The Theology of John Zizoulas: Contributions to Anthropology

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The Theology of John Zizoulas: Contributions to Anthropology

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Honors Thesis
Department of Theology
Carroll College, Helena Montana
May 9, 2008

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Date: 5.13.2008

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Date: 5-9-88
**Abbreviations**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>COA</td>
<td><em>Communion and Otherness.</em></td>
<td>-John D. Zizioulas</td>
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<td>BAC</td>
<td><em>Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church</em></td>
<td>-John D. Zizioulas</td>
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<td>EBC</td>
<td><em>Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries.</em></td>
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<td>McPartlan</td>
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Prologue

In many ways this thesis represents the sum total of what I have learned during my time at Carroll College. I hope that those who read it will see in it an expression of gratitude for the tremendous gifts received here.

This work is dedicated to Father Robert Turner, whose patient teaching and generous friendship have taught me more about theology, and indeed about life, than I can express here. He is the source of my interest in and my finest resource for this topic. His generosity, integrity, and above all humility are the greatest example of all I hope a theologian and priest might be.

Finally, I submit the following words of Thomas Merton as those that have guided my approach to this work, and which I hope will also guide those who may read it.

I do not intend to divorce myself at any point from Catholic tradition. But neither do I intend to accept points of that tradition blindly, and without understanding, and without making them really my own. ...at least I can hope they are thoughts that I have thought for myself and that, for better or for worse, mean something in my life and in the lives of those I live with.¹

Introduction

The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of people united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father’s kingdom, bearers of a message of salvation for all humanity. That is why they cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history.  

These opening lines of the Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, certainly among the most celebrated words written by the council fathers, proclaim the dignity and splendor of humanity. These words declare that the Church’s cry for salvation echoes the deepest cries of every human heart; and these cries not only echo in the heart of the Church, but are definitively answered there in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, the council fathers make this second, and equally celebrated statement: “In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of humanity truly becomes clear.”\(^2\) By these statements, the council fathers declare that the mystery of man and the mystery of God have become indivisibly united in the person of Christ, and thus in the deepest identity of the Church. In so doing, they emphatically underline the importance of anthropology for every aspect of the Church’s life and being. They place the truth of the human person at the very foundation of the mystery of salvation in the Church, the body of Christ. Therefore, Christian theology demands a Christian anthropology.

The goal of this thesis is to develop a Christian anthropology. The impetus for this anthropology is not merely a generalized understanding of the human person, but an

\(^{2}\) Gaudium et Spes 1  
\(^{3}\) Gaudium et Spes 22
articulation of the *salvation* of the human person. Such an anthropology attempts to be faithful to the vision of the Second Vatican Council described above by placing every aspect of theology and ministry into relationship with that understanding of personhood. This understanding must be organically bound to and derive its content from all the areas of theology if it is to succeed in grounding the salvation of human persons. The Church is about nothing more and nothing less than the salvation of every human person in every time, and so the anthropology which this thesis seeks must be situated at the very heart of Her self-understanding, and must be capable of resonating with every aspect of Her being. This means that this anthropology must derive first and foremost from the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The Church only gives what She has first received, and so Her anthropology must find its foundation in God himself. I have chosen the theology of John Zizioulas as the basis for my inquiry into Christian anthropology because in its foundations and application, the anthropology contained there fulfills the goals which I have outlined above.

In his article “Eschatology and Truth,” Fr. Robert Turner proposes “that three principles regulate the ecclesiology of John Zizioulas: an ontological, an eschatological, and an epistemological principle.”\(^4\) This analysis is penetrating and coherent, but it aims at grounding Zizioulas’ ecclesiology. Our aim here is to establish the essential concept of personhood which pervades and in a sense grounds all of Zizioulas’ theology. In order to establish the framework of this concept, I propose three principles that are foundational to Zizioulas’ theology: a metaphysical principle, an eschatological principle, and an ecclesial principle. The metaphysical principle concerns the ontological priority of personhood in light of the dialectic between creator and creation. The eschatological

\(^4\) Turner 15.
principle grounds truth upon the eschatological reality of salvation entering history in the person of Jesus Christ. The ecclesial principle concerns the nature of the Church as true unity in diversity (communion) by way of incorporation into the person of Jesus Christ, specifically in the divine Eucharist, and specifically by the work of the Holy Spirit.

These three principles originate from the valuable and penetrating insight of Robert Turner, but are broader in scope. They are certainly foundational to Zizioulas' thought, although it would be misleading to call them foundations per se. Speaking about foundational principles in Zizioulas' thought demands a nuanced understanding of his project. Zizioulas' theology does not take the form of syllogisms derived from first principles, but represents an organic whole which attempts to place various doctrines into relation with each other and with the lived experience of the Church. Zizioulas intently avoids over-systematizing, and his thought persistently frustrates attempts at schematization. However, this by no means indicates that his thought is dis-ordered. Perhaps the greatest strength of Zizioulas' theology is that it need not make recourse to logical or metaphysical systems to order its ideas. Rather, Zizioulas consistently aims at demonstrating the order of relationship between God, humanity, the Church, and the world. Thus, in method, as well as in content, Zizioulas' theology aims not at a systematic synthesis of ideas, but at a representation of the communion between God and human persons realized in the Church. Only in the communion of the Church, and especially in Her liturgy, are all human realities and all divine realities brought into right relationship in the person of Jesus Christ.5 The order of theology is not an order of revelation of ideas, but an order of relationship between God and world, and this is

5 See Knight 3
precisely the order of communion in the Church. Only this order can create a theology which is ‘Catholic’ in the fullest sense of the word.⁶

To simply dissect Zizioulas’ thought would not do it justice, but would run the risk of distorting rather than advancing our understanding. Douglas Knight describes Zizioulas as a “peerless teacher and communicator, able to make fundamental issues readily comprehensible, and indeed is very much better at this than his own interpreters.”⁷ Nevertheless, the task at hand remains to tease out principles which will help us to create a more coherent and profound understanding of Zizioulas’ theology. If we keep Zizioulas’ project of theological order close in mind, these principles can accomplish this task. Therefore, let us assert from the start that the principles I have proposed do not represent foundations, but a basis— a helpful starting point— (and perhaps not the only starting point) from which to penetrate the depth and breadth of Zizioulas’ thought and place that thought in dialogue with the Western Church’s theology and praxis. Let us also make clear that these principles in no way represent distinctions within Zizioulas’ thought, but necessarily flow from and lead to one another. In fact, it is precisely in their relationship to one another that we begin to really understand and put into practice Zizioulas’ theology. Through a patient and thorough-going (if at times superficial) analysis of these three principles, we will gain a general understanding of Zizioulas thought; more importantly, we will become intensely aware of why the person is at the very heart of Christian theology.

⁶ Knight 3
⁷ Knight 3
Ontology

"so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us"

John 17:21

The metaphysical principle of Zizioulas is that personhood is the cause and fulfillment of being. Before we can understand and analyze this principle, however, it is necessary to make a few remarks regarding the nature of Zizioulas’ ‘metaphysics.’

In his analysis of Zizioulas’ ontological principle, Robert Turner makes this important comment: “This ontological perspective articulates the meaning of salvation. Zizioulas is a theologian rather than a philosopher.”

First of all, we can see here that Zizioulas’ ontological principle already points to the eschatological and ecclesial. Secondly, we must understand that Zizioulas’ metaphysics aims at more than a mere philosophical account of all that exists. It aims at an account of the final reality of all things, at a salvation which is distinctively ontological in character. Zizioulas does not merely mean that metaphysics must account for the telos of things, but specifically that the ultimate reality of being is not the same as the given reality of the world. ‘The world’ is not a sufficient ground for metaphysics, because its existence is created. Ultimate being, including the ultimate being of human persons and the world, can only be understood in God, who freely asserts His own being and is therefore outside the world.

Thus, Robert Turner identifies the metaphysical principle as “rooted in the difference between Creator and creation.” This will all become much clearer, but for now let us suffice to say that Zizioulas’ metaphysics aims at an ultimate ontology which can only be

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8 Turner 15
9 COA 163-164, 165
10 Turner 15
found in God. We will see that precisely in as much as God’s being is personal, human persons may hope in salvation— in being like God.

Bearing always in mind Zizioulas’ concern for salvation and demand for metaphysics grounded in a relationship between Creator and creation that is truly dialectical, let us turn to the contents of this ontology. Zizioulas summarizes his ontology in the following way:

(a) There is no true being without communion. Nothing exists as an “individual,” conceivable in itself. Communion is an ontological category.
(b) Communion which does not come from a “hypostasis,” that is, a concrete and free person, and which does not lead to “hypostases,” that is, concrete and free persons, is not an “image” of the being of God. The person cannot exist without communion; but every form of communion which denies or suppresses the person, is inadmissible.¹¹

It is clear from this outline that Zizioulas’ essential project is to demonstrate that any being already implies communion, and that communion already implies the person. Thus the person is the ultimate end (and ultimate ground) of ontology. Though this ontology is easily identified, it will demand more patient arguments to fully understand.

If Zizioulas’ starting metaphysical point is uniquely theological, he claims his first question to be markedly ordinary and even conventional. Zizioulas asserts that metaphysics always arises in the context of the problem of personal identity, that is— what is it say that I am a person rather than I have a person?¹² According to Zizioulas, the question of personal identity, Who am I?, contains three constitutive ingredients: a demand for description, a demand for being, and a demand for particularity.¹³ The demand for a description answers who?— and answers it with the self-assertion of

¹¹ BAC 18
¹² COA 99-100
¹³ COA 100-101
consciousness. To know who I am demands that in the face of a given world, I am capable of conscious reflection, of asserting and therefore knowing my own being. The demand for being is a demand that the I who is conscious does in fact exist; that I am more than thought thinking itself, but am in fact an existent being in relation to other existent beings. The demand for particularity is a demand to distinguish myself from others. Faced with a given world full of other self-asserting persons, the question of identity is asked to establish my own uniqueness and individuality.\textsuperscript{14}

Most philosophers would easily grant this general analysis of the problem of personal identity. Although not all philosophers would grant that this is the basic impelling question of metaphysics, every metaphysician must seek to answer it in one way or another, and it seems that most if not all the major issues of western metaphysics are raised by this question. Therefore, we can safely say that Zizioulas’ focus on personhood is a valid and helpful approach to metaphysics.

