inner life. In this shared conviction, both safeguard divine transcendence, Trinitarian apophaticism and freedom.

However, their major divergence lies in the emphasis each assigns to different theological concerns. In Zizioulas's theology, the central preoccupation is the preservation of divine freedom. For him, any theological attempt to unqualifiedly identify the economic Trinity with the immanent Trinity creates the risk of subjecting God's eternal life to history and necessity. This is why Zizioulas insists that *Deus ad intra* remains always irreducible to *Deus ad extra*, precisely because the distinction between the two safeguards divine transcendence and the freedom of God, who is not bound by anything, not even by God's revelation in history.

When it comes to Stăniloae, he equally affirms the distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity; at the same time, he is more willing to regard the economic Trinity as a reflection or extension of the eternal relationships of communion between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. By distinguishing between relations of origin and relations of manifestation within the immanent Trinity, he creates space to claim that the missions of the Son and the Spirit in history are the extension *ad extra* of their eternal patterns of communion. Hence, for Stăniloae, the economy does not reproduce the relations of origin, but it does reveal the eternal dynamism of Trinitarian love. The circle of divine communion extends into history without being enslaved by it.

It is therefore accurate to say that the contrast between the theological approach of Zizioulas and Stăniloae is not between transcendence and immanence or between distinction and identity. It is a contrast between theological emphases and concerns that guide their views. While Zizioulas prioritizes the preservation of divine freedom and transcendence in order not to make God's eternal being dependent upon time and history, Stăniloae prioritizes the coherence between God's inner life and God's work in history in order to show that salvation and deification presuppose the extension of God's loving communion into the world.

Where Zizioulas stresses apophatic restraint, Stăniloae ventures a more cataphatic approach, yet without compromising the divine mystery.

Ultimately, both Zizioulas and Stăniloae converge in affirming that the God who acts in history is none other than the eternal God, namely the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. While the distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinity is real, it does not amount to separation or disconnection. *Oikonomia* presupposes or is anchored in *theologia*; yet God's revelation discloses without exhausting.

References

Asproulis, Nikolaos. "John Zizioulas." In *Orthodox Handbook for Ecumenism: Resources for Theological Education*, edited by Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Cyril Hovorun, et al., 254–257. Volos: Volos Academy Publications in cooperation with WCC Publications and Regnum Books International, 2014.

Ayres, Lewis. *Augustine and the Trinity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*. Vol. 1, part 1. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975.

Barth, Karl. *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991.

Berger, Calinic. "Does the Eucharist Make the Church? An Ecclesiological Comparison of Stăniloae and Zizioulas." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (2007): 23–70.

Berger, Calinic. "Dumitru Stăniloae." In *Key Theological Thinkers: From Modern to Postmodern*, edited by Staale Johannes Kristiansen and Svein Rise, 393–402. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.

Bordeianu, Radu. *Dumitru Stăniloae: An Ecumenical Ecclesiology*. London: Bloomsbury, 2011.

Bulgakov, Sergius. *The Comforter*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.

Chiapetti, Dario. *The Father's Eternal Freedom: The Personalist Trinitarian Ontology of John Zizioulas.* Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2022.

Clément, Olivier. "Grégoire de Cypre: 'De l'exporèse du Saint Esprit.'" *Istina* 17, nos. 3–4 (1972): 443–456.

Clément, Olivier. "Vladimir Lossky, un théologien de la personne et du Saint Esprit." *Messager de l'Exarchat du Patriarche Russe en Europe Occidentale* 8 (1959): 137–206.

Collins, Paul M. *Trinitarian Theology, West and East: Karl Barth, the Cappadocian Fathers, and John Zizioulas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Coman, Augustin (Viorel). "Hristologia Sinodului I Ecumenic de la Niceea (325): Theologia & Oikonomia" [The Christology of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325): Theologia & Oikonomia]. In *Sinodul I Ecumenic de la Niceea (325): Credința ortodoxă – baza unității Bisericii [The First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325): Christian Faith—the Basis of the Church's Unity]*, edited by Sorin Șelaru, Nicușor Beldiman, George Grigoriță, and Augustin (Viorel) Coman, 263–281. Bucharest: Basilica, 2025.

Coman, Viorel. "Different Orthodox Perspectives on the Ecclesiological Ramifications of the Filioque: Trinitarian Ecclesiology vs. Eucharistic Ecclesiology." *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 58, nos. 1–4 (2017): 1–22.

Coman, Viorel. *Dumitru Stăniloae's Trinitarian Ecclesiology: Orthodoxy and the Filioque*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2019.

Coman, Viorel. "Dumitru Stăniloae on the Filioque: The Trinitarian Relationship Between the Son and the Spirit, and Its Relevance for the Ecclesiological Synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 49, no. 4 (2014): 553–576.

Coman, Viorel. "Le Saint-Esprit comme liaison de l'amour éternel entre le Père et le Fils: un cas de 'sobornicité ouverte' dans la théologie orthodoxe moderne." *Irénikon* 89, no. 1 (2016): 25–51.

Coman, Viorel. "Orthodox Neo-Patristic Theology and the West: Dumitru Stăniloae on the Holy Spirit in the Church." *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 74, nos. 3–4 (2022): 262–278.

Congar, Yves. *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. Vol. 3. Translated by David Smith. New York: Seabury Press, 1983.

Congar, Yves. *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint: Le fleuve de vie qui coule en Orient et en Occident*. Vol. 3. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1980.

Durand, Emmanuel. "L'identité rahnérienne entre la Trinité économique et la Trinité immanente à l'épreuve de ses applications." *Revue Thomiste* 103, no. 1 (2003): 75–92.

Farrow, Douglas. "Person and Nature: The Necessity-Freedom Dialectic in John Zizioulas." In *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, edited by Douglas H. Knight, 109–123. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

Fox, Patricia. *God as Communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson, and the Retrieval of the Symbol of the Triune God*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001.

Ică Jr., Ioan. "Stăniloae, Dumitru (1903–1993)." In *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, edited by Trevor A. Hart, 527–531. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000.

Kabuya, Godefroid Mukenge. *Le « Grundaxiom » de Karl Rahner comme paradigme du renouveau trinitaire au XXe siècle: Une relecture interdisciplinaire*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2019.

Knight, Douglas H., ed. *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

Le Guillou, Marie-Joseph. "La critique du filioque de L. P. Karsavine." *Istina* 17, nos. 3–4 (1972): 304–307.

Louth, Andrew. *Modern Orthodox Thinkers: From the Philokalia to the Present*. London: SPCK, 2015.

Lysack, Maxym. *Asceticism and the Eucharist: Exploring Orthodox Spirituality with Metropolitan John Zizioulas*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2023.

Maican, Petre. "Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–93)." In *T&T Clark Handbook of Modern Theology*, edited by Philip E. Ziegler and R. David Nelson, 673–676. London: T&T Clark, 2026.

Meyendorff, John. *A Study of Gregory Palamas*. London: SPCK, 1964.

Moga, Ioan. "'Treimea imanentă' și 'Treimea economică': Probleme și perspective ale unei distincții teologice" ["Immanent Trinity" and "Economic Trinity": Problems and Perspectives of a Theological Distinction]. *Studii Teologice*, new series, 7, no. 3 (2011): 21–56.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. New York: Harper & Row, 1981.

Papanikolaou, Aristotle. *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006.

Papanikolaou, Aristotle. "Contemporary Orthodox Currents on the Trinity." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, edited by Gilles Emery, O.P., and Matthew Levering, 328–338. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Papanikolaou, Aristotle. "Is Zizioulas an Existentialist in Disguise? Response to Lucian Turcescu." *Modern Theology* 20, no. 4 (2004): 601–7.

Papadakis, Aristeides. *Crisis in Byzantium: The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (1283–1289)*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983.

Pino, Tikhon. *Essence and Energies: Being and Naming God in St Gregory Palamas*. London: Routledge, 2024.

Popescu, Dumitru. *Iisus Hristos Pantocrator [Jesus Christ Pantokrator]*. Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2005.

Rahner, Karl. *The Trinity*. Translated by Joseph Donceel. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

Reid, Duncan. *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997.

Rikheim, Lars Erik. "Johannes Zizioulas." In *Key Theological Thinkers: From Modern to Postmodern*, edited by Staale Johannes Kristiansen and Svein Rise, 435–447. Farnham: Routledge, 2013.

Rogobete, Silviu-Eugen. "Mystical Existentialism or Communitarian Participation?: Vladimir Lossky and Dumitru Stăniloae." In *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology*, edited by Lucian Turcescu, 167–206. Iași: Center for Romanian Studies, 2003.

Russell, Norman. *Gregory Palamas and the Making of Palamism in the Modern Age*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Sanders, Fred. "Entangled in the Trinity: Economic and Immanent Trinity in Recent Theology." *Dialog* 40, no. 3 (2001): 175–182.

Șelaru, Sorin. "Eternal Intra-Trinitarian Relations and Their Economic Consequences: An Approach according to Father Dumitru Stăniloae's Theological Perspective." *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 2, no. 1 (2011): 83–93.

Stăniloae, Dumitru. *Ascetica și mistica Bisericii Ortodoxe*. 4th ed. Bucharest: Basilica, 2019. English translation: *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical Guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Manual for the Scholar*. South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2002.

Stăniloae, Dumitru. *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*. 3rd ed. Bucharest: Basilica, 2013.

Stăniloae, Dumitru. *Iisus Hristos și restaurarea omului*. 3rd ed. Bucharest: Basilica, 2013.

Stăniloae, Dumitru. *Sfânta Treime sau la început a fost iubirea*. 2nd ed. Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2005.

Stăniloae, Dumitru. *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia ortodoxă*. 2nd ed. Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2004. English translation: *Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy*. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2025.

Stăniloae, Dumitru. *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă*. 3 vols. 3rd ed. Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2003.

Stăniloae, Dumitru. *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology. Vol. 1, Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God*. Translated by Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998.

Stăniloae, Dumitru. *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology. Vol. 3, The Person of Jesus Christ as God and Savior*. Translated by Ioan Ioniță. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2011.

Stăniloae, Dumitru. "Purcederea Duhului Sfânt de la Tatăl și relația lui cu Fiul, ca temei al îndumnezeirii și înfierii noastre." *Ortodoxia* 31, nos. 3–4 (1979): 583–92. English translation: "The Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and His Relation to the Son, as the Basis of Our Deification and Adoption." In *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy*, edited by Lukas Vischer, 174–186. Faith and Order Paper no. 103. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981.

Stăniloae, Dumitru. "Relațiile Treimice și viața Bisericii." *Ortodoxia* 16, no. 4 (1964): 503–25. English translation: "Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church." In *Theology and the Church*, 11–44. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980.

Turcescu, Lucian, ed. *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology*. Iași: Center for Romanian Studies, 2003.

Turcescu, Lucian. "'Person' versus 'Individual,' and Other Modern Misreadings of Gregory of Nyssa." *Modern Theology* 18, no. 4 (2002): 527–539.

van Rossum, Joost. "Gregory of Cyprus and Palamism." *Studia Patristica* 37 (2001): 626–630.

Zizioulas, John D. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985.

Zizioulas, John D. *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*. Edited by Paul McPartlan. London: T&T Clark, 2006.

Zizioulas, John D. *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*. Edited by Douglas H. Knight and Katerina Nikolopulu. London: T&T Clark, 2009.

Zizioulas, John D. "Pneumatology and the Importance of the Person." In *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, 178–205. London: T&T Clark, 2006.

Zizioulas, John D. *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology*. Edited by Bishop Maxim Vasiljević. Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2023.

Zizioulas, John D. "The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today: Suggestions for an Ecumenical Study." In *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today*, 3–16. Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2010.

Zizioulas, John D. *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*. Edited by Luke Ben Tallon. London: T&T Clark, 2011.

Zizioulas, John D. *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today*. Edited by Gregory Edwards. Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2010.

Zizioulas, John D. "The Teaching of the Second Ecumenical Council on the Holy Spirit in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective." In *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum: Atti del Congresso Teologico Internazionale di Pneumatologia*, vol. 1, edited by J. Martins, 29–54. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983.

OmegAlpha II:2 Autumn 2026, 87–126
ISSN 3067-1329 (Print), ISSN 3067-1337 (Online)
https://doi.org/10.63394/y8s49n06
Original Paper
Received: 2026-02-09; Revised: 2026-09-08;
Accepted: 2026-09-18; Published: 2026-11-10

John Zizioulas in Dialogue with Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac

Stavros Yangazoglou

Abstract
This article examines John Zizioulas's ecclesiology in dialogue with Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac. Emerging in the 1960s within the context of Eucharistic ecclesiology and the neo-patristic synthesis, Zizioulas's thought developed through a sustained engagement with the relationship between Christology and Pneumatology. His dialogue with Congar during the 1970s and 1980s demonstrates the ecumenical significance of the encounter between the neo-patristic synthesis and *ressourcement*. For Zizioulas, the synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology opens an eschatological horizon that shapes his understanding of the Eucharist, ecclesial institutions and ministries, personhood, communion, and truth. His Eucharistic ecclesiology also converges with de Lubac's recovery of the inseparable relationship between the Eucharist and the Church. Drawing on their shared biblical and patristic heritage, the article explores these convergences while identifying differences in their treatment of history, eschatology, and the work of the Holy Spirit. It argues that Zizioulas's distinctive contribution lies in the pneumatological and eschatological grounding of ecclesial communion.