The next step in Zizioulas’ ontology is to assume that being is caused. This is in essence an invocation of the doctrine of creation \textit{ex nihilo}. God creates the world of his own free will, and out of nothing. This is a clearly Christian notion which is opposed to Greek ontology. McPartlan points out that “Zizioulas persistently criticizes Greek philosophy’s closed ontology,”\textsuperscript{15} an ontology which is “fundamentally monistic.”\textsuperscript{16} The simple problem is that the Greek cosmology is eternal: being never begins and never ends, but is merely transformed, and so being cannot be particular. The Greek notion of causation is within the realm of being; being itself is not caused.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{15} McPartlan 144
\item \textsuperscript{16} Turner 16
\item \textsuperscript{17} COA 104
\end{itemize}
There are two serious difficulties with this Greek ontology. First, Plato’s recourse to the Forms and Aristotle’s recourse to species as that which is truly enduring destroy any possible ontological weight of the particular and concrete human person. The answer to the essential question of identity is found not in the individual existing person, but in the nature, substance, or form of the person, and this answer by definition cannot meet the third demand of particularity. In the Greek mind, Ontology becomes necessary in the sense that being is merely participation in being - and so nothing which is in being can be truly described as free. Zizioulas points out that:

The inability of Greek thought to create a personal ontology is not due to a weakness or incapacity of greek philosophy as philosophy... The observation of the world cannot lead to an ontology of the human person, because the person as an ontological category cannot be extrapolated from experience."

As we have already stated, the human experience is of a given world- a ‘closed’ ontology, and so the description of this experience by Greek philosophy underlines why Zizioulas claims that created existence cannot be considered a basis for ontology. This returns us to the fact that the world is not simply a given, but a gift which was created by God. It is here that Greek ontology faces its second crippling problem. Because the Greek ontology is closed, “not even God can escape from this ontological unity and stand freely before the world, ‘face to face’ in dialogue with it. He too is bound by ontological necessity to the world and the world to him.” An eternal cosmology makes God’s creation of the world, if accepted, necessary. The possibility that being might not have been is simple absurd for the Greek mind. Not only the doctrine of creation ex nihilo, but

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18 COA 103
19 BAC 29-30
the doctrine of God as utterly and radically free is unthinkable in the context of Greek ontology. 20

In light of the difficulty in reconciling the faith with Greek ontology, some apophatic theologies are tempted to simply reject ‘onto-theological’ predicates regarding God. Zizioulas, however, reminds us of the ontological weight of salvation-- that Christian hope in the resurrection is precisely in being like God. Turner insightfully identifies that “the key question is ‘...whether otherness can make sense in ontology, whether ontology can do anything more than rest on the idea of totality.’”21 The goal of this ontology is to establish the particular and enduring identity of the individual person, and to do this we must look first to God. Zizioulas claims that it was the Patristic Fathers, and especially Athanasius and the Cappadocian fathers who, by identifying person as ‘hypostasis’ created just such an ontology through their Trinitarian theology:

...it was necessary to find an ontology that avoided the monistic Greek philosophy as much as the “gulf” between God and the world taught by the gnostic systems-- the other great danger of this period. The creation of this ontology was perhaps the greatest philosophical achievement of patristic thought.22

Zizioulas presents an extended historical discussion of this Cappadocian ontology, but focused as we are on the content of Zizioulas' ontology, we will summarize the historical aspects only where necessary, relying especially upon the excellent summations of both McPartlan and Turner. Zizioulas situates the Cappadocian ontology upon “two basic ‘leavenings’ (that) had previously taken place in the field of patristic theology.”23 These leavenings deal precisely with freeing God from the ontological necessity inherent

20 See “Eschatology and Truth” 16
21 Turner 17 (Turner here quotes BAC 86)
22 BAC 16
23 BAC 39
in Greek thought which is described above. The first is attributed chiefly to the work of Athanasius and concerns the ontological freedom of God from His creation. The second is attributed to the Cappadocian fathers, and concerns the freedom of God within his own being, the Trinity.

Faced with a very aggressive Arian threat, Athanasius needed to be able to establish the common substance of the Son and the Father by showing that the Logos is in fact identical to the Son\textsuperscript{24} in order to protect the eternal divinity of Christ. Athanasius accomplished this through a distinction between the substance of God and the will of God. This makes it possible to say that while God exists because of his substance, the world exists because of his will.\textsuperscript{25} Therefore, the being of the world and the being of God are no longer necessarily identified: “through this distinction between substance and will, Athanasius was in a position to break out of the closed ontology of the greeks which linked God to the world by an ontological syggeneia.”\textsuperscript{26} In short, Athanasius’ distinction allows for the absolute freedom of God before the world and for the freedom of the world before God, the freedom to be other.\textsuperscript{27} Even though the world’s being is created, that being is not simply an emanation or extension of God, but the world can assert its own being (so long as it asserts the being it has been given.) This dialectic between God and His creation is fundamental to any notion of communion between God and humanity,

\textsuperscript{24} BAC 85 See also Zizioulas’ comment on page 77: “Thus, the problem which Origen and the whole current of logos theology leave unanswered is: how can we understand the historical Christ to be the truth?” This implies that the issue at stake is precisely that Origenistic theology identifies the logos of God and the world as one (rather than the logos of God entering the world / history). The resulting difficulty in protecting God’s transcendence is what leads to the Arian denial of Christ’s eternal divinity. Specifically, God and the soul (nous) were connected through a syggenenai (relationship / kinship), which risked monism because the character of this relationship means that God needs the world. - see McPartlan 156.

\textsuperscript{25} BAC 83-84

\textsuperscript{26} BAC 84

\textsuperscript{27} McPartlan notes here that Zizioulas’ objection to the Origenistic theology based on God’s transcendence relates to his rejection of Rahner’s formulation: ‘The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity’ - see McPartlan 157
which is precisely why Zizioulas grounds his ontology on this principle. Zizioulas pushes Athanasius’ simple distinction to arrive at this tremendously significant point:

To say that the Son belongs to God’s substance implies that substance *possesses almost by definition a relational character*... If God’s being is by nature relational, and if it can be signified by the word “substance,” can we not then conclude almost inevitably that, given the ultimate character of God’s being for all ontology, substance, inasmuch as it signifies the ultimate character of being, can be conceived only as communion? 28

Zizioulas’ argument here already points toward the results of the ‘second leavening’ of the Cappadocian fathers, but before we move on, let us point out two more brief but significant implications of Athanasius’ distinction. First, as we have just seen, Athanasius parts from Greek philosophy precisely in that the ‘substance’ of God is not complete or full except in the relationship between Father and Son. 29 In other words, “communion belongs not to the level of will and action but to that of substance.” 30 This point will lead directly to the Cappadocian conclusion. Second, the Athanasian view of substance and will remains to be clarified. How does God’s will give being to the world without itself having ontological content? And how can the Father and Son share a common substance but be in relationship? These questions would await the ‘second leavening’ of the Cappadocian fathers. 31

Turner notes, as the Cappadocian fathers did, that “For God to be free requires not only freedom from the world, but freedom within divine Being.” 32 He notes also the conclusion of the ‘second leavening’ in Zizioulas’ thought: “By giving priority to divine

28 BAC 84
29 BAC 85 note 60
30 BAC 86
31 BAC 86-87
32 Turner 16
person rather than divine substance, Zizioulas establishes the freedom of divine being.\textsuperscript{33}

The major shift of the Cappadocian fathers was that “The term \textit{hypostasis} was dissociated from that of \textit{ousia} and became identified with that of \textit{prosopon}.”\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Hypostasis} meant one’s individual concrete existence, and in God this had been identified with his \textit{ousia}, which meant ‘substance’ in the Greek sense. \textit{Prosopon} was a distinctively relational term, referring generally to one’s sphere of action or property, one’s place and function in the world.\textsuperscript{35} By identifying \textit{hypostasis} with \textit{prosopon}, the Cappadocian fathers established that “For someone or something to be, two things are needed: being itself (\textit{hypostasis}) and \textit{being in relation} (i.e. being a person).”\textsuperscript{36} In short, the being of God could no longer be thought of in a Greek way: as a ‘substance’ or common ‘nature’ which was shared between three persons, and which therefore was logically prior to each of the three persons. God can only \textit{be} as three persons in communion with each other.\textsuperscript{37} This leads to two important conclusions, one regarding causality and the Father (person is fundamental category), and another regarding the nature of ‘personhood.’

The first important conclusion is that the Father is the \textit{cause} of the being of God. If being must be caused in order to be free from the tyranny of substance, then God’s being must not be subordinated to his substance either. The three persons of the Trinity must not be caused by the divine substance if their relationship to each other is to be one of mutual self giving (\textit{perichoresis}), that is, if the Trinity is to be held together by love.

\textsuperscript{33} Turner 16
\textsuperscript{34} BAC 87
\textsuperscript{35} Zizioulas himself points out that referring to the three \textit{prosopons} frequently led to modalist or sabellianist conclusions, while referring to three \textit{hypostases} tended toward tritheism. See BAC 87
\textsuperscript{36} BAC 88
\textsuperscript{37} Zizioulas points out that After Augustine, the being of God is associated once again with substance (\textit{ousia} as “ultimate character and the causal principle (Archon) in God’s Being,”- BAC 88 - and laments at length the fact that in western theology the unity of God, or “One God” is practically always prior to the Trinity. As a paradigmatic example, in the \textit{Summa Theologica}, the subject of the Trinity is not even breached until question 27 of the 49 question \textit{Treatise on God}. 
between persons rather than common nature or substance. If this is the case, then God’s being must issue from Himself and no where else. For this reason the Cappadocians and Zizioulas vigorously assert the *monarchy* of the Father: that the person of the Father is the one *arche*, or cause in the sense of “personal ontological origination,” in the Trinity.\(^38\)

Let us point out exactly what Zizioulas means here:

Thus when we say that God “is,” we do not bind the personal freedom of God-- but we ascribe the being of God to his personal freedom. In a more analytical way this means that God, as Father, and not as substance, perpetually confirms through ‘being’ His *free* will to exist. And it is precisely His Trinitarian existence that constitutes this confirmation: the Father out of love-- that is, freely-- begets the Son and brings forth the Spirit.\(^39\)

This point is monumentally significant, because the Father is not only the cause of the Son and the Spirit, but the ontological cause of God’s being (the mon-arche), and in His own person the principle of Divine Unity.\(^40\) Thus, the *person* has entered ontology as its most fundamental category.

Before we continue to the second implication of the Cappadocian ontology, which is a clear result of this first one, it is necessary to note that the Monarchy of the Father is not widely accepted, at least in Western theologies. Taking this point seriously means that the Father is ontologically prior to the Trinity, and is prior not only in terms of the economic Trinity but in the immanent Trinity itself. Zizioulas makes an extended argument in which he addresses the chief objections to the notion of Father as cause\(^41\), and so it is neither necessary nor helpful for us to address this issue here.

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\(^{38}\) COA 118-119  
\(^{39}\) BAC 41  
\(^{40}\) Again, it is significant here to make a clear contrast between this doctrine of God, and the common western Doctrine in which the principle of God’s unity, and the fundamental cause of God’s being, is the *necessary* Divine substance. See McPartlan 165.  
\(^{41}\) COA: Chapter 3- The Father as Cause. See especially 123-149.
Zizioulas is quick to press the Cappadocian doctrine of the Father’s monarchy to a
generalized ontology of personhood: “the substance never exists in a “naked” state, that
is, without hypostasis, without a ‘mode of existence.’” Personhood is the ground of
ontology, because it answers all three demands of personal identity: description
(substance or nature) and being can here coincide with the particular. Being can only
arise freely and without necessity from a hypostasis, a person. Zizioulas summarizes
this point in the following words:

...the transcendence of the “necessity” of existence, the possibility of
affirming his existence not as a recognition of a given fact, of a “reality,” but as
the product of his free consent and affirmation. This and nothing less than this is
what man seeks in being a person.

This affirms the importance of the created-uncreated dialectic all the more. God’s
personhood means that the three persons are caused by the free consent of the Father, and
remain so precisely through the free consent and affirmation of their own personhood and
of each other’s personhood. The unity in diversity of the triune God is not a result of
common substance, but of personhood par excellence. However, the human person’s
desire to be a person through his or her own free consent and affirmation is frustrated by
the givenness of his or her being, and ultimately by death. The simple fact is that the
human person cannot freely will their own personhood, that is, their own being, either to
begin or to persist, but only to end. Even this act, which Zizioulas examines through the
words of Dostoevsky’s character Kirilov, is not completely ontologically ‘free’ because

\[\text{References:} \]
42 Quoted from St. Basil- see note 36 on BAC 41
43 BAC 41
44 COA 165,111
45 BAC 42
46 CAO 257-258
47 BAC 42-43
the existence the person ends is not their own but is given; besides “only a person can seek negative freedom— but it is a negation nevertheless of its ontological freedom.” 48 Therefore, true personhood, which demands absolute freedom from necessity, can only be realized in the Divine persons: “If God does not exist, the person does not exist.” 49

To complete the understanding of the ontology of personhood, let us therefore examine more closely the difference between God’s mode of existence (His hypostasis), and the human mode of existence (our hypostasis). Zizioulas accomplishes this most effectively through an examination of the corporate identities of God and man. In the bible, Adam is intended as a corporate identity for all human persons, and all human persons are caused by the person of Adam, and not by a common substance as Plato and Aristotle suggest. 50 The persons of the Trinity are likewise caused by the particular person of the Father, and share a common substance without being caused by that substance. 51 If ontological primacy (authentic personhood) were to truly be the case for humans, Adam would have to be “in a constant relationship with all the rest of human beings, not via nature… but directly.” 52 This is clearly not the case; for humanity death is the supreme blow to such a relationship. However, “What Adam should represent, God does represent” and this because “In God it is possible for the particular to be ontologically ultimate because relationship is permanent and unbreakable… and thus no contradiction between the ‘one’ and the ‘many’ can arise.” 53 The relationship between the

48 BAC 46
49 BAC 43
50 COA 104-106
51 CAO 106
52 CAO 106
53 CAO 107
three persons of the divine Trinity is the key to their being authentic persons, and this relationship is love.\textsuperscript{54}

If divine personhood is predicated upon relationship, and authentic personhood is itself ontological ultimacy, then it is clear that “the substance of God, ‘God,’ has no ontological content, no true being, without communion.”\textsuperscript{55} Being is inextricably linked with communion - being is constituted by being in relationship.\textsuperscript{56} However, for human persons, personal identity is achieved principally through differentiation from the other. In the very opening lines of *Communion and Otherness*, Zizioulas points out that the disposition of the fall is Adam’s rejection of the other, and the resultant character of human existence is the fear of otherness. Western metaphysics defines man in terms of his *individual* being, and it is characteristic of our human situation that we are pathologically conditioned (by Adam’ rejection of otherness) to identify difference with division.\textsuperscript{57} This concept is exhaustively examined both positively and negatively by existential philosophy. It is precisely the work of Zizioulas to recover the Patristic notion that difference is not division, and that otherness is the ground, not the enemy of communion. Indeed, true communion is *generative* of otherness.\textsuperscript{58}

“There is no model for the proper relation between communion and otherness either for the Church or for the human being other than the Trinitarian God.”\textsuperscript{59} This is precisely the case because authentic personhood demands that “The hypo-static and ekstatic have to coincide.”\textsuperscript{60} This is the answer which the Cappadocian shift poses to

\textsuperscript{54} BAC 17
\textsuperscript{55} CAO 107
\textsuperscript{56} CAO 107
\textsuperscript{57} CAO 1-3
\textsuperscript{58} CAO 3-5
\textsuperscript{59} CAO 4
\textsuperscript{60} CAO 112
Athanasius’ difficulty regarding how the Divine persons can share a common substance but be in relationship. The ontological content of their personhood is not found in their substance, but in their ecstatic relationship with one another. In fact, “[Personhood is constituted by ekstasis, the movement outside the self.”\textsuperscript{61} To be a person is not only to freely affirm and will self-existence, but to affirm and will the free existence of the other.\textsuperscript{62} This movement out of self within the Trinity is not necessary, but is born out of the divine freedom of the Father. The Father did not generate the Son out of necessity, but out of love, and it is this love that constitutes true freedom and therefore true personhood. Because love “‘hypostasizes’ God, \textit{constitutes} His being,”\textsuperscript{63} the Father is the person \textit{par excellence}: a person in free communion with other persons. \textit{Love} is the \textit{personal} way of being, and we have already shown that personal being is the only way of being (being cannot exist ‘nakedly’ but only through a hypostasis).\textsuperscript{64} Therefore Zizioulas declares that “the only exercise of freedom in an ontological manner is \textit{love}… (love) becomes \textit{the supreme ontological predicate}.”\textsuperscript{65}

Not only does communion constitute being, but it is the ground for being’s persisting. In as much as human personhood is characterized by the identification of difference with division (fear of otherness), man’s lack of communion with others leads to death (the end of his hypostasis). For God, however, it is precisely in the communion of the person that He endures: “If God the Father is immortal, it is because His unique and unrepeatable identity as Father is distinguished eternally from that of the Son and of

\textsuperscript{61} Turner 17
\textsuperscript{62} Again: “the reason the divine persons are persons is therefore not their work within the economy of salvation, but the freedom of God expressed in ecstatic love that makes divine being personal.” Turner 17
\textsuperscript{63} BAC 46
\textsuperscript{64} See notes 36,37
\textsuperscript{65} BAC 46
the Spirit, who call Him ‘Father’.\textsuperscript{66} The person is unique, unrepeatable, and enduring only in light of his relationship to the other—only in communion. Therefore, we have come full circle to the initial summary of Zizioulas ontology, in which we stated that communion is constitutive of being, and that the person is constitutive of communion. And this is arrived at only with a keen eye toward the ontological necessity regarding \textit{salvation}:

The eternal survival of the person as a unique, unrepeatable and free ‘hypostasis,’ as loving and being loved, constitutes the quintessence of salvation, the bringing of the Gospel to man... The goal of salvation is that the personal life realised in God should also be realized on the level of human existence.\textsuperscript{67}

Personhood is precisely the common ground that gives humanity hope in salvation, in sharing in the life of God, and it is precisely the \textit{person of Jesus Christ} which is this common ground. Turner notes that “personhood becomes the link between God and creation”\textsuperscript{68} and therefore “The incarnation of the Son of God is the basis of the person as an ontological category.”\textsuperscript{69} Therefore, it is correct to assert that for humanity, Jesus Christ is the \textit{person par excellence} and that for Zizioulas the person of Jesus Christ is both the source and summit of ontology. A thorough examination of salvation in Christ will accompany (and condition) the generalized anthropology to come, but before we are equipped to approach such an anthropology, we will need to establish Zizioulas’ principles regarding eschatology and ecclesiology.

\textsuperscript{66} BAC 48
\textsuperscript{67} BAC 50
\textsuperscript{68} Turner 18
\textsuperscript{69} Turner 19
II
Eschatology

"And, by means of Him, to reconcile all things in His person..."
Colossians 1:20

It should be clear by now that John Zizioulas’ theology hinges on the reality of salvation in Jesus Christ. His metaphysical principle exposes the ontological dimensions of salvation in the person of Christ. Zizioulas depends on an eschatological principle to explain how this salvation is realized in history: that is, precisely through the person of Jesus Christ. Because of its import for salvation, this notion of eschatology permeates every aspect of Zizioulas’ thought. Thus, we can summarize Zizioulas’ eschatological principle as: the only truth is the ultimate truth (salvation), and this ultimate truth enters history in the person of Jesus Christ.

Before we begin our analysis of this principle, however, it is necessary to note that although Zizioulas’ eschatological principle regards the truth, it is much more than an epistemological theory, and is in many ways a rejection of epistemology as the ground of truth. Likewise, although Zizioulas’ eschatological principle represents a theology of history, it cannot be simply limited to a theology of history. Finally, let us remember that the eschatological principle is not necessarily laid out systematically, but is demonstrated and developed through every area of Zizioulas’ thought. It is unfeasible to understand this principle except in relation to the metaphysical and ecclesial principles.

The project of Zizioulas’ discussion of eschatology is to answer the concern for salvation in history with precisely the person of Christ, and this project is tackled through his analysis of the question of truth. In short, only if salvation enters history definitively in the very person of Christ can we say that truth is in history without being bound to or
defined by history. Zizioulas’ discussion of truth focuses on the problem of truth in the neo-patristic era, because he claims that the critical synthesis of truth and communion which allows truth to be understood eschatologically is first reached in the work of the neo-patristic Fathers, and particularly by Maximus the confessor.