Stavros Yangazoglou
Department of Theology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Athens, Greece
E-mail: syang@theol.uoa.gr
https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1391-6986

© 2026 The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits use, distribution, reproduction, and adaptation in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Keywords: John Zizioulas, Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, Christology, Pneumatology, ecclesiology, eschatology, Eucharist, Eucharistic ecclesiology, "neo-patristic synthesis," "nouvelle théologie"

John Zizioulas and the Pioneers of "nouvelle théologie"

In the early 1960s, John Zizioulas wrote his dissertation on the unity of the Church, which was centered on the Eucharist and the institution of the bishop during the first three centuries of the Church, when the pan-Orthodox meetings began in Rhodes to prepare for the Council of the Orthodox Church. The subject of his doctoral thesis[1] is at the heart of the ecclesiological research that marked theology and the ecumenical movement from the early 20th century until the 1960s. It was essentially a historical study of the historical sources of the early Christian era, as well as of the relevant theological literature up to that point. The study focused on the development of the unity of the Church through the Eucharist, but also on the episcopal ministry, which connected the local Church with the universal Church. By examining the relationship of the Eucharist with the Church and the bishop in the early Church, he explored the unity of the Church at the local level and then the development of the "Catholic Church" throughout the world. The dissertation was completed and published in 1965. In this thesis, John Zizioulas took into account the rich ecclesiological research and theological thought that had already developed from the interwar period until the time of writing his thesis. In this work, he makes minimal reference to Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac, since he is interested in the historical exploration of the early centuries of the Church.[2]

[1] Ἰωάννου Ζηζιούλα, *Ἡ ἑνότης τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἐν τῇ Θείᾳ Εὐχαριστίᾳ καὶ τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ κατὰ τοὺς τρεῖς πρώτους αἰῶνας*, Ἀθῆναι 1965 / John Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop during the First Three Centuries* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001).

[2] Specifically, John Zizioulas includes the following works in his bibliography as references: Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*, trans. A. V. Littledale (Helicon Press, 1960). *Sainte Église. Études et approches ecclésiologiques*, Collection Unam Sanctam, 41

The most fruitful period for John Zizioulas began in Geneva, when he worked for three years on the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, focusing on inter-Christian relations and ecumenical dialogue. His unhindered study, inter-Christian stimuli and ecumenical contacts would pave the way for him to teach systematic theology, first in Edinburgh and then in Glasgow, followed by Thessaloniki and London. During the 1970s and 1980s, Zizioulas developed his theological thought, building solidly upon the historical background and primary ecclesiological material of his dissertation. Drawing on the legacy of Eucharistic ecclesiology, Fr. Georges Florovsky's program on "neo-patristic synthesis" and ecumenical dialogue, as well as the significant work of "nouvelle théologie,"[3] and the texts and decisions of the Second Vatican Council, John Zizioulas extended his ecclesiological research toward the theology of the Eucharist,[4] the place of Pneumatology and Christology in ecclesiology,[5] and the

(Editions du Cerf, 1963). Henri de Lubac, *Catholicisme. Les aspects sociaux du dogme* (Cerf, 1938). *Corpus Mysticum*, *l'eucharistie et l'Église au Moyen âge*. *Étude historique* (Aubier, 1944; citing here the 1949 second edition).

[3] At the same time that the movement of "nouvelle théologie" or "ressourcement" was developing in the Roman Catholic Church, Georges Florovsky and other Orthodox theologians worked toward a "neopatristic synthesis" as both a return to the sources and the patristic texts and, at the same time, a creative updating of patristic theology for our time. Eucharistic ecclesiology and liturgical renewal, the patristic teaching on theosis, and many other elements of the Orthodox tradition emerged from the fruitful exchanges and interactions that developed in ecumenical circles through the fruitful interaction between theologians of the "ressourcement" movement with theologians of the "neopatristic synthesis." For the relation between "nouvelle théologie" and contemporary Orthodox theology, see Barbara Hallensleben, Regula M. Zwahlen, Jack Pappas, et al. (eds), *Encounters. Dialogue and Theological Exchange between Catholic Nouvelle Theologie and Modern Orthodoxy* (Aschendorff Verlag – forthcoming).

[4] See Jean Zizioulas, "L'eucharistie: quelques aspects bibliques," Jean Zizioulas, J.-M.R. Tillard, J.-J. Allmen (eds.), *L'Eucharistie*, Églises en dialogue 12 (Mame, 1970), 11–74.

[5] John Zizioulas, "The Pneumatological Dimension of the Church," *Communio* 1:2 (1974), 142–158. "Implications ecclésiologiques de deux types de pneumatologie," *Communio Sanctorum, Mélanges offerts à Jean-Jacques von Allmen* (Labor et Fides, 1981), 141–154. «Cristologia, pneumatologia e istituzioni ecclesiastiche: un punto di vista ortodosso», *Cristianesimo nella storia* 2 (1981), 111–127.

theological significance of the person,[6] communion, and truth.[7] These thematic axes, and especially Pneumatology, gradually lead him toward eschatology, on the horizon of which John Zizioulas reinterprets his entire theological edifice with his last and most systematic work.[8]

Just as Congar served the renewal[9] that led to Vatican II, which inspired the convocation of the Second Vatican Council, Zizioulas, apart from his long-standing years of academic teaching at the university, placed his theology at the service of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, serving on theological committees and ecclesiastical delegations. For a significant period spanning some fifty years, his theological work concerned the varied and inspired initiatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for the protection of the natural environment (since 1989), theological dialogue with the Anglicans (since 1986) and the Roman Catholic Church (since 1978), and the preparation of the Holy and Great Council in Crete (already since 1976 as a member, and since 1992 as president of the pan-Orthodox pre-conciliar conferences). Throughout all those years, John Zizioulas worked tirelessly for the realization of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, despite the occasional problems of unity and cooperation among the local Orthodox Churches. After the Council of Crete and during the pandemic, in the midst of many health problems, John Zizioulas managed to complete his magnum opus on eschatology. His previously announced book, *Remembering the Future*: *Toward an Eschatological Ontology*, in which he realizes a complete theological synthesis, conveying the rich theological heritage of the 20th century to

[6] See John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion, Studies in Personhood and the Church* (St Vladimir's Seminary Press and Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 27–65.

[7] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion,* 67–122.

[8] The eschatological perspective is already evident in the early works of John Zizioulas and becomes increasingly decisive in his thought, ultimately becoming the horizon of his theological hermeneutics. See Metropolitan of Pergamon John Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future, Toward an Eschatological Ontology*, ed. Bishop Maxim Vasiljević (St. Sebastian Press, 2023).

[9] See, among other contributions, on the ressourcement movement Gabriel Flynn, Paul D. Murray, Patricia Kelly, eds., *Ressourcement, A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

the 21st century, was published a few months after his death in 2023 with a foreword by Pope Francis.

What connects John Zizioulas with Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac? Zizioulas is primarily connected to Congar through the issue of Pneumatology and ecclesiology, as the work of both reflects a fruitful and substantive theological dialogue on the synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology. Yves Congar, summarizing his ecclesiological contribution with a focus on the pneumatological significance of communion, recognizes in the ecclesiological work of John Zizioulas a fundamental and original contribution to the ecumenical dialogue.[10] Within John Zizioulas's pneumatologically grounded Christology, Yves Congar discerns the authentic voice of the shared tradition regarding the unity and catholicity of the Church. He considered John Zizioulas to be one of the most original and profound theologians of our time, whose originality stems from his penetrating study of the Greek Church Fathers and the living reality of the Church.[11] He points out the connection between ecclesiology and the theology of the person as an ecclesiological hypostasis, which leads Zizioulas to consider that the Church is not only an institution but also a way of being, which is experienced par excellence in the Holy Eucharist. Congar extols the eschatological nature of Pneumatology, which Zizioulas attributes to the Eucharistic experience of the ecclesial community. "We felt what wealth and improvements Orthodox thought can bring to our Latin constructs (which also have their value and power)."[12] At the same time, John Zizioulas is the Orthodox theologian who has systematically studied and discussed in depth the ecclesiological positions of Yves Congar. In the persons and work of these two theologians, "nouvelle théologie" and "neo-patristic synthesis" meet and dialogue in the most fruitful

[10] See Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 2, 51. See also Jean Rigal, "Trois approches de l'ecclésiologie de communion: Congar, Zizioulas, Moltmann," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 120:4 (1998): 605–619.

[11] Yves Congar, "Bulletin d'ecclésiologie," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 66 (1982): 87–119, 88.

[12] Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2, trans. David Smith (Seabury Press, G. Chapman, 1983), 50–51.

way, transcending the theological and polemical extremes of the past.[13] Congar's outlook of the Church, which breathes with its two lungs,[14] the traditions of the East and the West, also encounters the thinking of Fr. Georges Florovsky, who was a teacher of John Zizioulas, regarding the two Churches as twin sisters.[15] John Zizioulas took this mutual and supplementary view of the two theological traditions seriously, engaging in a deep, fruitful, and meaningful theological dialogue on the unity of the Church.

From Pneumatology to Eschatology

The initial study of the Eucharist opened up to John Zizioulas the horizon of Pneumatology and its synthesis with Christology in the field of ecclesiology. At the same time, the space in which the significance of the person, truth, and communion is realized—themes which constitute key interpretive elements of his systematic theological thought—is the Eucharistic community of the Church. This perspective also marked the passage from Pneumatology to the horizon of eschatology.[16]

The inclusion of John Zizioulas as a young holder of a doctorate in the "Faith and Order" committee of the WCC in 1967 coincided with a period when ecclesiology was the most discussed topic in the ecumenical movement. The relevant consultations, theological conferences, and the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council steadily shifted Zizioulas's interest from the historical view of the problem of Church unity to a more theological and systematic direction concerning the contemporary inter-Chris-

[13] See our article forthcoming in press "Yves Congar and John Zizioulas on Pneumatology, 'Nouvelle théologie' and 'neo-patristic synthesis' in dialogue," *Encounters: Dialogue & Theological Exchange Between Catholic Nouvelle Théologie & Modern Orthodoxy*, International Conference / Fribourg, August 29–31, 2024.

[14] See Jaroslav Z. Skira, "Breathing with Two Lungs: The Church in Yves Congar and John Zizioulas," Jaroslav Z. Skira, Michael S. Attridge, eds., *In God's Hands* (Leuven University Press, 2006), 283–305.

[15] Georges Florovsky, "The Legacy and the Task of Orthodox Theology," *Anglican Theological Review* 31:2 (1949): 65–71, 67.

[16] See Rémi Chéno, "Eschatologie et communion: les conséquences d'une constitution pneumatologique de l'ecclésiologie selon J. Zizioulas," *Istina* 51 (2006): 375–412.

tian status and the different traditions between East and West. According to Zizioulas, the Eucharist is incomprehensible without the bishop, that is, the *primus* or the head of the local Church, and this affects all levels of the Church's organization and structure. It is true that in his thesis, Zizioulas was sufficiently Christocentric in his ecclesiology due to the strong influence of Fr. Georges Florovsky. The approach of Khomiakov and many other Russian theologians seemed strongly pneumatocratic. Adhering to Florovsky's line of thought, Zizioulas believed that the Slavophiles' purely pneumatological outlook transformed ecclesiology into a "charismatic sociology." This Slavophile school of thought culminated in Nicolas Afanassieff, who perceived the Church not as a historical institution with a hierarchical structure and order, but primarily as a "charismatic community."[17] For Afanassieff, the Church is primarily "the Church of the Holy Spirit," not the Body of Christ. Vladimir Lossky's approach to the existence of two distinct economies of the Son and the Holy Spirit seemed to follow the same line of thought. The Church is connected to Christ in its objective aspect and to the work of the Holy Spirit in its subjective dimension. Thus, the sacraments, ministries, and institutions of the Church are of necessity founded on Christology, whereas the personal experience of divine grace and the theosis of the faithful depend entirely on Pneumatology. This dual view attempted to combine Christology with Pneumatology in ecclesiology in a somewhat schematic way. Ecclesiology, however, appeared as an organic part exclusively of Pneumatology, which also included anthropology. Florovsky's position on the viewpoint of Lossky

[17] According to John Zizioulas, this idea was passionately opposed by Father Georges Florovsky. See, for example Georges Florovsky, "Christ and His Church-Suggestions and Comments," *1054–1954 Église et les églises: Neuf Siècles de douloureuse Séparation entre l'Orient et l'Occident*, Etudes et travaux offerts à Dom Lambert Beauduin, 2 vols. (Chevetogne: 1955.2), 159–170. "Le Corps du Christ vivant: Une interprétation orthodoxe de l'Église," *La Sainte Église universelle: Confrontation œcuménique* (Delachaux, 1948). Ἰωάννου Ζηζιούλα, *Ἡ ἑνότης τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἐν τῇ Θείᾳ Εὐχαριστίᾳ καὶ τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ κατὰ τοὺς τρεῖς πρώτους αἰῶνας*, 17–18, 196–202. *Being as Communion*, passim. "The Mystery of the Church in the Orthodox Tradition—with additional final paragraphs on the cosmic dimension of the Church," *One in Christ* 24 (1988), 301. Μητροπολίτου Περγάμου Ἰωάννου Ζηζιούλα, *Ἔργα Α΄, Ἐκκλησιολογικὰ Μελετήματα*, 81–269.

was that ecclesiology was nothing more than a chapter of Christology: "The theology of the Church is but a chapter and a vital chapter of Christology. And without this chapter Christology itself would not be complete ... It must be stated therefore that no coherent Ecclesiology can be constructed unless the centrality of Christ, the Incarnate Lord and King of Glory, is admitted without any reservations."[18] Christ is the head of the Church and the Church is the Body of Christ. Thus, contemporary Orthodox theology presented two strong and completely different tendencies in its view of ecclesiology.

John Zizioulas's systematic preoccupation with Pneumatology began when he realized that contemporary Orthodox theology was neither unanimous nor complete and comprehensive regarding the matter of the relationship between Christology and Pneumatology in ecclesiology. His first significant study on Pneumatology seems to have been prompted by this critical problem, its significance, and its implications for inter-Christian dialogue between East and West. As is well known, Orthodox observers (and not only them) at the Second Vatican Council pointed out that there was a clear lack or even underestimation of Pneumatology in the texts on the Church. Indeed, when this deficiency was also realized by the Roman Catholics, an effort was made, albeit retrospectively, to introduce Pneumatology into an ecclesiological structure that was essentially based on Christology from the outset. In his post-conciliar studies, Congar often referred to an important meeting he had with two Orthodox observers of the Second Vatican Council, crediting them with the pneumatological shift of the Council. At an informal dinner with Nikos Nissiotis[19] and Fr. Alexander Schmemann, in order to exchange views on a preliminary draft of the constitution on the Church, the two Orthodox observers pointed out the following to Congar: "If we were to prepare a treatise *De Ecclesia* (On the Church), we would draft a chapter on the Holy Spirit, to which we would add a sec-

[18] Florovsky, "Christ and His Church, 159–170, 170.

[19] During this period, Nikos Nissiotis had already published his study, "Pneumatologie Orthodoxe," in Franz Leenhardt, et al., *Le Saint-Esprit* (Labor et Fides, 1963), 85–106.

ond chapter on Christian anthropology, and that would be all."[20] John Zizioulas saw that this approach, in attempting to transcend the traditional Christomonism of Roman Catholic ecclesiology, inclined toward a kind of pneumatomonism, excluding the organic relationship between Christology and ecclesiology. On the one hand, John Zizioulas recognized the crucial importance of Pneumatology in the relations and differences between East and West, and the importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church, but on the other hand, he believed that the exclusively pneumatological definition of the Church was not the correct and appropriate view of ecclesiology. In his early study, "The Pneumatological Dimension of the Church" (1973), Zizioulas demonstrated that ecclesiology is based in a reciprocal way on the synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology.

Exploring the place of Pneumatology in ecclesiology, Zizioulas highlights the unity of the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit in the biblical and patristic traditions of the early Church. Despite differences in emphasis, the mystery of the Church was understood in both the East and the West through a synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology in the one divine economy of the mystery of salvation. Undoubtedly, Christology is the basis and starting point of ecclesiology, but this is made possible through Pneumatology. The synthetic relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit is the stable foundation of the mystery of the Church. Christ is the *Anointed One* of the Spirit; Christology itself is structured pneumatologically. The Holy Spirit, as described in Holy Scriptures and patristic tradition, constitutes *power*, *sanctification*, *truth*, *freedom*, and above all, *life* and *communion*. Wherever the Holy Spirit blows, it creates life and communion. Christ himself, through the Spirit, is a relational being par excellence; He is a person and a body in which many are incorporated. Consequently, the mystery of the Church as the unity of the *One* and the *many* arises precisely from this relationship between Christ and the Spir-

[20] Yves Congar, "Actualité d'une pneumatologie," *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 23 (1973), 121–132. "Pneumatologie ou 'Christomonisme' dans la tradition latine?" *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 45 (1969), 394–416.

it. It is not that the *One* exists first and then the *many* follow, but that the *One* is simultaneously *many*. The pneumatological dimension of the Church transcends any linear development of the history of salvation and already introduces the eschatological into history. The eschaton, that is to say, concerns the historical consciousness of the Church. On the one hand, it sanctifies and affirms history, and on the other, it reveals that the Church does not depend on historical causality and evolution, but on the eschaton of the Kingdom. The Holy Spirit as *Spiritus Creator* connects the mystery of the Church with creation and the world, grace with nature. The Church is constituted simultaneously by the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit consists in transcending history, constantly opening up the horizon of the Church toward the eschaton. "The Church is the Body of Christ precisely in its being a 'spiritual body'"[21] The life of God is introduced into history; the Church becomes a *communion of saints* in the body of Christ, which is an event of communion within nature and history. This is precisely where, according to Zizioulas, Pneumatology encounters eschatology. The Holy Spirit does not merely guide the Church through history toward the eschaton, rather the Spirit already anticipates the mystery of the Kingdom, bringing the eschaton into history and liberating the Church from history's limitations. This perspective emerged from an organic synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology. However, subsequent theology up to the present day has not creatively assimilated this synthesis. This issue warrants further exploration. Here we will limit ourselves to arguing that this question—and particularly the theological, ecclesiological, and pastoral implications of this synthesis—does not appear to have been a major concern for contemporary Orthodox theology. John Zizioulas's observation in the early 1980s that "the actual state of Or-

[21] John Zizioulas, "The Pneumatological Dimension of the Church," *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today* (St. Sebastian Press, 2010), 79.

thodox theology in this respect is by no means satisfactory" appears to remain true even today.[22]

If the Church is constituted by the Spirit as the body of Christ, this means that the Spirit establishes a concrete community in a particular place. This refers to the Eucharistic community in which the (Christological) mystery of Pascha is integrated with the (Pneumatological) mystery of Pentecost. The Eucharist, although established Christologically at the Last Supper, is now celebrated on *Sunday*, which is the eschatological day of the Resurrection. The historical aspect of the institution of the Eucharist is transcended by the Spirit, since it is now celebrated on the Eighth Day of the week and takes place within a community. The epiclesis of the Eucharistic community to the Holy Spirit, namely, the pneumatological-eschatological factor, determines history and gives life to the Body of Christ, which is the Church. "Thanks to the epiclesis, the Church realizes in herself the Christ event without her causing it to happen and without her being caused by it."[23] Therefore, according to Zizioulas, the epiclesis shows that there is no question of priority between Christ and the Spirit. This fact also reveals another pneumatological application in ecclesiology: The Eucharist (through the epiclesis of the Spirit) makes the Church, and the Church (through the epiclesis of the Spirit) makes the Eucharist. "In speaking about the *ecclesiological presuppositions* of the Eucharist I wish to exclude right from the start such an assumption. If there are ecclesiological presuppositions of the Eucharist –and there certainly are– these must not be understood to involve a priority of the Church over the Eucharist. My position... is that the Church constitutes the Eucharist while being constituted by it. Church and Eucharist are interdependent; they coincide, and are even in some sense identical... In order to find the

[22] See footnote 30 below. To the best of our knowledge, such an endeavor can be found in Boris Bobrinskoy's work, *The Mystery of the Trinity: Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*, (St Vladimirs Seminary Press, 1999). See also our work *Communion in Theosis: The Synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology in the Work of Saint Gregory Palamas*, forthcoming from Sebastian Press.

[23] John Zizioulas, "The Pneumatological Dimension of the Church," *The One and the Many*, 81.

deeper roots of this coincidence between Church and Eucharist we must again go back to the question of the relation between Christology and Pneumatology."[24]

Pneumatology implies that the Church exists as a local Eucharistic community. Its members are not individuals, but *persons in communion*. The Church is a *community/communion of persons*. This has implications for its structure and organization. By means of apostolic succession, the Church is a communion in time, and through synodality, it is a communion in space. The correct and balanced synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology transcends linear historicism and collectivist universalism, highlighting the local Church under the bishop and in the Eucharist as the plenary and catholic Church that encompasses all orders and ministries as charismatic events. Institution and charism are mutually composed precisely because of the synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology. This issue, according to John Zizioulas, had been resolved by the early Church when it confronted the pneumatocratic and enthusiastic movements of Gnosticism and Montanism. "In the Spirit, the institutional becomes charismatic and the charismatic becomes institutional," because, according to Irenaeus, '*Ubi enim Ecclesia, ibi et Spiritus Dei; et ubi Spiritus Dei, illic Ecclesia et omnis gratia.*'"[25] Every charismatic gift of the Spirit always serves the edification and perfection of the body of the Church, that is, the Eucharistic community under the bishop. The charisms of the Holy Spirit are not individual but build up and relate the members of the community. They do not oppose either the order or the institution of the Church, but rather highlight it as a charismatic event. Institution and hierarchy are not objective expressions of authority, order, and submission, but ways of expressing charisms and means of communion and freedom of persons. "In the same Spirit the very structure of the Church becomes the existential structure of each person."[26] The Church is led to the truth by the Holy Spirit, while the truth is Christ himself, who becomes

[24] Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 68.
[25] Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, III, 24, I, PG 7, 966C.
[26] Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 85.

the life and communion of God with people. In his study, John Zizioulas has already perceived the crucial importance of *iconic ontology* in the Eucharist, which is shaped by the experience of the eschaton through the Holy Spirit in the Church. Whenever the Church celebrates the Holy Eucharist, the "truth" of the eschaton is already depicted within history.[27]

Christ, through the Spirit, sacramentally becomes the communion of truth within history. However, the word of God is ultimately *truth* and *communion* with the truth that is Christ. This truth is not confined to autonomous linguistic and conceptual forms and expressions, to autonomous historical and cultural constructions. The formulations of the Councils aim at truth and communion within the community of the Church. Everything that exists in the Church is determined by the event of Pentecost and becomes a charismatic event of truth as communion. Thus, the ministry of the bishop is not an objective form of apostolic succession above the community, but a charism within the Eucharistic community, in which all the ministries, orders, and structures of the local Church are dynamically and by means of the epiclesis encompassed. The confession of faith is not simply a logical statement, but a matter of the whole of human existence, which through the Holy Spirit communicates and is sanctified by the organic link it has with the body of the Church, namely, the Eucharist.

For John Zizioulas, the Holy Spirit as an event of communion in the Church is an expression of the *eschaton within history*. Thus, the Church in its pneumatological dimension becomes a *relational* reality that embraces the world in order to transform it. Its Eucharistic worship does not oppose the profane world, but embraces it in order to sanctify it. It does not build the Kingdom within history, but recognizes that it cannot become a state of history. On the contrary, through the Spirit, it constantly brings the eschaton into history in order to change the world.

[27] Maximos the Confessor, *Scholia eccl. Hier.* 3.2, PG 4, 137D: "The things of the Old Testament are shadow (σκιὰ); those of the New Testament are image (εἰκών); truth is the state of the things of the future (ἀλήθεια δὲ ἡ τῶν μελλόντων κατάστασις)." Cf. *Amb.* 21 (PG 91, 1253CD), *Cap. theol.* I.90 (PG 90, 1120C).

Historical developments alienated the East and the West, and this separation was due to the obscuring of the common tradition of Christology and Pneumatology. We therefore need to return to this common tradition in order to see and address the various problems that have arisen in the life of the Church and constitute obstacles to ecclesiological dialogue between East and West. Zizioulas points out that contemporary Orthodox theology cannot address the so-called "Christomonism" of the West by promoting pneumatological tendencies in ecclesiology. "The Orthodox are thus becoming the 'specialists on Pneumatology' to whom people can turn in discussions of this subject."[28] However, if the synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology is applied not only to theology but also to the very existence of the Church, then this "pneumatomonism" will be fully assimilated and will no longer constitute a supposed particular privilege or trait of the Orthodox. This synthesis, as Zizioulas is quick to point out, is not a conceptual construct or a purely academic speculation, but is grounded in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, which reveals two fundamental movements in the life of the Church. The Holy Spirit leads to the unity of the Church and at the same time makes the Church an *ecstatic* and *relational* community that embraces the whole of creation. These two movements belong both to Christ and to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes the Church a structured community and at the same time a relational event, which realizes the catholicity of Christ, who is the recapitulation of all things. Thus, the Divine Economy is fulfilled through the Trinity, since everything ultimately refers through Christ and through the Spirit to the Father (1 Cor. 15:28). The recognition of this dual movement in the mystery of the Church reveals both the difficulties and the promising prospects for the path toward the restoration of Christian unity. Zizioulas concludes this first pneumatological contribution as a vision for unity and not as yet another theoretical framework. Acknowledging the various practical problems of this theological task, he points out that it is in the nature of Pneu-

[28] Zizioulas, "The Pneumatological Dimension of the Church", 89.

matology to free us from our self-sufficiency and leave the work of unity among divided Christians to God. However, our minimum task and responsibility is to obediently see the vision that the Holy Spirit sets before us. In this study, John Zizioulas laid down almost all the basic axes of his ecclesiological thought, which he would highlight and specialize in the evolution and development of his theological work.

Ten years after his first study on Pneumatology, he reverted to its ecclesiological dimension to demonstrate more vividly the synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology, exploring the consequences of two types of Pneumatology in biblical and early patristic sources.[29] According to the first type of Pneumatology, the Holy Spirit is given by Christ to complete his mission with the miraculous expansion of the Church in the world. Christology here becomes the source of Pneumatology. Pneumatology is dependent on Christology. "The Church is the people of God in the diaspora, on the way to the Kingdom."[30] The work of the Spirit follows the work of Christ. The Church as a body must obey and follow Christ as its head. At the level of ecclesiology, there is a distance between the head and the body.

At the same time, another type of Pneumatology appears in the New Testament. Here, the Holy Spirit is not only related to the mission and expansion of the Church, but also to its eschatological nature. If in the first type the Holy Spirit is given by the risen Christ, here the Holy Spirit leads to the resurrection of Christ. The Holy Spirit brings about not only the resurrection of Christ, but also his Nativity and everything related to his work. Christ is full of the Spirit. In this case, Pneumatology is the source of Christology. Christology is dependent on Pneumatology. The Church is not understood primarily as a dispersed people, but as a gathered people. Instead of diaspora and missionary work, the Church

[29] Jean Zizioulas, "Implications ecclésiologiques de deux types de pneumatologie," *Communio Sanctorum, Mélanges offerts à Jean-Jacques von Allmen* (Labor et Fides, 1981), 141–154; reprinted in Jean Zizioulas, *L'Église et ses institutions* (Cerf, 2011).