The problem of truth for the Patristic Fathers is characterized by the dynamics of Greek and Hebrew thought and their relationship to the assertion that Christ is the truth. For the Jews, truth is expressed narratively in the Old Testament. The truth about God and his people is expressed through the signs which God has performed in their history. The truth is realized historically because it consists in God’s actions and Israel’s response to those actions in history. Zizioulas points out the eschatological nature of this conception of truth which is clear in as much as God’s actions are meant as signs of his faithfulness, promises of salvation: “According to this way of understanding truth, it is God’s promises which may be considered as ultimate truth, and these promises coincide with the goal or fulfilment of history.”

Where the Jews saw truth as necessarily historical, “for the Greeks this is primarily a cosmological question.” For the Greeks, truth exists in ideas; in a nature which transcends the individual being. Truth is essentially linked to form, and form is linked to the mind. Thus, the Greek cosmology represents a closed ontology which contains being, mind, and form (idea or essence). It is precisely the harmony between being, mind and form which constitutes the good, the true, for the Greeks. There is no room in such a closed ontology for change, and so change is explained by cause (logos).

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70 BAC 68
71 BAC 68
72 BAC 69
73 BAC 69
The truth in change can only be seen in its cause and this cause is itself an enduring idea or form. For the Greeks, true being cannot change, and so truth must be found in the cosmos and not in history. The difficulty in establishing an eternal truth in history characterizes the entire Christian discussion of truth, particularly for the Patristic Church, and even until today. Zizioulas points to the Greeks as the originators of the fundamental problem of truth for Christianity:

How can a Christian hold to the idea that truth operates in history and creation when the ultimate character of truth, and its uniqueness, seem irreconcilable with the change and decay to which history and creation are subject?

However, the real trouble for Christians is not only that truth must enter the historical world because we are in it, but that the most fundamental proposition of the faith is that truth has in fact entered the historical world in Jesus Christ. This proposition is not the end of the discussion for Christians, but the “sole starting point for a Christian understanding of truth.” The New Testament Christian faith asserts a Christological character of truth: that truth exists in history, but in Christ, the alpha and omega who is the beginning and end of that history. Therefore, Zizioulas formulates the problem of truth which the Patristic fathers (and, in a sense, all theology) faces:

How, in other words, can truth be considered simultaneously from the point of view of the nature of being (Greek preoccupation) from the view of the goal or end of history (preoccupation of the Jews) and from the view point of Christ, who is both a historical person and the permanent ground (the λόγος) of being (the Christian claim)- and all the while preserving God’s “otherness” in relation to creation?

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74 For this reason, the notion of history as such is itself alien to the Greek worldview, which relies instead on a cyclical and eternal worldview. There can be no real- that is, true- change in being. Those existent things which can pass out of being (the physical world of corruption and decay) cannot be true.

75 BAC 70

76 BAC 67

77 BAC 70-71

78 BAC 71 see also Turner 23
Zizioulas outlines several attempts to answer the problem of truth during the Patristic era. The first of these attempts he describes as the logos approach. This approach, characteristic of Origen and the Alexandrine school, emphasized Christ as the logos of all creation. Zizioulas pinpoints the origins of this theory in Justin the martyr, who “developed an idea of truth similar if not identical to that of Platonism.” In the closed Greek ontology, God is the ultimate being, that is, the ultimate idea from which all other ideas proceed. Those beings that are less ideal (creation) receive their being from God through procession or emanation, and participate in truth through their necessary relationship to the ideal being.

In this theory Christ is indeed the truth which links God and the world; however this truth takes the form of the order of creation: its form or idea. Christ is God as the order or idea of creation. This results in two difficulties which we have already largely predicated of the Greek approach to truth. First, God and the world are bound in a monist ontology, because the order of creation is precisely God, who is the ultimate form or reality of all being. In this monist system, God becomes bound to creation by necessity, and God’s transcendence is lost. Secondly, in as much as Christ is the logos of all creation, he is not known in that creation per se, but only in the form or order of that creation - that is, only by the mind. Zizioulas points out “it is clear that underlying Justin’s way of understanding truth is not only the dualism between things of the sense and of the intellect but, more importantly, of the ontologically necessary link between God and the world.” Salvation in Christ therefore becomes salvation by an idea, and the character of

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79 See BAC 72 -78
80 BAC 73
81 BAC 73-74
this salvation is that of the rejection of the physical world and the body in favor of the soul (the mind).

In the hands of Origen, the logos Christology becomes more nuanced, but maintains an essential link between God and creation that mirrors the relationship of mind to truth. Origen goes so far as to "speak of an eternal creation, arguing that God would not be omnipotent with no object on which to exercise his power."\(^{82}\) For Origen, "Truth resides in the meaning of things, and once this meaning has been grasped, the things bearing it lose their importance."\(^ {83}\) Thus Origen has maintained both the relationship of necessity between God and man, and the primacy of the mind as the ground of truth. Zizioulas points out the dramatic effects of this conception of truth regarding the incarnation. The incarnation is not the realization of truth in history, but the revelation of God as idea.\(^ {84}\) Revelation in this sense is in fact opposed to history, because history presents truth in a fragmented and developing way, while ‘revelation’ as logos claims to present a pure idea, God himself, to the human mind: it merely "reveals a pre-existing truth."\(^ {85}\) Christ is not the truth made incarnate, that is, made truly historical and human, but is so in as much as he represents "simultaneously the logos of God and creation."\(^ {86}\) Jesus Christ does not realize the truth, but Jesus merely bears the truth (and therefore is the Christ) which is the fundamental and necessary relationship between creator and creation- their common logos.

Our remark here, delicate but fundamental, is that "wisdom" does not depend on the Christ-event, but, in a sense, Christ participates in wisdom. We cannot invert the assertion ‘Christ is the truth’ and say the truth is ‘Christ,’ since the historical

\(^{82}\) BAC 75  
\(^{83}\) BAC 76  
\(^{84}\) BAC 77  
\(^{85}\) BAC 77  
\(^{86}\) BAC 77
Christ appears to the truth precisely because of his participation in truth, being the *logos* of creation-not because he is Jesus of Nazareth.

Thus, the problem which Origen and the whole current of *logos* theology leave unanswered is: how can we understand the *historical* Christ to be the truth?\(^\text{87}\)

Zizioulas’ criticism that Christ merely participates in wisdom or truth may seem like an unfair representation of Origen’s intention. After all, for Origen ‘wisdom’ (*logos*) and ‘Christ’ are one and the same, so neither precedes the other. This, however, brings to light precisely Zizioulas’ point: the historical Jesus of Nazareth cannot be separable from Christ the logos of God.\(^\text{88}\) This is an extremely piercing criticism in light of the Arian development of logos-Christology. Christ is the logos of all creation-the beginning and end of history only because he has entered into that history in the incarnation. The difference pointed to here betrays the distinction between a truly *historical* truth, and truth which is only *cosmological* in nature.\(^\text{89}\) In reference to eschatology, Zizioulas points out that Origen’s theology “is oriented not towards a consummation of history, but toward the eternal significance of events.”\(^\text{90}\) The logos approach to truth effectively adopts Greek philosophy as its model, and therefore fails to establish truth in history and in the person of Jesus Christ.

The second approach to truth which Zizioulas outlines is the Eucharistic approach. “Already in the writings of St Ignatius of Antioch, it is made clear that the idea of truth is not primarily a matter of epistemology--in the strictest sense of the word--but

\(^{87}\) BAC 77
\(^{88}\) Zizioulas attributes to Athanasius the clarification of exactly how the logos is identical with Christ, and this is primarily through the distinction between being and will, and through the necessity of communion for ontology. This has been discussed at length in the first chapter. See BAC 83-89.
\(^{89}\) BAC 76-77
\(^{90}\) BAC 76
is connected with what we might call life."91 For the Greek mind (and therefore for our own, at least to some extent), life is a quality of some beings but it is possible for many things to be, and therefore to be ‘true,’ without being alive. On the other hand, the Hebrew mind tended to associate life with ‘praxis,’ the practical, and so in the Old Testament truth takes the form of living the commandments of God.92 Christianity is faced once again with the difficulty of reconciling these Greek and Hebrew elements: we see ‘life’ as the practical- the everyday, while we see truth as tied to being and existence; yet we need truth to concern life, for the goal of the Christian in knowing the truth is everlasting life.

The Patristic Fathers identified truth, being and life together in Christ and particularly in the experience of the Eucharistic community. For Ignatius and Irenaeus, salvation consists in both immortality and incorruptibility (thus demanding a resurrection of the body), tying life and being together. Irenaeus “sees Christ as being the truth not of the mind-- his fight against Gnosticism, the most rationalistic movement of the period leads him away from this-- but of the incorruptibility of being.”93 This emphasis on the incorruptibility of being flows from Irenaeus’ and Ignatius’ defense of the Eucharist as the substantive presence of Christ’s risen and incorruptible body. It is exactly in as much as we receive Christ’s true body that we receive eternal life, the resurrection of our own bodies. Thus, life and being are inextricably linked, and it becomes clear that salvation as eternal life has ontological character.

If the Eucharist is not truly Christ in the historical and material sense of the word ‘truth,’ then truth is not life and existence at the same time, since for

91 BAC 78
92 BAC 80-81
93 BAC 80
both men, the Eucharist imparts life. Thus truth had to become historical without ceasing to be ontological.  

The life given in the Eucharist is nothing more than real communion with the life of God, the life of the Trinity, and this communion is realized in the community gathered around the bishop. Thus, we can say that in the Eucharist it becomes clear that eternal life is a life of sharing in the communion of God in an ontological way (through the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.) We have already seen the intrinsic link between ontology and communion, but this point particularly draws out the nature of truth as ontological rather than epistemological, and by ontological we mean expressly that truth implies communion. The experience of the Bishops Ignatius and Irenaeus in defending Christ as the truth through the Eucharist, the source of eternal life, is important but is not yet a coherent synthesis of truth. Let us suffice to say here that already in these early fathers, it is clear that truth is tied to life-- to the life of God which is given in the Eucharistic communion.

Zizioulas points to Maximus the Confessor as the neo-patristic father who creates the necessary synthesis of truth. Maximus is keenly aware of the problems faced by his predecessors: he knows the necessity of truth to be both cosmological and historical, and accepts the ontological importance of truth as communion, while seeing the danger of monistic ontology in the logos approach. Maximus’ brilliant synthesis is this:

... the truth of creation is a dependent truth, while the truth of God’s being is communion in itself. ... Creaturely truth is dependent upon something else, in which it participates; this is truth as communion by participation (as compared with God, who is truth as communion without participation). ... Once more, the

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94 BAC 81
95 BAC 81 see also note 55 on BAC 82
96 BAC 81-82
idea of truth leads us ultimately not to the ‘nature’ of things, as with the Greeks, but to life and communion of beings.\(^{97}\)

Note that this synthesis regarding truth maintains the ontological dialectic between creator and creation which is the foundation of Zizioulas’ metaphysical principle as well. In this way, Maximus enables Christ to be the logos of all creation without binding God to creation by necessity. Thus truth as communion is able to be cosmological without snaring God within the cosmos, and without subordinating beings and life to nature and idea. How then, does this synthesis allow Christ as the ontological truth to enter history?

This question is answered once again by placing the problem in the light of the created-uncreated dialectic through Maximus’ distinction between created and uncreated truth. Zizioulas exposes the fundamental question as: “Can there be truth in the movement of being, when in history this movement is associated with death and decay?”\(^{98}\) In creation, movement always leads toward decay and death, but for God, movement is characterized by ekstasis, by love. God is relation—love—before he is being, because he is first Father (a person who loves), then Trinity (communion in love), then unity, substance and nature. Therefore, Maximus places motion before rest, inverting Origen’s formulation. Where Origen saw motion (decay and death) as sin’s destruction of rest and in this way communion with God, Maximus sees the motion of history as the motion of God’s love which leads to communion.\(^{99}\) Thus the truth of history does not lie in its beginning- but in its end. Just as the end of the loving person of God the Father is the perfect communion of the Trinity, the end of creation is perfect communion with God, and its natural movement of loving God and being loved by God.

\(^{97}\) BAC 94
\(^{98}\) BAC 95
\(^{99}\) BAC 95
(its history) must precede its ultimate truth which is communion with God. Simply put, if the end of history is the annihilation of being (death) then there is not truth in history, but in the resurrection Christ realizes his being (and this being is human and bodily, that is, historical) as eternal.\textsuperscript{100} Turner points to the importance of this point: "The premise that there would be no truth in history if history leads to a non-existence is consistent with an ontological understanding of salvation, and gives truth an eschatological foundation.\textsuperscript{101} Thus, the \textit{truth of history} is its \textit{ultimate truth}: eternal life and incorruptible being in the resurrection of Christ. Zizioulas asserts:

The truth of history lies in the future, and this is to be understood in an ontological sense: history is true, despite change and decay, not just because it is a movement \textit{towards} an end, but mainly because it is a movement \textit{from} the end, since it is the end that gives it meaning... The truth of history is identified thus with the truth of being simply because history is the movement of being towards and from its end which gives it meaning.\textsuperscript{102}

Christ is the logos of this creation, but is its \textit{ultimate} logos- and we have seen that this ultimate logos is precisely communion with God. Christ is the logos of all things not because he is the underlying rational form or nature of being, but because "the substratum of existence is not being but love."\textsuperscript{103} Christ the truth does not represent the mind of God, but the loving will of God (and it might be helpful to describe this will here precisely as the \textit{universal salvific} will of God), and therefore truth cannot be known through the mind, but only through the communion of all beings with God. Maximus points out that "God does not know things according to their own nature but he recognizes them as the

\textsuperscript{100} BAC 108 See Turner 24-25
\textsuperscript{101} Turner 25
\textsuperscript{102} BAC 96
\textsuperscript{103} BAC 97
realizations of His own will since He makes them through His will." Christ is the beginning, the end, and the heart of history, because he is the truth which has entered into that history and made it meaningful by showing its ultimate end in his person. Zizioulas puts it best when he says:

_The incarnate Christ is so identical to the ultimate will of God’s love, that the meaning of created being and the purpose of history are simply the incarnate Christ. All things were made with Christ in mind, or rather at heart, and for this reason irrespective of the fall of man, the incarnation would have occurred._

But precisely how does Christ act as the truth in history? It is here that Zizioulas makes use of the notion of icon. He quotes Maximus in the following way: “The things of the Old Testament are shadow (σκιά); those of the New Testament are image (εἰκόνα); and those of the future state are truth (ἀλήθεια).” By way of the icon, Zizioulas is expressing that the truth is made present in history by way of relationship between future and present in the person of Christ, and not through the mind. According to Robert Turner:

_For Zizioulas the term ‘icon’ is intended to express a dialectic between history and the eschaton which ... “[keeps history from ‘eschatologizing’ itself and the eschaton from being transformed into history, while at the same time assuring the existential encounter of the two.]”_

The truth is iconic because it allows truth to be seen as the “not as a reproduction of the past, but as the presence of what will be.” The idea of icon revolves around the idea of relationship: truth is manifested and in fact made present through the relationship of present and future (eschaton) which exists in the person of Jesus Christ. The historical

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104 BAC 97
105 BAC 97
106 Turner 25- Turner here quotes Zizioulas in translation from French. See Note 65, pg. 25.
107 Turner 25
life, death and resurrection of Christ, as well as the life of the Church, are icons of the ultimate truth-- they make the eschatological truth present in history without that truth being defined by history. Truth does not depend on historical facts:

...iconological language liberates truth from our ‘conception,’ ‘definition’ ‘comprehension,’ of it and protects it from being manipulated and objectified. It also makes it relational, in the sense that the truth of one being is able to be ‘conceived’ only in and through the mirror of another.108

Truth is iconic because it is predicated by God’s will, and not by our minds. We cannot ‘know’ truth except by entering into communion with the person of Jesus Christ who is the truth. At long last, we can safely assert that truth is a person: Jesus Christ. But let us clarify this remark with a few further comments about truth in light of the dialectic between Creator and Creation.

Zizioulas argues that “Our state of fallen existence is characterized precisely by the fact that in our approach to truth, being is constituted before communion. Salvation through the truth thus depends in the last resort upon the identification of truth with communion.”109 Because being is prior to communion, our concept of truth is dominated by epistemology and by the dialectic between subject and object. In this dialectic, one cannot enter into relationship with another being until that being is appropriated and then known as an object. Under this presupposition, we are faced with the givenness of the other and we must acknowledge them before we can love or hate them. Thus the truth of being is necessarily prior to the truth of relation or communion.110 Truth exists in the ‘adequatio’111 between subject and object. This givenness divides truth against freedom,

108 BAC 100
109 BAC 101
110 BAC 102-104
111 BAC 103
for truth consists in accepting that which is given.\textsuperscript{112} The ultimate obliteration of truth for created existence lies in the individualization of persons, which is death. We are incapable of unity (communion) before diversity, and so we are bound to die because being is identified with communion. Salvation demands truth which is communion and life, and therefore it demands authentic personhood.

Zizioulas points out that “The only way for a true person to exist is for being and communion to coincide.”\textsuperscript{113} Jesus Christ is exactly this person, because His being is constituted by His communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit—“He is the revelation of true personhood.”\textsuperscript{114} Christ is the truth because He is not subject to the individualization of creation, but enters into and persists in being through relationship with His Father and the Spirit. His being is ecstatic, and so He is not subject to death, nor is His freedom in conflict with truth. Rather His freedom is the very ground of truth because His freedom is not constituted by His being an individual, but by His love for the Father and Spirit— that is, by His personhood. Robert Turner states “The truth in history is a person, not an idea, memory, or dogmatic formulation.”\textsuperscript{115} Only the person of Christ is true, because only in a person can unity and diversity, being and communion, coincide.

The Eucharist, as the realization of Christ in history par excellence, and as the eschatologization of Christ points us already toward the ecclesial nature of truth, and toward the true nature of the Church. The relationship of the Truth and the Church will become much clearer as we examine Zizioulas’ ecclesial principle. But let us first point out that through his eschatological principle, Zizioulas has accomplished a coherent

\textsuperscript{112} See BAC 103
\textsuperscript{113} BAC 107
\textsuperscript{114} BAC 107
\textsuperscript{115} Turner 27
theory of eschatological truth as the ground of ontological salvation in the person of Christ. In short, Zizioulas has powerfully answered Joseph Ratzinger’s demand that “Here, in fact lies the task of contemporary eschatology: to marry perspectives, so that person and community, present and future, are seen in their unity.”116

III
Ecclesiology

And thus, just as the head and members of a living body, though not identical, are inseparable, so too Christ and the Church can neither be confused nor separated, and constitute a single “whole Christ.”
-Dominus Iesus 16

In the introduction to Communion and Otherness, John Zizioulas situates ecclesiology in his theology in the following way:

All the observations we have made so far concerning faith in the Trinity, in Christ and in the Spirit take their concrete form in the Church. It is there that communion with the other fully reflects the relation between communion and otherness in the holy Trinity, in Christ and in the Spirit.117

Like the rest of Zizioulas’ thought, his ecclesial principle develops out of his concern for salvation. The Church is the locus of authentic personhood, meaning authentic communion and otherness, and this is precisely the meaning of salvation. The Church realizes communion between God and humanity while preserving the dialectic, that is, the otherness between them. Therefore, the Catholic Church is the eschatological realization of salvation in history, and this is precisely because it is identified with Christ. This unity through identity is accomplished only through the work of the Spirit, and is consummately realized in the Eucharist.

Zizioulas emphatically declares the Christological nature of the Church. The Church, as such, is Christ, and Christ is the Church. Zizioulas states that the first appearance of the Church is not Pentecost, but is the very incarnation of the person of Jesus Christ. This means that ecclesiology “becomes an organic chapter of

117 COA 6
Christology," and that the truth of the Church "ceases to be a system of ideas... and becomes a truth ontological in character." The very identity of the Church is the person of Christ, and so the Church is true to the same extent and in the same way that Christ is the truth. The Church is the eschatological and iconic presence of Christ in history, just as we have seen Christ himself to be the eschatological and iconic truth in history. The Church is a historical reality, but does not derive Her identity from history—She derives Her identity eschatologically to be Christ. Thus the Church is the sole and supreme bearer of truth and salvation to history and to humanity, because She is not only instituted by Christ, but is identified with Christ.