[30] Zizioulas, "Implications ecclésiologiques de deux types de pneumatologie," *L'Église et ses institutions* (Cerf, 2011), 30.

is seen here as an *eschatological gathering*, as will happen in the eschaton. According to this understanding, the Holy Spirit does not address certain individuals for the fulfillment of the mission, but forms a *community*, *creates communion*. The Holy Spirit does not follow Christ, but realizes the Christological event in history through the community of the Church. The communion of the Spirit also means the presence of Christ. The Church is holy because of its unbreakable relationship with its head, Christ. The early Church experienced this dimension of Pneumatology in the Eucharist, as the faithful came together *in one place* and at *one and the same time*, as an eschatological act and experience. The Eucharist constitutes a manifestation of the Church as an eschatological community and communion with the life of God, and for this reason, it became the basis for the organization of the Church.

These two types of Pneumatology coexist organically in the New Testament. Their divergence began gradually in the post-apostolic period and intensified with Tertullian and Augustine with the exaggeration of morality and human activity in history. The Holy Spirit was perceived as the power that inspires individuals and is transmitted as a special authority through ordination as a grace that produces specific results. The biblical eschatology of the early Church, under the influence of Greek thought, was understood either as historical actualization (ἐντελέχεια), as the natural conclusion of the linear course of time, or as *spiritualization* or *symbolism*, where its spiritual or symbolic meaning is sought under Platonic influence. Another possibility of eschatology was the *apocalyptic* dimension as a "prevention" of the eschaton of the Kingdom. This dimension is clearly subject to the Eucharist and, through patristic tradition, passes from Irenaeus to Athanasius and reaches Maximus the Confessor as an *iconic ontology* of the eschaton.

Nevertheless, things took a different turn. In the East, under the influence of Origenism, the perception prevailed that the Holy Spirit acts and is possessed by certain individuals, mainly in monastic circles, and at the same time, the Eucharist was experienced as the place par excellence where the Spirit acts. The Holy Eucharist, deeply influenced by eschatology, was experienced as a living

image of the Kingdom. In the West, Pneumatology was based on the notion of mission. This idea was crystallized in the *Filioque* and in the overemphasis on the historical element of God's revelation as the basis of theology and the Church. The East preferred a more *theophanic* and meta-historical view, in which the Holy Spirit is equal to the Son.

For Zizioulas, these differences between East and West mark the gradual disappearance of the eschatological perspective in both Pneumatology and ecclesiology. The Holy Spirit was disconnected from the future age and connected with the historical Christ who is prolonged through the Church. Eschatology was also abandoned by modern Orthodox academic theology. However, it remained in the Divine Liturgy. The existing problems in the theological dialogue between East and West are largely related to the different approaches to Pneumatology and eschatology. If theology and ecclesiology developed differently in the East and the West; if papal primacy and infallibility came to be understood within a hierarchical, pyramidal ecclesiology; if the universal Church takes precedence over the local Church; if history is overemphasized at the expense of the eschaton, the divine essence at the expense of the divine persons; if the work of the Paraclete is underestimated and rendered entirely subordinate to Christ; if the Eucharistic epiclesis is absent and the Eucharist is understood merely as a historical commemoration of the Last Supper; if institution is opposed to charism; and if grace is incompatible with nature—all of these issues are related to the way Pneumatology and eschatology are interpreted.[31] For this reason, it is necessary to synthesize Christology and Pneumatology in contemporary ecclesiological problems. Pneumatologically dependent Christology, which could influence ecclesiology beyond the missionary-

[31] In his work *L'Église de saint Augustin à l'époque modern* (Cerf, 1970), 276, Congar cites a characteristic passage taken from Thomas Aquinas's *Contra errores Graecorum* II, 32 (Leonine Edition: Rome 1967): "Those who deny the universal primacy of Christ's Vicar, the Pope of the Roman Church, commit a similar error when they hold that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son. Just as Christ institutes the Church by confirming it with His Spirit, likewise the Vicar of Christ, exercising his primacy, takes care that the Church remains obedient to Christ."

historical type, balances the Eucharistic-eschatological type and could facilitate contemporary inter-Christian dialogue. This synthesis is more necessary than ever for the Church to combine its historical engagement in the world with the eschatological vision of the Kingdom, which it must bear witness and offer to the world. History without an eschatological vision has no meaning: "The Church exists in the world for the redemption of history and not simply to follow the flow of history."[32]

When asked what an exact synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology could bring to ecclesiology, John Zizioulas replies that we must first answer two basic questions. The first is the question of priority, and the second is the question of content and the particular characteristics of both Christology and Pneumatology. Both approaches are found in the biblical and patristic tradition. The problem arose when they became separated and completely alienated from one another, when Christology dominated Pneumatology in the West. Reacting to the Christomonism of the West, modern Orthodox theology has not managed to overcome the temptation of an antagonistic stance toward the priority of Pneumatology in ecclesiology. Going beyond extremes and polemics, we simply need to re-establish the synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology as mutual and complementary.

Once the specific content of each is clarified, the synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology can be complete. Certainly, their content is integrated into the Trinitarian mode and the specific contribution of the divine Persons to the economy of salvation. The Holy Spirit brings the eschaton into history and creates the Eucharistic community of the Church. However, the Holy Spirit constitutes the Church from the beginning and does not "inspire" it afterwards. Consequently, Pneumatology is connected with the being of the Church. Subsequently, the eschatological dimension and communion are necessary elements for the formation of ecclesiology, which needs to balance its missionary and historical dimensions. If this theological framework is applied to ecclesiol-

[32] Jean Zizioulas, "Implications ecclésiologiques de deux types de pneumatologie," *L'Église et ses institutions*, 47.

ogy, then there are specific implications for the very structure and organization of the Church. If Pneumatology is constitutive of Christology and, at the same time, of ecclesiology, then the local Churches are as primary as the universal Church. Basically, there is reciprocity and not some priority between them, transcending the dilemma between the local and universal Church. This is precisely where the role of the synodal institution and synodality as a *communion* that unites the local Churches among themselves comes to the fore. *Communion* and *uniqueness* coincide in ecclesiology because of synodality. The 34th Apostolic Canon articulates precisely this ecclesiology of communion portraying the unity of the *many* in the *One* Christ—as a Church that is both one and manifold. The same is true at the level of the local Church, where the one represents the many and the many are expressed through various ministries. The one cannot exist without the many, and the many cannot exist without the one. This mutual dependence takes place in the Eucharistic community, which is an image of the eschaton as a *gathering together in one place* and at *one time*. Consequently, all ecclesial institutions are sacramental because they are placed in the dialectical relationship between history and eschatology. In this way, the Church is founded by Christ and at the same time *co*-founded by the Spirit. Pneumatology provides the ecclesiastical institution with the element of communion, inviting us to participate freely in the Church.

This perspective, notes Zizioulas, could provide the framework for transcending the dual ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, which did indeed take significant steps to recognize the catholicity of each local Church, the communion of local Churches, and the importance of the people of God, while continuing to recognize the pyramidal universal ecclesiology under the pope. However, how can ecclesiology that emphasizes the fullness and catholicity of each local Church be balanced with ecclesiology that considers catholicity to be a matter of universality under the bishop of Rome? Perhaps a Third Vatican Council[33] could complete the work of the Second Vatican Council, making

[33] John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 141.

the Church's being totally dependent on the ontology of communion, giving a constitutive and not a secondary role to Pneumatology in relation to Christology and ecclesiology.

Yves Congar and Pneumatology

Yves Congar's work in ecclesiology, which began in the 1930s, despite the freshness of the ressourcement movement and the laborious effort to renew Roman Catholic theology, devoted little attention to Pneumatology. The preoccupation not only of Congar, but also of other Roman Catholic theologians, with Pneumatology was minimal and restricted simply to the auxiliary role of the Holy Spirit in Christ's work of transmitting sanctification and grace to the Church. The collaboration and fruitful discussions with the Orthodox observers at the Second Vatican Council, and especially the critical observation that Pneumatology was almost absent from the draft texts, which were dominated by Christology, led to the subsequent introduction of relevant references to the Holy Spirit.

It seems that Congar took the criticism of the lack of Pneumatology seriously and, despite his initial reservations, ultimately accepted this observation as fruitful.[34] Indeed, the last creative decade of his life, shortly before his health declined, was devoted to the re-acceptance and promotion of Pneumatology in Roman Catholic theology and ecclesiology. In addition to his extensive writings on Pneumatology in the 1970s, in the early 1980s Congar published an important trilogy entitled *I Believe in the Holy Spirit,*[35] which culminated in another volume entitled *The Word and the Spirit.*[36] In this trilogy, he presents the biblical data on the work of

[34] See Pablo Arteaga, "How an Orthodox Accusation Became a Source of Inspiration for Congar's Pneumatology," *New Blackfriars* 100:1989 (2019): 526–537. Pablo Arteaga, "Yves Congar et l'Esprit Saint," *Communio* 271 (2020/5): 85–96. Cf. Yves Congar, "Actualité renouvelée du Saint-Esprit," *Lumen Vitæ* 27 (1972): 543–560, 550. Elizabeth Teresa Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

[35] Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 1–3, trans. David Smith (Seabury Press, G. Chapman, 1983).

[36] Yves Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, trans. David Smith (Harper & Row, 1986).

the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and the dogmatic teaching of the Western Church up to the Second Vatican Council, with frequent references to Orthodox Tradition and the Reformation. He then develops the critical issue of pneumatological ecclesiology and its implications for ecclesiastical institutions and Christian anthropology. Finally, he attempts to bring the theological traditions of the East and West into a fruitful dialogue, discussing and incorporating fruitfully and creatively the contribution of contemporary Orthodox theology. Many elements of John Zizioulas's contribution, and especially his proposal for the synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology, are utilized by Congar in this pneumatological ecclesiology.[37] In the epilogue to the trilogy, Congar develops three interrelated theological fields: Christological Pneumatology, Pneumatological anthropology, and Pneumatological ecclesiology. In a remarkable synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology, Congar overcomes the obstacles of a misinterpreted Christomonism and Filioquism, as well as an autonomous Pneumatology.

In his exposition, Yves Congar begins with the revelation of the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures, which is transmitted to man through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Scriptures testify in various ways that the Word and the Spirit come from and lead to God the Father. The Word and the Spirit work together to accomplish the work of God the Father. From *Genesis* to the *Apocalypse*, they are revealed as inseparably connected persons in the economy of salvation. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, who is Christ. Roman Catholic ecclesiology, as crystallized from the Tridentine period to the papal encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* (1943), construed the Church as a hierarchical community founded by Christ, who provided it with all the necessary

[37] See Stavros Yangazoglou, "Yves Congar and John Zizioulas on Pneumatology 'Nouvelle théologie' and 'neo-patristic synthesis' in dialogue," in Hallensleben, *Encounters. Dialogue and Theological Exchange.* See also our related article, "Yves Congar's Contribution to the Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue," Dr. Petros Vassiliades and Archbishop Lazar Puhalo (ed.), *For the Visible Unity of the One Church of Christ* (Cemes Publications, Synaxis Press, 2022), 191–212.

means for its mission until the end of history. The various anti-hierarchical reactions that have arisen from time to time, the Protestant Reformation, and the many pietistic, charismatic, and mystical currents and movements within the Roman Catholic Church showed a sharp contrast between institution and charism, hierarchy and spirit. Rudolf Sohm and Adolf Harnack systematized this contrast in ecclesiology. The Spirit as a factor of freedom and charisma is opposed to the institutional hierarchy of the Church, which was founded by Christ. Congar points out that there is no autonomy of the Spirit vis-à-vis the institutional and hierarchical structure of the Church, because according to biblical and patristic tradition, the Holy Spirit is inseparable from Christ and acts together with Christ. In the Church, there are no institutions, ministries, or charisms independent of the gift of the Holy Spirit. All ministries are charismatic and all are organically integrated into the order and institution of the Church; even the prophetic element is integrated and functions within the community and not separately or in isolation. The Church is structured by the synergy of Christ and the Spirit. Only an erroneous view of the Word hinders the work of the Spirit, who "blows where he wills" (John 3:8). However, Pentecost does not establish another Church apart from the Church that is the body of Christ in history. "The Word may be permeated with the Spirit, but the Spirit is also permeated with the Word. The two are inseparable. They both proceed from the Father. There is only one Church of God, which is at once the established Church and the Church of the future, and is built up by the 'two hands' of God! Those two hands are also what God uses to make men one with himself."[38]

The Holy Spirit co-establishes the Church with Christ, and the charisms are dynamic elements that continually build up the Church. "The Church appears therefore to come both from the Word in his incarnation and from the Spirit—or the glorified Lord—who is unceasingly active both in men and women and in sacramental or juridical structures. Truly, God works with his two

[38] Congar, T*he Word and the Spirit*, 71–72.

hands conjointly."[39] All the works of Christ the Messiah in the history of salvation are accomplished in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. Congar considers that the Spirit is in an indissoluble relationship with the Son and in the eternal Trinity, and refers positively to the Pneumatology of Gregory of Cyprus and Gregory Palamas on the eternal enlightenment of the Spirit from the Son. However, he acknowledges that the accusation of Christomonism is justified. Both he and other Roman Catholic theologians attempted to remedy this deficiency immediately after the Second Vatican Council. However, he believes that there were often one-sided aspects to this criticism, as well as to the exaggeration and autonomy of Pneumatology in ecclesiology. If there is a place where Christology and Pneumatology come together, it is the Eucharist, which is an institution established by Christ and an act of the grace of the Holy Spirit.[40] He acknowledges, in any event, that Roman Catholic theology has not sufficiently developed the cosmological and eschatological action of the Holy Spirit in creation as *Spiritus Creator*. Therefore, Congar concludes, the Church is founded mutually on the Word and the Spirit. Christology is pneumatological, and Pneumatology is defined Christologically. The Church is the body of Christ and at the same time the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Congar concludes this work with references to Nikos Nissiotis, always remembering the discussion they had during the Second Vatican Council, which turned him firmly toward Pneumatology. Combining Eastern and Western traditions, exploring Western theological tradition, and pointing out common paths and different emphases, Congar adopted the synthetic and clearly ecumenical approach of John Zizioulas. Congar accepts Zizioulas's distinction between historical and eschatological approaches to ec-

[39] *The Word and the Spirit*, 83.

[40] Yves Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, 116–117: "What is more, the one place where Christology and pneumatology are united is undoubtedly the liturgy. In its contents, those who perform it and its whole context, in its combination of word and activity, spirit and form and finally as a celebration on the part of Christ as the great High Priest and the coming of the Holy Spirit into our hearts, it is instituted by Christ and constitutes an event of grace."

clesiology, recognizing both its originality and interpretive depth. However, because he emphasizes the Church's ministry and apostolic mission in the world, he insists on the priority of history and the realities of the divine economy over the eschaton—of the Alpha over the Omega.[41] His own interpretive approach to ecclesiology is more linear and historical. For Congar, the Holy Spirit "establishes" the Church, remains within it and gives it life. Zizioulas does not reject this approach; he maintains that Christ establishes the Church, whereas the Holy Spirit constitutes it. Yet this presupposes that Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is an "eschatological being" who incorporates the many. In this sense, Zizioulas understands and accepts Congar's description of the Holy Spirit as a co-founder of the Church. The Holy Spirit does not merely animate or vivify the Church after the fact; rather, the Spirit constitutes the Church's reality from the very beginning, just as the Spirit constitutes the event of Christ. Zizioulas thus argues for the priority of the eschatological, maintaining that the Alpha of history derives from—and exists by virtue of—the Omega of the last things, namely, the Kingdom of God.[42]

This important work is ultimately his magnum opus, which showed, on the one hand, the gaps and problems of Pneumatology in Roman Catholic theology from the 13th to the 20th century, but also how contemporary Roman Catholic theology can reclaim the rich biblical, liturgical, and patristic heritage of the theology of the Holy Spirit in the contemporary ecumenical domain and in a fruitful encounter with the Orthodox Tradition of the Eastern Church,[43] as well as within the sphere of the Reformation. After Congar, the place and significance of Pneumatology in the Catholic Church changed, not only in theology, but also in its piety and spirituality. Zizioulas pointed out that, despite histori-

[41] See Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 2, 51.

[42] See Jean Zizioulas, *L'être ecclesial* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1981), 136–170. "Le Christ, l'Esprit et l'Église," *Prêtres Diocésains*, 1366, Mars-Avril 1999 (numéro spécial): 172. Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 15. See also *Remembering the Future*, 22–26.

[43] See Joseph Famerée, "Orthodox Influence on the Roman Catholic Theologian Yves Congar, OP, A Sketch," *St Vladimirs Theological Quarterly* 39 (1995): 409–416.

cal differences and problems, Pneumatology is a common heritage in the East and West.

After an extraordinary flourishing of Pneumatology in the West in recent years, the Orthodox cannot appear as the "experts in Pneumatology." Congar's interest in Pneumatology is a respectable and honorable response to Orthodox theologians' criticism of "Christomonism" in the Catholic Church, but also an important supplement to the ressourcement movement in contemporary Roman Catholic theology. Congar certainly does not fail to mention the eschatological and cosmological role of the Holy Spirit, though not in the existential, Eucharistic, and systematic manner of Zizioulas, but rather from a more historical perspective. Perhaps Zizioulas would have liked Congar's exceptional approach to place greater emphasis on its implications on ecclesiology and especially for ecclesiastical institutions. For Zizioulas, the Second Vatican Council paved the way for the recognition of the fullness and catholicity of the local Churches alongside the primacy of universality of the bishop of Rome. For this reason, he believed that overcoming this dual ecclesiology could be a task for the future. In any case, the spirit of Vatican II and the ecclesiology of communion, which he promoted both in practice and in theory, seems to have begun to be revitalized and to take on new forms and expressions in the Roman Catholic Church, primarily through the initiatives of the late Pope Francis regarding synodality at all levels of ecclesiastical life. None of this could have happened without the Second Vatican Council, without the renewal brought about by the "nouvelle théologie" movement, as represented by such eminent theologians as Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, and many others.

"The Eucharist Makes the Church." Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas

While the evidence for the mutual theological dialogue between John Zizioulas and Yves Congar is clear, the connection between the Orthodox theologian and Henri de Lubac was not direct.

This does not mean that Zizioulas, belonging to a younger generation, did not study and draw inspiration from the profoundly existential, dynamic and renovative genius of this important theologian of "ressourcement," who expressed the other center alongside Le Saulchoir of the "nouvelle théologie" in Lyon.

What might have attracted John Zizioulas's interest in Henri de Lubac's thought? Obviously, the work of theological renewal of "ressourcement," which included the sources and patristic texts of the East, along with the Christian sources of the West and met the goals of the "neo-patristic synthesis," as expressed by Fr. Georges Florovsky and other Orthodox theologians. With his work, which was enormous in both thematic development and size, de Lubac attempted to unlock the treasures of the tradition of the Church in order to bring them into an updated dialogue with contemporary man. "Just to imitate primitive Christianity or the Middle Ages will not be enough. We can revive the Fathers' all-embracing humanism and recover the spirit of their mystical exegesis only by an assimilation which is at the same time a transformation. For although the Church rests on eternal foundations, it is in a continual state of rebuilding, and since the Fathers' time it has undergone many changes in style; and without in any way considering ourselves better than our Fathers, what we in turn have to build for our own use must be built in our own style, that is, one that is adapted to our own needs and problems."[44] Renewal

[44] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism*: *A study of Dogma in Relation to the Corporate Destiny of Mankind* (Sheed and Ward, 1958), 172. Certainly, this was not some kind of innovation or "new theology," as this movement to return to the forgotten tradition was ironically called by the scholastic theology of the time. De Lubac himself, looking back on his work, noted characteristically: "Without pretending to open up new avenues of thought, I have rather sought, without any archaism, to make known some of the great common sources of Catholic tradition. I wanted to make it loved and to show its ever-abiding fruitfulness. Any such task required a process of reading across the centuries rather than critical application at definite points. It excluded too privileged an attachment to any particular school, system or period." Henri de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits* (Culture et Vérité, 1989). "Epilogue to Part Two: The Texture of a Work and its Unity," *Theology in History*, trans. Anne Englund Nash (Ignatius Press 1996), 599. See also Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church* (Communio Books 1993), 143. See Hans Urs von Balthasar's excellent and insightful presentation of de Lubac's work in his book, *The Theology of*

is the modernization and inspired revival of tradition in our times. Zizioulas also attempted to achieve this in the context of his "neo-patristic synthesis" and Eucharistic ecclesiology. His entire work, which revolves around the Eucharistic axis of ecclesiology and eschatology and the theological and anthropological significance of the person and communion, is an inspired apperception and fruitful transfer of the tradition of the Greek Fathers to the contemporary life of the Church and of humanity. At the same time, de Lubac's intensely existential view of the Christian faith amid the sufferings of 20th-century Europe, when atheism, wars, and various extreme and utopian ideologies seemed to attract the masses, did not leave Zizioulas unaffected.

In his dialogue with modernity, de Lubac draws inspiration not only from the Western Christian and humanist tradition, but also from the Fathers of the East and from Dostoevsky and Nikolai Berdyaev. The human person is connected to the personal God, and their relationship culminates at the Omega point, as his friend Teilhard de Chardin had said. De Lubac developed a theology for modern man that went beyond the rigidity and narrowness of the scholarly and formal Roman Catholic theology of his time, which was responsible for "the removal of Western man from his Christian origins."[45] The exiles, prohibitions, and bitter experiences endured by this brilliant and charismatic theologian did not diminish either his strength or his work, which was recognized in the late 1950s on the way to the Second Vatican Council, to which he was a prominent advisor alongside his companion and friend Yves Congar.

John Zizioulas, belonging to the next generation, was inspired in his work both by the ressourcement movement and by the corresponding and parallel movement of the "neo-patristic synthesis." These two currents shared many common elements of early Christian heritage and tradition, such as the central importance

Henri de Lubac: An Overview (Ignatius Press, 1991).

[45] Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée* (Éd. Spes [Le Cer], 1944), 5. For de Lubac's intellectual and theological journey, see Aidan Nichols, "Henri de Lubac: Panorama and Proposal," *New Blackfriars* 93:1043 (2012): 3–33.

of the Eucharist in the mystery of the Church, Christ as a relational being par excellence in the mystical body of the Church, etc. Both Eucharistic ecclesiology and the theology of the person constitute a contemporary witness of Orthodox theology to the great problems of the modern age. Particularly with regard to the Eucharist as the authentic basis for a new view of ecclesiology, beyond the scholastic, juridical and polemical theology of the Counter-Reformation, which also influenced Orthodox academic theology, John Zizioulas, despite the continuities and discontinuities of the two theological traditions, recognized many common points between East and West in the work of the representatives of ressourcement.

There is a fundamental point where John Zizioulas's Eucharistic ecclesiology converges and engages fruitfully with the thought of Henri de Lubac. "The Church makes the Eucharist, but the Eucharist also makes the Church."[46] This view could be taken as Zizioulas's position or even as a patristic quotation.[47] However, it belongs to Henri de Lubac, for whom there is a complementary relationship between the Church as an institution in which the Eucharist is celebrated and the Church as the body of Christ, which is constituted by the mystical body of the Eucharist. Emphasizing the link between the Eucharist and the Church, especially with regard to the relationship between the Eucharistic body and the ecclesial body, de Lubac drew mainly on the theological thought of Augustine, but also on the Fathers of the early Church (Irenaeus, Origen, Ambrose). De Lubac attributed clear Eucharistic significance to Augustine's account of the voice of the Word: "You will not change me into yourself, as you do the food of your flesh, but you will be changed into me / *nec tu me in te mutabis sicut cibum carnis tuae, sed tu mutaberis in me*."[48] For Augustine, con-

[46] Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum, The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame Press, 2006), 104, 292–293, *The Splendour of the Church* (Sheed and Ward, 1956), 92, 106, 133. See Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (T.&T. Clark, 1993), 75–97, 98–120.

[47] See Bernard Sesboüé, "Eucharistie : deux générations de travaux," *Etudes* 355 (1981): 109–115, 101.

[48] Augustine, *Confessions* 7, 10.

stant participation in the Eucharist constitutes constant incorporation into the Church.[49]

The Eucharist as the mystical body of Christ has intense ecclesiological significance, and the Church as the historical body of Christ has an inherently Eucharistic character. In *Corpus Mysticum*, de Lubac explains that in the early Church, sacramental and ecclesial communion were considered inseparable.[50] For the Fathers, "sacramental communion (communion in the body and blood) is always at the same time an ecclesial communion (communion within the Church, of the Church, for the Church)."[51] The Eucharist creates the Church, as the faithful become what they eat. The Eucharist "corresponds to the Church as cause to effect, as means to end, as sign to reality."[52] While the Church produces the Eucharist through its priests, the Eucharist, in a very real sense, produces the Church, insofar as ecclesial communion is the result of sacramental communion.

De Lubac insisted on the link between sacramental and ecclesial communion, considering that this link had been lost in theology due to rationalism and neo-scholasticism. The focus simply moved to whether the Eucharist is really or symbolically the body of Christ. De Lubac clearly considers the Eucharist to be a real presence, but he points out that the Eucharist concerns the historical, sacramental, and ecclesial nature of the body of Christ. The sacraments of the Church, as the real presence of Christ, are also the means of unity within the Church. Christ is given to the faithful through the Eucharist. Without the sacramental body, the ecclesial body would not exist. The importance of the sacraments,

[49] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 99–100.

[50] Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum,* 13–36. See Hans Boersma, "Sacramental Ontology: Nature and the Supernatural in the Ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac," *New Blackfriars* 88: 1015 (2007): 242–273. Dennis M. Doyle, "Henri de Lubac and the Roots of Communion Ecclesiology," *Theological Studies* 60 (1999): 209–227. Alexander J. D. Irving, "The Eucharist and the Church in the Thought of Henri De Lubac and Rowan Williams: Sacramental Ecclesiology and the Place of the Church in the World," *Anglican Theological Review* 100.2 (2018): 267–289.

[51] Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 21.

[52] Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 13.

and especially of the Eucharist, is absolutely clear for ecclesiology. The Eucharist is par excellence "the sacrament of unity"[53]; it is "a union with Christ and at the same time a union of all."[54] According to de Lubac, the Church is realized in "the very Act of the Eucharistic sacrifice itself,"[55] which is both type and reality, and through the power of invocation. The pneumatological factor in the Eucharist is clear when de Lubac points out that "Our churches are the 'upper room' where not only is the Last Supper renewed but Pentecost also."[56]

This unity of the Church as the body of Christ does not abolish the difference between its members; the personal element is not abolished by the universal. In the body of the incarnate Word, the unity of distinct human beings with God is realized. According to de Lubac, "there is no real unity without persisting difference."[57] We need "a real perception that grasps at a glance, beyond any spatial intuition, the bond between the personal and the universal."[58] The link between unity and diversity was achieved through the work of Christ. That is why "A fully realized, that is, a perfectly universalized, person without Christ is an impossibility."[59] Indeed, "Christ, by completing humanity in himself, at the same time made us all complete—but in God ... we are fully persons only within the Person of the Son, through whom and with whom we share in the circumincession of the Trinity."[60]

Regarding the ecclesiological presuppositions of the Eucharist, Zizioulas acknowledges his indebtedness to the work of de Lubac and Congar in highlighting the progressive loss of the connection between the Church and the Eucharist, particularly from the 13th century onward. In scholastic thought, the emergence of a sacramental theology independent of Christology and ecclesiol-

[53] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 88–89.
[54] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 92.
[55] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 102.
[56] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 110–111.
[57] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 341,
[58] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 341.
[59] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 342.
[60] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 342.

ogy reduced the Eucharist to one sacrament among many and transformed it into a "means of grace," rather than an expression of the entire body of the Church. Thus, the Eucharist came to be regarded as a sacrament produced by the Church, rather than as a sacrament that constitutes the very being of the Church. This view also influenced modern Orthodox theology.