We will examine the critical role of the spirit for ecclesiology momentarily, but first let us note exactly why Zizioulas can mutually identify Christ and the Church. It seems easy to admit that the Church depends on Christ for Her identity, but Zizioulas also asserts that Christ is incomplete without the Church.

...Christ is not Christ unless He is an existence in the Spirit. Such a Pneumatological constitution of Christology implies, from the viewpoint of ontology, the understanding of Christ not in terms of individuality which affirms itself by distancing itself from other individualities, but in terms of personhood which implies a particularity established in and through communion... It is this that allows the Biblical notion of "corporate personality" to be applied to Christ: Christ without His body is not Christ but an individual of the worst type. 

Christ's true identity is His eschatological and therefore ultimate identity. This identity includes His body, the Church. It is eschatology which allows Zizioulas to assert that Christ must be the Corporate Christ, and the corporate Christ, that is, the Body of Christ, has been postulated as the Church's identity since the theology of Paul. McPartlan

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118 EBC 15
119 EBC 15
120 BAC 183
reminds his readers of Christ’s corporate identity because “from the beginning, Christ is a person, defined by communion with others; he is one who is defined by many.” The Church and Christ are co-identified, but this is only understood in the eschatological sense, and only through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The goal of Zizioulas’ thoroughly Christo-centric ecclesiology is precisely the Body of Christ as the eschatological reality of salvation. He points out that if the “phenomenon of the Church as community,” rather than the incorporate Christ is taken as “the starting-point in looking at the Church and Her unit… in the first case, which is where a Pneumato-centric ecclesiology leads, the Church is considered as ‘the body of Christians’ united in the Holy Spirit.” This is inadequate precisely because the character of salvation is ontological communion in the person of Christ. Therefore, a christo-centric identity of the Church demands “the necessity of considering this unity, first and foremost, sacramentally, i.e. as the incorporation of human beings in Christ.”

The eschatological nature of Christ and salvation demand that the Church be identified as the corporate Christ, but this eschatological identification is possible only by clearly establishing the role of the Holy Spirit for Christ and the Church.

Although it is clear that Christ must be the center point of ecclesiology, that Christ represents the fundamental identity of the Church, it would be equally mistaken to separate Christology from Pneumatology in any way. Zizioulas points out that it is a “question of priority.” The Church depends upon both Christology and Pneumatology

121 McPartlan 166
122 EBC 16
123 Zizioulas points out here that protestant ecclesologies are commonly Pneumato-centric, resulting in a mere ‘charismatic sociology,’ like the formulation ‘societas fidei et Spiritus Sancti in cordibus’ of the Augsberg Confessions. See EBC 16, esp. note 40 and 42.
124 EBC 16
125 BAC 127
in their unity for its identity, but the distinct roles of Christ and the Spirit must be clearly established. This distinction is difficult in as much as the economic activity of any one member of the Trinity always implies the unity of the other two. However, we can say that only Christ becomes incarnate: "only the Son becomes history." 126 As Zizioulas points out, any historical event of the economy of salvation must be understood as part of the Christ-event, because the Father and the Spirit cannot be limited by time and history: "to be involved in history is not the same as to become history." 127

If the role of Christ is to become history, the role of the Spirit is to eschatologize history. It is the Spirit who constitutes Christ not only as a historical person, but as the Eschatological Christ - the bringer of salvation. Jesus is in history, but it is by the work of the Holy Spirit that he also transcends history. The role of the Spirit in Christology is manifested throughout the Scriptures, especially in the scenes of Christ's baptism, His transfiguration, and consummately in His resurrection. Precisely in as much as Jesus Christ is in communion with the Holy Spirit and by that Spirit in communion with His Father, can we say that he is the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, and thus the 'eschatologically definitive bringer of salvation.' 128 It is the Holy Spirit who constitutes Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ. Thus "The Spirit is the beyond history, and when he acts in history he does so in order to bring into history the last days, the eschata," 129 and we have seen that this eschatological reality is nothing other than the

126 BAC 130
127 BAC 130. Note here that it is precisely the mystery of the incarnation that Christ becomes history without being limited to or defined by that history. Christ is so defined by his communion with the Father and the Spirit that even in truly becoming history, he cannot be limited by that history. Rather that history becomes redefined by His communion with the Trinity - it receives its eschatological identity from Christ in as much as he becomes history.
129 BAC 130
very person of Christ. Christ is inseparable from the Spirit because the Spirit’s role is to constitute Christ in History.

The Spirit is not only the principle of Christ’s eschatological constitution, but of his corporate constitution. Zizioulas points out that “the Spirit has always, since the time of Paul, been associated with the notion of communion (κοινωνία).” The Spirit is the one who brings unity, and it is the Spirit who constitutes the historical Christ as one who is defined by many, that is, constituted eschatologically, and therefore by communion. This eschatological communion which constitutes Christ in the Spirit is exactly the incorporated Church:

In the same Spirit of God, Christ contains us in himself, by His very constitution as Christ in the Spirit. He thus in the Spirit contains by definition the eschata, our final destiny, ourselves as we shall be; He is the eschatological man- yet, let me repeat, not as an individual but as Church, i.e. because of our being included in Him. 130

As the eschatologizer of history, it is the Spirit who constitutes the Church as Christ’s Body, and Christ as His corporate identity: His body, the Church. Therefore, Christ and the Spirit are inseparable, the Spirit being constitutive of Christ, and Christ being the very characterizing identity of the Spirit, His Spirit. Likewise, the Holy Spirit “undoubtedly constitutes the supreme principle of the Church,” without being the “starting point” (the fundamental identity) of the Church. Therefore, because the Church is always and everywhere constituted as Christ by the Spirit, Zizioulas declares:

The body of Christ is by becoming again and again what it is as if it were not at all that which it is. The Spirit brings the charismata from the future, from the future, from the eschata, as new events; he does not elicit them out of history as a deposit of grace. 132

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130 BAC 183 see also BAC 111
131 EBC 16
132 COA 296
The Church is identified with Christ, indeed, constituted by the Spirit as Christ, most perfectly in the Eucharist. Zizioulas points to the Eucharist as “the supreme sensible incorporation of the Church in space and time into Christ.”\textsuperscript{133} It is first and foremost in the Eucharist that the Church is incorporated into Christ, and thus ‘the Eucharist makes the Church.’\textsuperscript{134} The Eucharist is not the only way the Church is incorporated in to Christ, as Zizioulas points out that the Church “is not expressed to the full in a Eucharistic unity which lacks any preconditions. The Church has always felt herself to be united in faith, love, baptism, holiness of life, etc.”\textsuperscript{135} The Eucharist is the supreme reality of the Church’s unity, and while it alone does not encompass every aspect of the Church’s unity, no other aspect of the Church’s unity is understandable apart from the Eucharist. Thus, although Zizioulas does not use this formulation, we might accurately say that the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life.”\textsuperscript{136}

In his doctoral thesis, published in English as \textit{Eucharist, Bishop, Church}, Zizioulas argues that in the first three centuries, the historical reality of the unity of the Church was identified with the Eucharist. This historical argument establishes a compelling picture of the consciousness of the early Church regarding its unity in the Eucharist,\textsuperscript{137} but cannot be examined at length here. It is for us to uncover exactly why

\textsuperscript{133} EBC 17
\textsuperscript{134} This formulation is attributed to Zizioulas as well as other proponents of ‘Eucharistic Ecclesiology’ (for example Afanassiev) and is the essential distinguishing doctrine of this movement. It is fair to place Zizioulas among this movement, but he also makes certain criticisms which we will see later. See McPartlan xviii-xix, 226-228, EBC 17.
\textsuperscript{135} EBC 17
\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Lumen Gentium} 11
\textsuperscript{137} I can only hope that Zizioulas’ excellent historical argument can, and perhaps already has, breathed the fresh air into Patristic scholarship which he hopes it is able to- both in terms of its content and its method (which does not pretend to inspect history either ‘objectively’ or place the vantage point of inquiry ‘within
Zizioulas asserts the Eucharist as the fundamental locus of the Church’s communion, and examine this ecclesiology on theological rather than historical grounds. The following passage largely summarizes Zizioulas’ conclusions:

Historical research views the Eucharist not simply as a vertical communion of each of the faithful with God in Christ, but also as a horizontal union of the members of the Church with each other through which each person’s communion with God necessarily has to pass being, thus, made into an ecclesial expression instead of an individual one... the Eucharist is examined by the historian not so much as a thing, but rather as an action: not so much as a communion in “holy things,” but rather as a “communion of saints” (i.e. of “holy people”), expressed as such through the Eucharistic synaxis of which the visible center and head has always been the bishop, as the one who “presides,” and “offers.” This connection of the bishop with the Eucharist and of both with the unity of the Church becomes even more necessary in view of the fact that the whole canonical unity of the Church... cannot in principle be understood apart from the Divine Eucharist. ¹³⁸

There are three important points which we should recognize in this summary. First, the Eucharist represents an ecclesial reality, a synaxis which constitutes the Church as a community. Second, the canonical unity of the Church, as well as the entire order of charismata contained in Her, are inseparable from the Eucharist. Third, the unity of the Church in the Eucharist likewise identifies Her unity in the person of the Bishop.

It is precisely in the Eucharist that the Spirit constitutes Christ as a corporate person in which the many become one. Zizioulas points out that “from an examination of the oldest texts of primitive Christianity, the Epistles of Paul, it transpires that the Eucharistic assembly was identified with the ‘Church of God’ herself.”¹³⁹ The Church of God is considered to be those gathered epi to auto, in the same place, and this means those who are gathered at the Eucharist table. The Church is principally defined not by

¹³⁸ EBC 18
¹³⁹ EBC 52
those who share a common faith, but who share communion in the person of Christ: who are gathered into the person of Christ, a unity unto identity: “the connection of the Eucharist with the consciousness that the ‘many’ are united to the point of identity with the One who offers himself on their behalf.” Thus, Zizioulas asserts that because the Eucharist affects authentic communion through incorporation into the person of Christ, the Church is identified by the Eucharist assembly. She cannot be except in and through it (even though this is not the only aspect of Her being.) Thus Zizioulas asserts:

... from the first appearance of the term ekklesia there was a most profound connection, even to the point of identity, between this term and the Eucharist celebrated in each city. Each such Eucharist constituted the expression in space and time of the Church of God herself.

If the Church is identified by the Eucharist, then it seems a matter of course that Her canonical unity be connected to Her Eucharistic unity. In as much as the Church is constituted through the Eucharist, Her structure must reflect the Eucharist. If Christ is Her identity, then Christ himself must be the source of Her authority. The Church is an incorporation into Christ, so “the heavenly worship was truly represented typo-logically in the Eucharist on earth, so the authority of Christ was truly reflected in the ministers of the Church.” Zizioulas clarifies that “The Church ministries, therefore, were not understood as existing in parallel with Christ’s authority, but as expressing the very authority of Christ.” The various charismata, that is, gifts or ministries which the Spirit makes present, can do nothing other than make Christ himself present in their own way, for we have seen that it is the principle of the Spirit and the nature of the Church to

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140 EBC 54
141 EBC 53
142 EBC 68: “Identification of the Eucharistic assembly with the ‘Church of God’ led automatically to the co-incidence of Eucharistic unity with the basic canonical unity of the Church.”
143 EBC 60
constitute Christ. Each charismata in its own way manifests Christ and derives its
authority only as part of his corporate identity. This means that the canonical order of the
Church, which orders the various charismata, reflects the unity of those charismata in the
Eucharist, where they are seen in their authentic unity and diversity as the incorporation
of Christ. "This makes the Church a theocratic unity,"144 because Christ’s identity as
Lord and King is not parallel to, but is expressed incarnately in the Church as He governs
"through it and in it."145 The order of the Church’s law and hierarchy does not reflect
Christ, but manifests him, and therefore derives its identity first and foremost from the
Eucharist: “the Divine Eucharist through which Christ was united to the point of identity
with the Church, making it possible in this way for the charismata to be distributed,
became not only the source of canonical unity, but also the chief area in which it was
expressed.”146 It is because of this idea that Zizioulas rails against any notion of antithesis
between “spirit and order, charism and hierarchy, because hierarchy and order without a
spiritual charism were inconceivable.”147

The Bishop is the most important of all ministers, because in his person he
contains the unity of the Church, not only canonically, but also, and primarily, through is
charism. Zizioulas asserts that “The task of the Bishop was from the beginning
principally liturgical consisting in the offering of the Divine Eucharist.”148 Because the

144 EBC 61
145 EBC 60
146 EBC 61 Note: Zizioulas emphasizes this point especially in defending the ecclesiology of Cyprian, for
whom “A basic presupposition... is the coincidence between the canonical boundaries of the Church and
her essential boundaries. This coincidence was achieved... through the unity of each Church in one
Eucharist under one bishop.”146 Two notable points here are that Cyprian’s ecclesiological formulations are
concerned principally to protect the notion of salvation in and through the Church, and that the West,
especially after Augustine, who does not accept the co-incidence of the canonical and charismatic
boundaries of the Church. See EBC 148-149
147 EBC 62
148 EBC 66
Bishop presides over the Eucharist, his charism is to represent Christ in his role in the heavenly liturgy: as the one to whom and through whom all worship is addressed: “This was from the beginning the place the Bishop occupied as the one who offered the Divine Eucharist, and for this reason the Church saw him as the image and type of God or of Christ.” Zizioulas points out that “the episkopos par excellence is God, Whose place in the Eucharistic assembly was now occupied by the Bishop who presided over it.”

The Bishop is the type of Christ because in his person as he offers the sacrifice of Christ to the Father (the sacrifice of the many, in which they are incorporated,) the many become one in Christ, and the Bishop with Christ is identified through the many.

Zizioulas points out the essential character of the Bishop:

He was the one who would offer the Eucharist to God in the name of the Church, thus bringing up to the throne of God the whole body of Christ. He was the one in whom the “many” united would become “one,” being brought back to him who had made them, thanks to their redemption from Satan by the one who took them upon himself.

In this way, the Bishop is unthinkable except in connection with his role as president of the Eucharistic liturgy, as the center of the Eucharistic assembly, and likewise the Eucharistic is unthinkable without reference to the Bishop. In this same sense, both apostolic succession and the ‘charism of truth’ both derive from the Bishop’s role as president of the Eucharist. Thus, Zizioulas firmly establishes that the Church is an incorporation, a unity to the point of identity, with Christ, and this reality is constituted by the Holy Spirit specifically in the Eucharist and the person of the Bishop.

149 EBC 67
150 EBC 67
151 BAC 153
To completely understand the importance of Zizioulas’ ecclesial principle we must make one more note regarding the catholicity of the Church. The Church is Catholic (universal) precisely because She contains the whole Christ, principally through the Eucharist. Therefore Zizioulas asserts that “The Church is the fullness (pleroma) of Christ because she constitutes Christ in His fullness.”\textsuperscript{152} The Church is universal precisely because Her identity is Christ, who is the eschatological and therefore universal man. The Church (in her eschatological, that is, Her true identity) represents the incorporation of all persons, and indeed all creation into Christ, and therefore into communion with the Godhead. The Church is not universal because of her historical reality, although her historical reality manifests her Catholic nature, as it is constituted by the Spirit.

Zizioulas claims that “In consequence, the local Church is catholic not because of her relationship with the “universal” Church, but \textit{because of the presence within her of the whole Christ in the one Eucharist under the leadership of the Bishop}.”\textsuperscript{153} For Zizioulas every local Church is ‘catholic’ in its full meaning, because it is the eschatological manifestation of the whole Christ. Zizioulas asserts that “There is one Church, as there is one God. But the expression of this one Church is the communion of the many local Churches. Communion and oneness coincide in ecclesiology.”\textsuperscript{154} Remember that the local Church is the Eucharistic assembly gathered around a Bishop, and not simply any parish in which the Eucharist is celebrated.\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{152} EBC 119  
\textsuperscript{153} EBC 117  
\textsuperscript{154} BAC 134-135  
\textsuperscript{155} It is here that Zizioulas most notably distinguishes himself from ‘Eucharistic Ecclesiology’ ala Afanassiev.
In asserting the universal Church as the communion of local catholic Churches, Zizioulas is defending otherness (diversity) as the ground of communion rather than an obstacle to communion. This is clear especially as he claims “No Christian believer could participate in the unity of the Church throughout the world if he did not first belong to the unity of a particular local Church.” He simply will not allow a conception of the universal Church as a communion which destroys, rather than constitutes the authentic otherness of local Churches. But to be Catholic, these local Churches must maintain communion because they share the same Christ, and are in fact the same Church.

As we have discovered, the unity of the Church is the focus of Zizioulas' entire inquiry into the early Church. This unity is by way of identity in Christ, and this is linked to the person of the Bishop. Zizioulas asserts that “Universal unity, therefore, consists not in a mutual complementarity of parts or in a democratic ‘majority’ but in the coincidence of the local Churches with each other in the same place, i.e. ‘in the gnome of Jesus Christ.’” The Church is one because the Bishops are united in one mind, the mind of Christ, and each Bishop represents the corporate identity of those gathered around him in the Eucharistic synaxis. Zizioulas points out three indicators, or criterion for judging the Bishops to be of the same mind. First, there is the ‘chronological or historical’ coincidence of the local Church with the past, meaning that it could trace its history back to originating in the one primitive Church of the Apostles. Second, there is a ‘spatial or geographical verification,’ which essentially means that a Church is in communion with others because it is identifiable with them in its life and practice. Third, the “charismatic or sacramental’ verification ensures that through apostolic succession, the Church’s

156 EBC 153
157 EBC 154
sacramental life was traced back to the Apostles. This last point demonstrates that "the truth of the Church is unbreakably bound up with the charism of the Priesthood, and is therefore preserved by the Bishops;" which means that the Catholicity of the Church depends once again on the Eucharist and the Bishop.

The Catholic Church is such precisely through the communion of each local Church by way of the coincidence of the Bishops in the common mind of Christ, therefore: "The only center of such unity for the Church... was Jesus Christ." However, the concrete expression of this unity was the council, where the Bishops gathered in the same place to manifest their unity and to protect the communion of Churches by denying communion to those who were not of one mind with them. The importance of orthodoxy for unity became pressing especially in light of heresies and schisms. Thus by necessity the Bishop "combined at once right liturgical life and right faith." However, orthodoxy is a pre-condition for the Eucharist, and cannot constitute communion on its own. Zizioulas criticizes the West for interpreting the Bishops' 'charism of truth' in terms of right faith and teaching without this being conditioned by the Eucharist. Thus the Bishop in the west became primarily an administrator, and no longer primarily and consummately the president of the Divine Eucharist. In asserting that orthodoxy alone without the Eucharist cannot constitute communion, Zizioulas is once again decrying any notion of truth apart from ontological communion.

Therefore, as we reach the end of our comments regarding Zizioulas' ecclesial principle, let us duly note the personal nature of the Church. Her identity is Christ, and

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158 EBC 158
159 EBC 156
160 EBC 134
161 See EBC 133
this is always constituted by the Spirit in orientation to the glory of the Father. Thus, the communion of persons is the most fundamental aspect of the Church. The Church is the reality of our salvation, because she not only mirrors, but realizes the very life of the Trinity in history. Thus Zizioulas begins Being and Communion by announcing that “The Church is not simply an institution. She is a ‘mode of existence,’ a way of being.”162
IV
Anthropology

"A problem cannot be solved on the level of consciousness from which it was raised"
- Albert Einstein

The metaphysical, eschatological, and ecclesial principles which we have examined provide a solid foundation for understanding Zizioulas’ theology. More importantly, our examination of these principles has demonstrated that, at bottom, each of these principles points to and depends upon the person. Therefore, we are now equipped to develop the goal of this thesis— a generalized anthropology.

The anthropology which Zizioulas develops here depends entirely upon a prosopology163: his concept of the person as such grounds and conditions his understanding of the human person, and because of the created-uncreated dialectic this concept of the person depends upon the persons of the Divine Trinity.