In engaging de Lubac's thesis on the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist, Zizioulas makes a creative contribution by illuminating the question through the organic relationship between Christology and Pneumatology, or between history and eschatology. If the Church, as the Body of Christ, exists first and foremost as an institutionalized historical entity and subsequently produces "means of grace," such as the Eucharist, then the Church indeed makes the Eucharist. In this framework, Christ comes first, followed by the Spirit, and then by the Church, which produces the Eucharist. For Zizioulas, however, the deepest roots of the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist lie in the organic relationship between Christology and Pneumatology. When Christ is united with the Holy Spirit, the one Christ becomes a communion that incorporates the many. The Body of Christ is this eschatological communion of the many: the "communion of saints," the ecclesial community. Consequently, from an eschatological perspective, the ecclesiological presuppositions of the Eucharist are found within the Eucharist itself. The gathering of God's people in one place for this purpose—including all the orders and charisms of the community, centered on the bishop—constitutes the Eucharist's eschatological vision and manifests the mystery of the Church. These ecclesiological conditions transcend any dilemma concerning priority between the Church and the Eucharist.[61]

For de Lubac, the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist arises from a causal and complementary connection. The Church produces the Eucharist, and, conversely, the Eucharist gives rise to the existence and development of the Church

[61] Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 61–74.

through their mutual causal interaction. The Church is thus an institution in which the Eucharist takes place within a reciprocal causal relationship. For Zizioulas, by contrast, the pneumatological and eschatological constitution of the mystery of Christ and the Church leads—under certain conditions—to the full identity of the Church and the Eucharist, while avoiding both hierarchical and the charismatic approaches to ecclesiology. His thesis is that "the Church constitutes the Eucharist while being constituted by it. Church and Eucharist are interdependent; they coincide, and are even in some sense identical."[62]

As Paul McPartlan[63] has shown brilliantly and in detail, although the two theologians come from two different theological mindsets and traditions, their thinking converges and dialogues. Both develop their ecclesiological thought in common areas, such as the emphatically existential character of their theological thought, the attempt to express the tradition of the Church in a contemporary way, their intense anthropological interest, the mutual interpenetration of Eucharist and ecclesiology, the importance of catholicity in the Church and humanity, etc. Despite the convergence on many points, their thinking also shows some significant differences. In his theology of the Eucharist and the Church, John Zizioulas appears to base his thinking on eschatology in the *apocalyptic* sense. Henri de Lubac clearly has an eschatological view, but his emphasis is on *history* and the *mission* of the Church in the world. In our opinion, despite such pneumatological accents, the Spirit remains structurally secondary in his ecclesiology. Let us not forget that de Lubac's major works date back to the interwar period and extend roughly to the Second Vatican Council. De Lubac follows what Zizioulas called the first type of Pneumatology, where the historical-Christological perspective prevails, according to which the Church is the people of God in dispersion on their way to the Kingdom. The work of the Spirit follows the work of Christ. The Church as a body obeys and

[62] *The One and the Many*, 68.

[63] Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist makes the Church, Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (T.&T. Clark, 1993).

follows Christ as its head. At the level of ecclesiology, there is a distance between the head and the body. Christ unites the many in his body, but mainly as the individual Christ who precedes and gradually incorporates them. Christ as an *ecstatic and collective personality*[64] in Zizioulas's theology is already the Christ of the eschaton and the Kingdom. In de Lubac's Eucharistic view, man dominates and the world and creation as a whole receives comparatively little attention. In his time, the ecological problem had not yet become acute. In any case, the Eucharist seems to concern not the rest of creation, but only man. This gives some priority to man's moral and social action within history and culture. For Zizioulas, only the Eucharist as an act and a manner of life can change not only man, but also the whole world.

The ecclesiology of communion based on the Eucharist as the mystical body of Christ exists in both theologians with different emphases. Both recognize the importance of mission, which belongs to the nature of the Church. For de Lubac, mission is addressed to humanity, while for Zizioulas it is addressed to the whole of creation. For de Lubac, every Christian proclaims the Gospel to others as a missionary act, as a participation in the gift of divine life. For Zizioulas, the celebration of the Eucharist is perhaps more important than the preaching of the word of God. The Eucharist involves not only rational man, but also the whole of creation, and becomes the nucleus of the ultimate destiny of the world. Man is the priest of creation and Christ is the "first-born" of creation. The Eucharist recapitulates creation in the one body of Christ. The Eucharist is a reference of creation to God. Immediately after his dissertation, Zizioulas wrote the essay "The Eucharistic Vision of the World and Contemporary Man" (1966)[65] as its conclusion. The word of God is addressed to man and, through man, to creation, which refers to God. He believes

[64] On this issue, see Amphilochios Miltos, "La notion biblique de «personnalité corporative», De l'exégèse biblique à la théologie dogmatique," *Θεολογία* 85.2 (2014): 147–175.

[65] "Η εὐχαριστιακὴ θεώρηση τοῦ κόσμου καὶ ὁ σύγχρονος ἄνθρωπος", *Χριστιανικόν Συμπόσιον* (Ἀθήνα 1967): 183–190; in French: "La vision eucharistique du monde et l'homme contemporain", *Contacts* 19 (1967), 83-92.

that the dichotomy between man and nature in the West is due to the importance Augustine attached to the concept of psychological time, distinguishing between man's "internal" time and the "external" time of the world, a perception that he passed on to modernity.[66] Zizioulas clearly places more emphasis on the altar than on the ambo, even though as a bishop he preached at every Divine Liturgy.[67] According to de Lubac, God calls every human being to the same supernatural end, which is founded on the unity of humanity. Zizioulas's broader perspective considers that the salvation of man requires the salvation of the whole of creation, because man is a *microcosm*. Christ, as the new Adam, is not an individual, but a *corporate personality* that includes the *many*. This is realized in the Eucharist. All ancient Eucharistic references begin with *thanksgiving* first for the gift of creation and then for redemption in Christ.

De Lubac focuses on the moral and ontological obstacles to the salvation of the human person. Zizioulas observes that the Christian West has not been freed from the Pelagian controversy over whether man participates decisively in his own salvation. Zizioulas accepts that the Eucharist is not merely a ritual, but has clear social and practical implications for people's lives and morals. However, as Paul McPartlan observes, for de Lubac as for Congar, *Omega comes from Alpha*. Zizioulas, on the contrary, believes that *Alpha comes from Omega*.[68] This is a difference in theological mentality between the Eastern and Western traditions. For Zizioulas, eschatology depends on Christology, making Christ a *corporate-relational personality*. The one Christ becomes "many." Christ is not an individual being who gradually incorporates individuals into himself, but is a corporate personality from the outset

[66] *Remembering the Future*, 254.

[67] Metropolitan John of Pergamon, *Receive One Another: 101 Sermons*, ed. Maxim Vasiljević (St. Sebastian Press, 2023).

[68] See Maximus Confessor, *Ad Thalassium* 59, PG 72, 616: «οὐκ ἔτι γὰρ μετὰ τὴν παράβασιν δείκνυται τὸ τέλος ἐκ τῆς ἀρχῆς, ἀλλ' ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐκ τοῦ τέλους." For Congar, the Holy Spirit, as co-founder of the Church, unites the Alpha with the Omega, attesting to the continuity of the Church's apostolic mission throughout history as it moves toward the end of time. See Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 2, 33–51.

and is experienced empirically in ever-new Eucharistic communities.

Zizioulas makes the elements of *memory* and *reception* inseparable from the Eucharist. De Lubac, insofar as he maintains a distinction between Christ and the Church, appears unable to incorporate these aspects fully, despite his intention to do so. Christ, inseparable from the Church, as he will be in the future of the Kingdom, is already experienced in the Eucharist. Perhaps a pneumatologically-dependent ecclesiology could be the solution to the problem, so that Christ through the Spirit is considered inseparable from the Church. This is not something that will happen only in the eschaton, but something that is already happening, albeit not fully, in the Eucharistic experience of the Church. This eschatological experience of the Eucharist is crucial to the identity of the Church. "The Church does not draw her identity from what she is but from what she will be ... She is what she is by becoming again and again what she will be."[69]

John Zizioulas, with his contribution to Pneumatology and eschatology, seems to cover and fill in the gaps and limitations that appear in the Western theological tradition, realizing more fully the ecclesiological goals of Henri de Lubac himself. Thus, if the Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church, these ecclesiological principles need to be mutually and inseparably unified and not constitute obstacles to de Lubac's mystical ecclesiological synthesis. In this way, Paul McPartlan considers that these two brilliant theologians dialogue and complement each other in their ecclesiological approaches. He even points out that de Lubac's initial contribution, by excavating the tradition of the Church, opened up new avenues and inspired Zizioulas to proceed to a more complete theological synthesis, bringing in the particular elements of the Orthodox tradition of the Church. McPartlan concludes his detailed exploration of the convergences and divergences between the two theologians with

[69] Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 138, 144.

Zizioulas' reference to Fr. Georges Florovsky, for whom "the authentic catholicity of the Church must include both the West and the East."[70]

Conclusion

The encounter between John Zizioulas and the two leading figures of ressourcement shows that the "neo-patristic synthesis" and the "nouvelle théologie" were not parallel monologues but a genuine exchange. With Congar, Zizioulas shared the conviction that Christology and Pneumatology cannot be separated. With de Lubac, he shared the recovery of the inseparable bond between the Eucharist and the Church. In both cases, however, the decisive difference lies in the direction of theological thought.

For Congar and de Lubac, Omega proceeds from Alpha: the Church is established in history and moves toward the Kingdom through its mission. For Zizioulas, Alpha proceeds from Omega: the Spirit constitutes the Church from the beginning by bringing the eschaton into history, so that the Church draws its identity from what it will be.

Herein lies his distinctive contribution. Because the Spirit constitutes the Church rather than merely animating it, several consequences follow: Church and Eucharist coincide rather than cause one another; the local Church is as primary as the universal; institution and charism are mutually composed; the Eucharist embraces not only humanity but the whole of creation.

The question Zizioulas put to the Second Vatican Council, how the catholicity of the local Church can be reconciled with a universalist ecclesiology, remains open. The synodal initiatives of recent years show that it has lost none of its urgency. In this sense, the dialogue among these theologians is not concluded. It belongs to the future that, for Zizioulas, already shapes the present.

[70] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 26.

References

Arteaga, Pablo. "How an Orthodox Accusation Became a Source of Inspiration for Congar's Pneumatology." *New Blackfriars* 100:1989 (2019): 526–537.

Arteaga, Pablo. "Yves Congar et l'Esprit Saint." *Communio* 271 (2020/5): 85–96.

Balthasar, Hans Urs von. *The Theology of Henri de Lubac, An Overview*. Ignatius Press, 1991.

Bobrinskoy, Boris. *The Mystery of the Trinity: Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*. Translated by Anthony P. Gythiel. St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999.

Boersma, Hans. "Sacramental Ontology: Nature and the Supernatural in the Ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac." *New Blackfriars* 88:1015 (2007): 242–273.

Chéno, Rémi. "Eschatologie et communion: les conséquences d'une constitution pneumatologique de l'ecclésiologie selon J. Zizioulas." *Istina* 51 (2006): 375–412.

Congar, Yves. *The Word and the Spirit*. Translated by David Smith. Harper & Row, 1986.

Congar, Yves. *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. Vol. 1–3. Translated by David Smith. Seabury Press, G. Chapman, 1983.

Congar, Yves. "Bulletin d'ecclésiologie." *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 66 (1982): 87–119.

Congar, Yves. "Actualité d'une pneumatologie." *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 23 (1973): 121–132.

Congar, Yves. "Actualité renouvelée du Saint-Esprit." *Lumen Vitæ* 27 (1972): 543–560.

Congar, Yves. *L'Église de saint Augustin à l'époque moderne*. Histoire des dogmes III/3. Cerf, 1970.

Congar, Yves. "Pneumatologie ou 'Christomonisme' dans la tradition latine?" *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 45 (1969): 394–416.

Congar, Yves. *Sainte Église. Études et approches ecclésiologiques*. Collection Unam Sanctam, 41. Editions du Cerf, 1963.

Congar, Yves. *The Mystery of the Church*. Translated by A. V. Littledale. Helicon Press, 1960.

De Lubac, Henri. "Epilogue to Part Two: The Texture of a Work and its Unity." In *Theology in History*, translated by Anne Englund Nash. Ignatius Press, 1996.

De Lubac, Henri. *At the Service of the Church*. Communio Books, 1993.

De Lubac, Henri. *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits*. Culture et Vérité, 1989.

De Lubac, Henri. *Catholicism, A study of Dogma in relation to the Corporate Destiny of Mankind*. Sheed and Ward, 1958.

De Lubac, Henri. *The Splendour of the Church*. Sheed and Ward, 1956.

De Lubac, Henri. *Corpus Mysticum, L'eucharistie et l'Église au Moyen âge. Étude historique*. Aubier, 1949.

De Lubac, Henri. *Le drame de l'humanisme athée*. Éd. Spes (Le Cerf), 1944.

De Lubac, Henri. *Catholicisme. Les aspects sociaux du dogme*. Collection Unam Sanctam, 3. Édition du Cerf, 1938.

Doyle, Dennis M. "Henri de Lubac and the Roots of Communion Ecclesiology." *Theological Studies* 60 (1999): 209–227.

Famerée, Joseph. "Orthodox Influence on the Roman Catholic Theologian Yves Congar, OP, A Sketch." *St Vladimirs Theological Quarterly* 39 (1995): 409–416.

Florovsky, Georges. "Christ and His Church-Suggestions and Comments." *1054–1954 Église et les églises: Neuf Siècles de douloureuse Séparation entre l'Orient et l'Occident*, Etudes et travaux offerts à Dom Lambert Beauduin, 2 vols. Chevetogne (1955):159–170.

Florovsky, Georges. "The Legacy and the Task of Orthodox Theology." *Anglican Theological Review* 31:2 (1949): 65–71.

Florovsky, Georges. "Le Corps du Christ vivant: Une interprétation orthodoxe de l'Église." *La Sainte Église universelle: Confrontation œcuménique.* Delachaux, 1948.

Flynn, Gabriel, Paul D. Murray, and Patricia Kelly, eds. *Ressourcement, A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

Groppe, Elizabeth Teresa. *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

Irving, Alexander J. D. "The Eucharist and the Church in the Thought of Henri De Lubac and Rowan Williams: Sacramental Ecclesiology and the Place of the Church in the World." *Anglican Theological Review* 100.2 (2018): 267–289.

McPartlan, Paul. *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*. T.&T. Clark, 1993.

Miltos, Amphilochios. "La notion biblique de «personnalité corporative», De l'exégèse biblique à la théologie dogmatique." *Theologia* 85.2 (2014): 147–175.

Nichols, Aidan. "Henri de Lubac: Panorama and Proposal." *New Blackfriars* 93:1043 (2012): 3–33.

Nissiotis, Nikos A. "Pneumatologie Orthodoxe." In *Le Saint-Esprit,* edited by Franz Leenhardt, et al. Labor et Fides, 1963.

Rigal, Jean. "Trois approches de l'ecclésiologie de communion: Congar, Zizioulas, Moltmann." *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 120:4 (1998): 605–619.

Sesboüé, Bernard. "Eucharistie: deux générations de travaux." *Etudes* 355 (1981): 109–115.

Skira, Jaroslav Z. "Breathing with Two Lungs: The Church in Yves Congar and John Zizioulas." In *In God's Hands,* edited by Jaroslav Z. Skira and Michael S. Attridge. Leuven University Press, 2006.

Yangazoglou, Stavros. "Yves Congar and John Zizioulas on Pneumatology, 'Nouvelle théologie' and 'neo-patristic synthesis' in dialogue." *Encounters Dialogue & Theological Exchange between Catholic Nouvelle Théologie & Modern Orthodoxy*. International Conference / Fribourg, August 29–31, 2024 (to be published).

Yangazoglou, Stavros. "Yves Congar's Contribution to the Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue." In *For the Visible Unity of the One Church of Christ,* edited by Petros Vassiliades and Archbishop Lazar Puhalo. Cemes Publications, Synaxis Press, 2022.

Yangazoglou, Stavros. *Communion in Theosis: The Synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology in the Work of Saint Gregory Palamas* (Sebastian Press, forthcoming)

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. *Remembering the Future, Toward an Eschatological Ontology*. Edited by Maxim Vasiljević. St. Sebastian Press, 2023.

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. *L'être ecclésial* (Labor et Fides, 1981)

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. "Le Christ, l'Esprit et l'Église," *Prêtres Diocésains* 1366 (1999)

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. *Receive One Another: 101 Sermons*. Edited by Maxim Vasiljević. St. Sebastian Press, 2023.

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. *Erga A, Ekklēsiologika meletēmata*. Athens: Domos, 2016.

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today*. St. Sebastian Press, 2010.

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries*. Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001.

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. "The Mystery of the Church in the Orthodox Tradition" (with additional final paragraphs on the cosmic dimension of the Church). *One in Christ* 24 (1988).

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. *Being as Communion, Studies in Personhood and the Church*. St Vladimir's Seminary Press and Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985.

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. "Implications ecclésiologiques de deux types de pneumatologie." *Communio Sanctorum, Mélanges offerts à Jean-Jacques von Allmen*. Labor et Fides (1981): 141–154; reprinted in Jean Zizioulas, *L'Église et ses institutions.* Cerf, 2011.

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. "Cristologia, pneumatologia e istituzioni ecclesiastiche: un punto di vita ortodosso." *Cristianesimo nella storia* 2 (1981): 111–127.

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. "The Pneumatological Dimension of the Church." *Communio* 1:2 (1974): 142–158.

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. "L'eucharistie: quelques aspects bibliques." In *L'Eucharistie* (Eglises en dialogue 12), edited by Jean Zizioulas, J.R. Tillard and J. Allmen. Mame (1970): 11–74.

Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon John. *Hē henotēs tēs Ekklēsias en tē Theia Eucharistia kai tō episkopō kata tous treis prōtous aiōnas*, Athens 1965.

OmegAlpha II:2 Autumn 2026, 127–132
ISSN 3067-1329 (Print), ISSN 3067-1337 (Online)
https://doi.org/10.63394/e279xn02
Book Review
Published: 2026-11-10

What Is Man? Theology Encountering Biology and the Physical Sciences by John D. Zizioulas. Edited by Maxim Vasiljević. Alhambra, California: Sebastian Press, 2026. xv + 158 pp. ISBN 978-1-964233-42-0.

This volume collects lectures and essays by Metropolitan John, including previously unpublished material, with publication dates spanning 1997–2026. These texts address the problems of the modern human condition in a world deeply influenced by scientific culture and technology. A distinctive feature of the volume is that the fundamental ideas of Christian anthropology and personhood developed by Metropolitan John, and presented in now-classic theological works such as *Being as Communion* and *Communion and Otherness*, are placed within the context of the dialogue between theology and modern science, particularly biology, psychology, ecology, and physics, as well as contemporary developments in computer technology and artificial intelligence.

The central concern throughout these discussions is the human being, since the tensions and misunderstandings between modern science and traditional theology begin and end with the single articulating agent of both science and theology: the human person. Methodologically, therefore, the problems discussed in this volume ultimately converge upon the central question underlying both theological and scientific accounts of the world: the human being and the ambivalence of the human condition, situated between an openness to infinity and the capacity for an experience of God, on the one hand, and existence as a physical and biological organism confined within the conditions of earthly nature, on the other.

© 2026 The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits use, distribution, reproduction, and adaptation in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Metropolitan John traces the historical drama of the divergence between theological and scientific articulations of the world to a gradual separation of knowledge from wisdom, knowledge of the world from love for it, the mastery of nature from humility as an epistemological condition of science (5), and the objectification of individual natural phenomena from their participation in an implicate order associated with harmony and design.

Metropolitan John argues that these tensions arise from a deficiency in modern anthropology, which has departed from the understanding formulated within Christian theology and, in particular, Greek patristic thought. Characteristically, he develops this position by invoking the Fathers' understanding of the human being as a unity of body and soul, constituted through relationality to God and to the rest of creation. This also implies a distinctive role for the body, which mediates this relationality through its consubstantiality with the physical constituents of the universe. At the same time, the distinctive feature of the human being created in the image of God is freedom and the capacity to formulate the purposes of life and, through them, to discern purposes in nature.

Freedom, however, creates the dangerous possibility of turning against nature by subordinating it to human needs shaped by a loss of relationality to the other and by a failure to remember humanity's dependence upon God. What is endangered here is not humanity alone but the whole of nature. As Metropolitan John clearly states, "Even in the kingdom of God the human being can only be conceived as part of the survival of the physical world" (23–24). The physical world, the universe, planet Earth, and earthly nature thus constitute necessary conditions for the very possibility of being human, including the distinctive human experience of God and the possibility of deification itself (25). Earthly nature thereby acquires a sacramental dimension, elevating any abuse or neglect of nature to the level of sin (54). Humanity's responsibility to care for nature consequently becomes integral to the fulfilment of its theological vocation.

Modern humanity is empirically united by scientific advancement and technology. In this respect, science and technology become ecumenical issues for dialogue among religions because, under all possible scenarios, a common "anthropology becomes ... the central focus of ecumenism in our time" (27). Metropolitan John repeatedly returns to patristic anthropology as a "golden" standard for defining the human being and for preserving the distinctive uniqueness of human nature within creation. His discussion encompasses theological, socio-historical, cosmological, eschatological, and Christological perspectives. Without a proper understanding of humanity, one cannot adequately understand either the meaning of human actions or the consequences of human knowledge.

The central issue here concerns the underlying cause of the present state of sin, understood as humanity's inability to overcome decay and mortality (34). Metropolitan John maintains that even moral perfection cannot deliver humanity from the state of sin. Consequently, departures from patristic anthropology, whether grounded in modern psychology or in technological definitions of the human being, remain implicated in the fundamental condition of sin understood in terms of mortality.

Metropolitan John associates this impoverishment of the human condition with an insufficient appreciation of patristic insight into humanity. Yet such insight cannot simply be appropriated literally. A contemporary hermeneutics of patristic thought is required if it is to be situated meaningfully within present socio-political, scientific, and technological contexts. Here, patristic ideas concerning the relationality of humanity to God, other human beings, and nature become particularly important, since they can be brought into dialogue with contemporary scientific developments in comparative biology and anthropic cosmology. Christology is especially significant in this respect, insofar as the very fact of the incarnation of God is inseparable from earthly and cosmic conditions.

A particularly important topic in the volume is bioethics, especially questions arising from genetic engineering, reproductive

technologies, and cross-species modification, which threaten "a disappearance of the fundamental distinction between person and nature." Metropolitan John identifies several conditions necessary for safeguarding personhood (77), insisting that "what is left now to the Church is to influence bioethical decisions as much as she can. In so doing she has to compromise the ideal with the feasible, her view of the human person with the actual trends of science" (78).

Another subject that occupied Metropolitan John for many years, and which was repeatedly addressed in his contributions to ecological forums, is the environmental crisis and the preservation of nature for the sake of fulfilling the vocation theologically entrusted to humanity. The degradation of the natural conditions of human existence and the real possibility of extinction—the disappearance of *Homo sapiens*—are linked to the domination of technology. This is not merely a practical problem. According to Metropolitan John, it is an anthropological and theological problem, manifesting a profound crisis of civilization that has defined humanity apart from God, apart from nature, and apart from communion (142). If technology is not situated within the relational character of human existence, it ceases to serve humanity; instead, humanity becomes enslaved to it.

With regard to modern information technology, the development of the internet, and artificial intelligence, the principal problem identified by Metropolitan John is the threat of losing living communion within human society. One particularly original aspect of his analysis is the danger of depriving human beings of a future because information concerning previous states and periods of their lives can be preserved indefinitely within digital networks, thereby enslaving them to memory (143). If memory becomes permanent and inescapable, it can effectively displace communion, profoundly altering the human condition by distorting the meaning and possibility of freedom directed towards transfiguration.

One might add that the development of artificial intelligence has already intensified this difficulty for theology. Knowledge ac-

quired through an individualistic engagement with AI agents, isolated from genuine communion, risks substituting an apparent access to something radically new for genuine creativity. Metropolitan John reiterates his earlier point that the wisdom of communion and love can be lost within such a vision of the world. Once again, what is at stake is the human condition itself and humanity's capacity to fulfil its primary vocation of deification and the transfiguration of nature.

Assessed within the context of the continuing dialogue between theology and science, the book makes a significant contribution by introducing distinctive Eastern Orthodox dimensions into this dialogue. At the same time, it raises several questions concerning the modern human condition that invite further development.

One such question concerns bioethical problems surrounding birth control and genetic intervention in the human condition. These cannot be separated from the problem of planetary population and the finitude of the material resources required to sustain more than eight billion embodied human beings. The bioethical question therefore becomes inseparable from an ecological one: the need to maintain a viable balance between technologically organized human society and the finite physical resources of the Earth inevitably raises difficult questions concerning demographic growth and the means by which it might be addressed.

A second issue concerns the implications of contemporary anthropic reasoning in cosmology. Although anthropic considerations emphasize the profound physical continuity between human beings and the cosmos, the necessary physical conditions for the emergence and existence of humanity—and hence for the human experience of God—do not by themselves establish sufficient conditions for humanity's distinctive microcosmic status. The anthropic perspective therefore does not directly resolve the theological question of humanity's place within creation.

An additional difficulty emerges from modern cosmology itself. According to the standard cosmological model, approximately 95 per cent of the universe's total matter-energy content is at-

tributed to dark matter and dark energy, neither of which is identical with the ordinary visible matter constituting the Earth and human bodies. This raises a profound theological question concerning the relationship between the geocentric particularity of the Incarnation and its claimed cosmic universality. How is the incarnation of the Logos-Creator of the entire universe, occurring within an extremely restricted sector of physical reality on Earth, to be understood in relation to the universe as a whole? Here one encounters the more general tension between the geocentric specificity of God's revelation to humanity and the theocentric universality of theological claims.

What Is Man? thus offers a range of stimulating ideas that invite theologians, philosophers, and scientists to advance further in their attempts to comprehend both the meaning of human existence and the character of reality as a whole within a genuinely holistic framework.

Alexei Nesteruk
School of Mathematics and Physics, University of Portsmouth
Portsmouth, Hampshire, UK
E-mail: alexei.nesteruk@port.ac.uk
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6318-7907

Appendices with Comments

St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary

537 WEST 121ST ST. NEW YORK 27 N.Y.

March 26, 1962

Mr. John Zizioulas
1703 32 street, N.W.
Washington 7, D.C.

Dear Mr. Zizioulas:

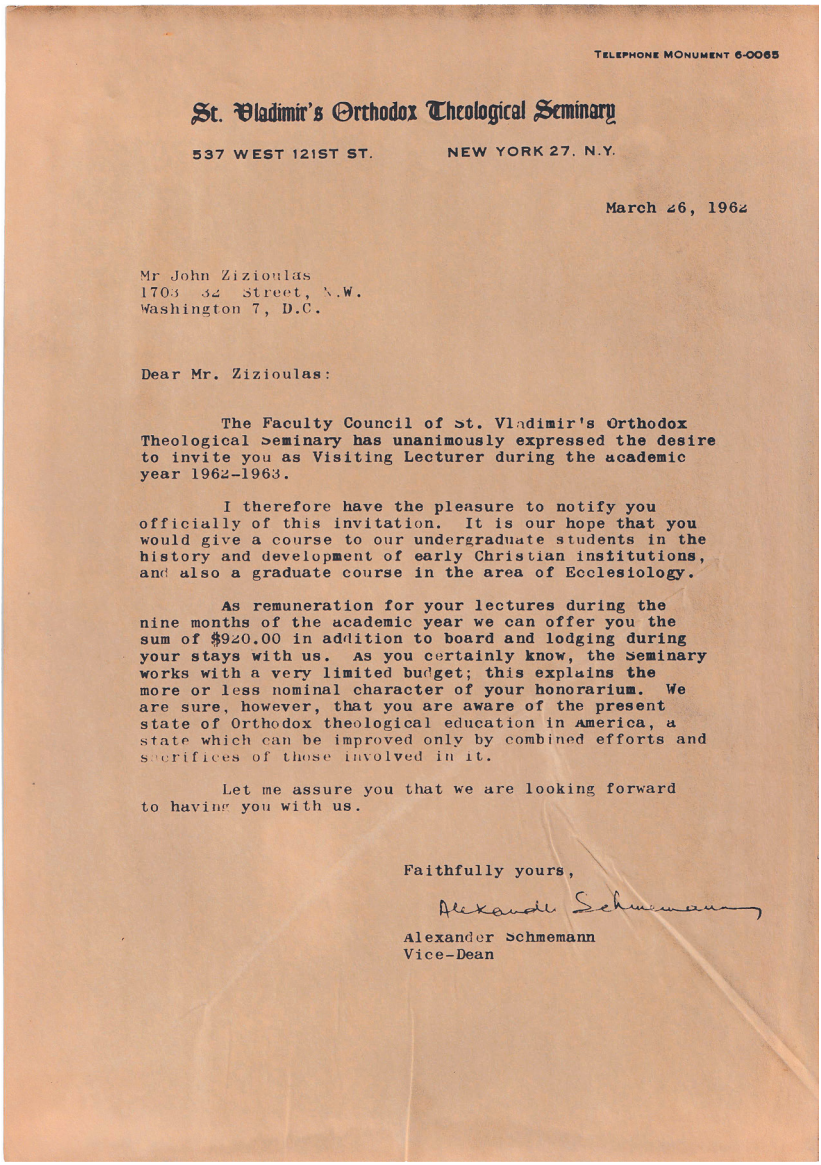
The Faculty Council of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary has unanimously expressed the desire to invite you as Visiting Lecturer during the academic year 1962–1963.

I therefore have the pleasure to notify you officially of this invitation. It is our hope that you would give a course to our undergraduate students in the history and development of early Christian institutions, and also a graduate course in the area of Ecclesiology.

As remuneration for your lectures during the nine months of the academic year we can offer you the sum of 920.00 USD in addition to board and lodging during your stays with us. As you certainly know, the seminary works with a very limited budget; this explains the more or less nominal character of your honorarium. We are sure, however, that you are aware of the present state of Orthodox theological education in America, a state which can be improved only by combined efforts and sacrifices of those involved in it.

Let me assure you that we are looking forward to having you with us.

Faithfully yours
Alexander Schmemann
Vice-Dean



TELEPHONE MONUMENT 6-0065

St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary

537 WEST 121ST ST. NEW YORK 27, N.Y.

March 26, 1962

Mr John Zizioulas
1703 32 Street, N.W.
Washington 7, D.C.

Dear Mr. Zizioulas:

The Faculty Council of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary has unanimously expressed the desire to invite you as Visiting Lecturer during the academic year 1962-1963.

I therefore have the pleasure to notify you officially of this invitation. It is our hope that you would give a course to our undergraduate students in the history and development of early Christian institutions, and also a graduate course in the area of Ecclesiology.

As remuneration for your lectures during the nine months of the academic year we can offer you the sum of $920.00 in addition to board and lodging during your stays with us. As you certainly know, the Seminary works with a very limited budget; this explains the more or less nominal character of your honorarium. We are sure, however, that you are aware of the present state of Orthodox theological education in America, a state which can be improved only by combined efforts and sacrifices of those involved in it.

Let me assure you that we are looking forward to having you with us.

Faithfully yours,

Alexander Schmemann

Alexander Schmemann
Vice-Dean

Courtesy of the Archives of Metropolitan John Zizioulas

Editorial:

The letter published here[1] documents an early episode in John Zizioulas' relationship with Fr. Alexander Schmemann (1921–1983). Whereas Zizioulas' relationship with Georges Florovsky has received considerable scholarly attention, his connection with Schmemann, a prominent Russian émigré theologian and advocate of Orthodox liturgical renewal in the United States, remains less explored.

Schmemann and Florovsky had worked closely together to develop St. Vladimir's Seminary, although their collaboration eventually gave way to disagreement over its direction. During his studies in the United States under Florovsky, Zizioulas' research interests shifted from the Christology of Maximus the Confessor toward ecclesiology, the subject of his doctoral thesis completed at the University of Athens in 1965. On 26 March 1962, Schmemann, then vice-dean, wrote on behalf of a unanimous Faculty Council to invite Zizioulas to serve as visiting lecturer during the 1962–63 academic year. The proposed teaching comprised an undergraduate course on the history and development of early Christian institutions and a graduate course in ecclesiology, reflecting the faculty's recognition of his developing expertise.

The letter also draws attention to the limited resources of Orthodox theological education in the United States. Explaining the modest honorarium, Schmemann appealed to the "combined efforts and sacrifices" needed to improve its condition. These difficulties had a longer institutional history. As late as January 1947, plans for a graduate-level theological institution in America remained uncertain. In the following years, however, these aspirations began to take firmer institutional shape. Florovsky's arrival contributed to this development, building on the work of older émigré scholars, including Nicholas Lossky, George Fedotov, Nicholas Arseniev, and Evgeny Spektorsky. Younger theologians

[1] "Fr. Alexander Schmemann to John Zizioulas, 26 March 1962", *Archives of Metropolitan John Zizioulas*.

trained at the St. Sergius Institute, among them Schmemann, also came to participate in this undertaking.[2]

In an address to the twenty-third annual meeting of the Federated Russian Orthodox Clubs in September 1949, Florovsky argued that the disruption of theological education in the Soviet Union over the preceding three decades placed a particular responsibility on Orthodox Christians in the United States to sustain this tradition. He understood theological education as serving the Church beyond national boundaries, rather than chiefly preserving the cultural identity of the Russian diaspora. His efforts to raise academic standards at St. Vladimir's Seminary formed part of this wider vision.

Following Schmemann's arrival in the United States in 1951, differences gradually emerged between him and Florovsky over theological education at the seminary. Florovsky insisted on rigorous academic preparation, including the study of Greek, which presented difficulties for students with limited prior training. Schmemann placed greater emphasis on adapting theological education to students' pastoral vocations and differing educational backgrounds. Their disagreement concerned the relative weight given to academic requirements and pastoral formation in the seminary's teaching.

Looking back on Florovsky's tenure as dean, Zizioulas interpreted the disputes over the seminary's curriculum and academic standing as expressions of a wider question about Orthodoxy's relationship with its cultural surroundings. He associated the opposition to Florovsky with both the introduction of Greek and the effort to secure academic recognition for the seminary. In Zizioulas' assessment, "At the root of all these issues lay the essential dilemma as to whether Orthodoxy would be incorporated into the contemporary world by entering into dialogue with its cultural surroundings, or else remain a continuation of the Russian tradi-

[2] For the historical background to the following discussion of Florovsky, Schmemann, and theological education at St. Vladimir's Seminary, see Paul Gavrilyuk, *On Christian Leadership. The Letters of Alexander Schmemann and Georges Florovsky* (1947–1955) (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2020).

tion in exile."[3] He concluded: "Fr. Georges always envisioned Orthodoxy in dialogue with the contemporary world, and it is to this vision that he dedicated his whole life."[4]

Zizioulas' admiration for Florovsky was accompanied by a sense of theological affinity with Schmemann. Asked in an interview about Schmemann, he recalled: "I knew him very well. We shared the same theological perspectives. Sometimes I would write something and later find the same idea in Fr. Alexander's works, and sometimes I would read something by him first, which would then influence me. We had a common approach."[5] This recollection suggests both an independent convergence of ideas and Schmemann's influence on Zizioulas' thinking, although it does not establish what motivated the invitation of 1962.

Their shared emphasis on the Eucharist as the center of the Church's life, together with Zizioulas' warm recollection of knowing Schmemann well, suggests a relationship that was both theological and personal.[6] The letter of March 1962 provides a concrete point of reference for the history of that relationship, documenting the faculty's invitation to Zizioulas to contribute to teaching at St. Vladimir's Seminary.

[3] Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, "Endorsement", in *The Patristic Witness of Georges Florovsky: Essential Theological Writings*, eds. Brandon Gallaher & Paul Ladouceur (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 1.

[4] Ibid.

[5] "Fundamentalism Will Become a Sect", Interview with Metropolitan John of Pergamon (Zizioulas)", *Kifa*, 166 (October 11, 2013), 2. Original: „Фундаментализм превратится в секту" (Интервью с митрополитом Пергамским Иоанном Зизиуласом, Юлия Балакшина, Софья Андросенко), *Кифа* 12 (166), October 11 (2013) 2; https://a.gazetakifa.ru/content/view/5024/12/ accessed March 1, 2026.

[6] Works that discuss the relationship between Zizioulas and Schmemann include: Jason DelVito *Encountering Eucharistic presence within a postmodern context: A Dialogue among Chauvet, Schmemann and Zizioulas* (2013) (Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University). Retrieved from https://dsc.duq.edu/etd/475, and Mark Roosien, "Rethinking the 'Liturgy after the Liturgy' with Schmemann, Zizioulas, and Bulgakov," *Ortodoksia Special Issue: New Approaches to Liturgy and Patristics* (2025), 76–94.

Doctor Honoris Causa at the Institut Catholique de Paris (1990)

On 23 March 1990 the Institut Catholique de Paris conferred on Metropolitan John Zizioulas the degree of Doctor of Theology *honoris causa*. The ceremony belonged to the celebrations marking the centenary of the Faculty of Theology and gathered theologians and church leaders from across Europe. Four others were honored alongside him: André de Halleux, Dominique Barthélemy, Georg Kretschmar and Bishop Pietro Rossano.

Metropolitan John recalled the occasion in his own words:

On March 22–23, 1990, the renowned Institut Catholique de Paris, where famous names such as Daniélou have taught, and which awards doctorates in collaboration with the University of Sorbonne, conferred upon me the title of Doctor of Theology *honoris causa* on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of its Theological School.

The distinction was rare. The previous honorary doctorate in theology, he noted, had gone to Michael Ramsey in 1953, years before Ramsey became Archbishop of Canterbury. The *éloge* was delivered by the Dominican ecclesiologist Hervé Legrand, who closed with the Institut's gratitude: "Aujourd'hui, l'Institut catholique de Paris vous en rend un hommage admiratif et reconnaissant."

Metropolitan John's address, "Tradition liturgique et unité chrétienne," appeared later that year in the *Revue de l'Institut Catholique de Paris* (36, 1990, 157–170). He began with the breach itself. "About a thousand years ago, the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople anathematized each other. For long centuries, they argued against each other or ignored each other. This was a disaster for the unity of the Churches." What the centuries cost was catholicity: "The East and the West imagined that



1. The conferral. Institut Catholique de Paris, 23 March 1990. Metropolitan John Zizioulas receives the degree of Doctor of Theology *honoris causa*. Courtesy of the Archives of Metropolitan John Zizioulas



2. Group portrait after the ceremony. From left: P.-M. Gy, O.P.; A. de Halleux, O.F.M.; J. Doré; Mgr P. Rossano; Mgr P. Guiberteau; Metropolitan John Zizioulas; D. Barthélemy, O.P.; G. Kretschmar; M. Quesnel; P. De Clerck; H. Legrand, O.P. Courtesy of the Archives of Metropolitan John Zizioulas



3. Awaiting the conferral of their insignia, 23 March 1990. From the foreground: A. de Halleux, D. Barthélemy, G. Kretschmar, Metropolitan John Zizioulas, P. Rossano. Courtesy of the Archives of Metropolitan John Zizioulas

they could live without each other and that their Church alone could be 'the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.'"

The Paris school itself—Congar, de Lubac—had helped reopen the way, and with it the rediscovery of what Fr. George Florovsky called the ancient catholic ethos. But the ground of unity, Zizioulas argued, is not doctrinal agreement. Unity "can only be reconstituted on the basis of a common tradition. And the most stable and secure form of tradition for rebuilding Christian unity is none other than the liturgical tradition." Hence: "The *lex credendi* is not simply complemented by the *lex orandi*: it is in the latter that it finds its full expression and justification."

He then turned the argument against his own. With the spread of printed service books it had become impossible "not only to introduce new anaphoras [...] but even to modify a secondary ritual element"—a ritualism that hampers rapprochement with Protestants and with Catholics after Vatican II, and that di-

vides the Orthodox among themselves. Tradition must be received and spoken again in each place: "A liturgical tradition that is not ready to modify its language or to express itself through the artistic and cultural forms of its time and region does not achieve a correct eucharistic 'anamnesis.'" He called this the criterion of incarnation.

Liturgical scholarship therefore had work to do: to separate the essential from the secondary and, "ceasing to be simply historical," to become theological.

The honor was more than academic. It marked the reception of Orthodox ecclesiology within the wider theological world and restated the conviction of a lifetime—that the road to unity runs through the Church at prayer.