The Cappadocian Church Fathers developed and bequeathed to us a concept of God, who exists as a communion of free love of unique, irreplaceable and unrepeatable identities, that is, true persons in the absolute ontological sense. It is of such a God that man is meant to be an ‘image’. There is no higher and fuller anthropology than this anthropology of true and full personhood.164

Here we see the full weight of the dialectical relationship between God and creation for Zizioulas’ theology, and the person as the key to this relationship. If humans are to hope in salvation, it is only in as much as they are persons who are capable of true and authentic personhood through communion with the Divine Persons. Thus, the person is

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163 Prosopology is taken to mean the study of the person, as a fundamental ontological concept. This term is not in any way meant to reflect the views of the Nestorius and the other proponents of the fourth century heresy which regarded Christ as a prosopic rather than a hypostatic union. This heresy derives precisely from an insufficient understanding of the person- an unacceptable prosopology which understood person essentially as nature and not as hypostasis, and therefore points to the critical importance of prosopology.

164 COA 168
the ground of salvation. The fundamental ground of the human being is his or her personhood, just as the ground of God’s own being is the person of the Father. The reality of salvation as communion with God is the person of Jesus Christ, whose person is the Truth which enters history, is the Church, and is the recapitulation of all creation into the Godhead. Any anthropology which begins anywhere but with the person cannot express the full truth of the human person, and therefore cannot establish our salvation. Thus, Zizioulas declares “The Cappadocian Fathers gave to the world the most precious concept it possesses: the concept of the person, as an ontological concept in the ultimate sense.” Before we proceed to discuss anthropology, let us review the basic tenants of the prosopology which was presented in the first chapter.

Zizioulas’ prosopology can be summarized in three points: the person is communion, the person is unique, and the person is free. To say that the person is communion is to say that “the person cannot exist in isolation,” because person is a fundamentally relational term. Authentic personhood must result in communion with others, and so love is the personal way of being. Our identity cannot be established except through relationship with the other which affirms their personhood in love. Personhood is ecstatic, because it demands the movement out of self and towards the other— it demands relationship. This is the very life of the Trinity, the result of the Father being a true person.

In this love the person is unique, because the relationship of communion must be a communion of others, a relationship of true unity in diversity. Communion does not destroy difference but unites difference in communion. This is the source of the critical

\[165\] COA 166
\[166\] COA 166
patristic notion that difference is not division. If persons are to be in communion, they must be unique, that is, truly other. The real otherness of the person means that they are unrepeatable and irreplaceable. The ecstatic nature of the person is generative of otherness: love is the cause of being, and it is love that makes beings persist in their otherness.

Finally, the person must be free, because their existence is established by nothing beyond their relationship with the other, and especially with the undying person of the Father. The person cannot exist except through relationship: thus the ground of the person is love, and love means to freely will the existence of the other as such, and to be so willed in return. Thus the authentic personhood of the Father already implies a communion of persons, a Trinity of unity in diversity that is manifested not by necessity, but by love—"Personal identity can emerge only from love as freedom and freedom as love."\(^\text{167}\)

All of this means that the concept of the person is the fundamental ontological category, that the person is ultimate. That person is prior to nature is perhaps Zizioulas' greatest contribution to anthropology. He asserts that "the human being usually receives an answer pointing to what he is, not to who he is,"\(^\text{168}\) but "Personhood is not about qualities or capacities of any kind: biological, social, or moral. Personhood is about hypostasis, that is, the claim to uniqueness in the absolute sense of the term."\(^\text{169}\) Only the person is truly unique—truly other: "nature in itself cannot give you existence and being as an absolutely unique and particular identity. Nature always points to the general."\(^\text{170}\)
Only the person is free because “a person is not subject to norms and stereotypes; a person cannot be classified in any way... only a person is free in the true sense.”\(^{171}\) The being of a person is not given by a nature, form, or idea, but is freely willed through relationship with the other. Being is hypostasized by the person as communion, and so the person is “freedom to be other in an absolute ontological sense.”\(^{172}\)

Zizioulas’ foundational prosopology roots his anthropology in the dialectic relationship between creator and creation. We have already seen that this relationship is only properly understood in the light of eschatology, and that the eschaton is made present in history through Christ and his Body the Church. Therefore, from Zizioulas’ prosopology, two clear stepping stones towards the concrete anthropology we seek are his eschatological and ecclesial principles.

The eschatological principle entails that the truth of the human person is the ultimate truth: the truth of the _eschatological_ human person. Zizioulas asserts that “it is not on the basis of someone’s past or present that we should identify and accept him or her, but on the basis of their future.”\(^{173}\) The truth of the human person cannot be seen in who they are, but only in who they _will be_. This truth is indeed shown once and for all in the person of Jesus Christ, the eschatological man _par excellence_, not in an individual identity but in his corporate (and therefore truly personal) identity, the Church. Incorporation into the Church, the body of Christ is the ultimate truth of the human person, and therefore the reality of salvation. Therefore, Zizioulas’ anthropology relies at bottom on the distinction between fallen man and ecclesial man, and in this way it truly grounds a hope for ontological salvation in the body of Christ.

\(^{171}\) COA 9
\(^{172}\) COA 11
\(^{173}\) COA 6
The driving force for anthropology is salvation, because salvation means authentic personhood. For this reason, Zizioulas focuses on the eschatological Church as the locus of authentic personhood, the reality of a new way of being for man. According to Zizioulas, "patristic theology sees man in the light of two 'modes of existence.' One may be called the hypostasis of biological existence, the other the hypostasis of ecclesial existence." The hypostasis of ecclesial existence represents the ultimate truth and identity of the human person, and Zizioulas' anthropology takes the form of analyzing the dialectic between that ecclesial hypostasis and the biological hypostasis which characterizes the human person's fallen existence. This anthropology consists mainly of drawing out the distinctions between the two modes of existence, but also establishes the human capacity to be transformed from a biological to an ecclesial way of being. In other words, this anthropology grounds the reality of an ontological salvation in an eschatological identity of the human person by which the human person is truly divinized without being de-humanized.

The biological hypostasis of the human person is a necessary (in the sense that it is given) existence which is determined by the laws of nature. "The hypostasis of biological existence is 'constituted' by a man's conception and birth." Every human person is born out of an act of communion between two persons: they are born out of love. Yet this love, which takes the form of a bodily expression, creates life but is unable to establish the person as freedom. Zizioulas describes two 'passions' from which the biological person suffers: ontological necessity and individualism. The first passion describes the fact that the human being is constituted as having a nature to which they are
bound. This nature is controlled by their biological makeup and the ultimate fact of this nature is death. The human person is born in to a world in which their identity is largely *given* by their biology, and the ultimate reality given to every living being is death. Thus “the person as a being ‘subsists’ not as freedom but as necessity.” The passion of ontological necessity means that the human being is not free to assert their own existence as such through communion with others, but their being is given to them by nature, and so the act of human love which constitutes a new being fails to constitute an authentic person as such. Something more than human nature is necessary for personhood, that is, for salvation.

The second passion which faces the biological hypostasis is that of individualism. The biological drive of the human being demands that it identify and perpetuate itself in opposition to the other. The development of the human as a biological being does not lead to personhood, first of all because the laws of biology aim at self-preservation and self-affirmation in the form of differentiation from others, rather than ecstatic self giving in relationship. Nevertheless the body is not only the axis of separation between individuals, but is also the axis of relationship between individuals: “The body tends toward the person but leads finally to the individual.” Human relationships are embodied relationships, and it is through the body that humans build communion as well as separation. Zizioulas describes the body as “the ‘mask’ of hypocrisy, the fortress of individualism, the vehicle of the final separation, death.” Death is the ultimate

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176 BAC 50
177 See BAC 51- It is particularly noteworthy here that the process of biological maturation always involves a breaking of the relationship of necessity with the parent, rather than an affirmation of this relationship. Thus the biological character of the person alone leads to individualization rather than love.
178 BAC 51
179 BAC 52
limitation of the biological hypostasis because the body alone cannot be the locus of real
communion and this is so because every act of communion which is created through the
body will eventually end in the death and individualization of the bodies involved.

It is difficult to understand what Zizioulas means by all of this, but this much is
clear: The body is the realm of relationship with others, but this relationship must fail to
result in lasting communion because the body is ruled by death. Death, as the dissolution
of the person, proves that for the biological hypostasis even ecstatic bodily relationships
fail to result in the gift of the complete self to the other, because the body precedes the
person, and so the individual being always precedes the relationship. If the person
survives as such through their relationship with others, then the biological hypostasis
cannot be the ground of survival: it always leads to death. Zizioulas points out that “this
‘failure’ of the biological hypostasis is not the result of some acquired fault of a moral
kind (transgression), but of the very constitutional make-up of the hypostasis, that is, of
the biological act of the perpetuation of the species.” 180 The failure of the biological
hypostasis as person is already necessary in the biological constitution of fallen human
persons. It is for this reason that original sin is transmitted through the very act of the
constitution of each human person and is passed biologically: not because of the
sinfulness of the act of conception, but because of the failure of the biological hypostasis
to create authentic communion, and therefore authentic persons. The following passage
demonstrates the important implications of the biological hypostasis:

The tragedy of the biological constitution of man’s hypostasis does not lie
in his not being a person because of it; it lies in his tending toward a person
through it and failing. Sin is precisely this failure. And sin is the tragic prerogative
of the person alone.

180 BAC 52
Consequently, for salvation to become possible, for the unsuccessful hypostasis to succeed, it is necessary that eros and the body, as expression of ecstasy and of the hypostasis of the person, should cease to be the bearers of death. Two things therefore appear to be indispensable: (a) that the two basic components of the biological hypostasis, eros and the body, should not be destroyed (a flight from these elements would entail for man a privation of those means by which he expresses himself equally as ecstasy and as hypostasis, that is, as person); and (b) that the constitutional make-up of the hypostasis should be changed-- not that a moral change or improvement should be found but a kind of new birth for man. 181

The new birth of which Zizioulas speaks is baptism, the birth into an ecclesial hypostasis. We have already established that the Church is an incorporation into the person of Christ, and so the ecclesial hypostasis of the human person is a hypostasization according to the corporate identity of Jesus Christ. “Thanks to Christ man can henceforth himself ‘subsist,’ can affirm his existence as personal not on the basis of the immutable laws of his nature, but on the basis of a relationship with God which is identified with what Christ in freedom and love possesses as Son of God with the Father.”182 This new way of being, the authentically personal way of being “according to the image of God means living in the way God exists, that is, as an image of God’s personhood, and this would amount to ‘becoming God.’ This is what the theosis of man means in the thinking of the Greek Fathers.”183

The ecclesial hypostasis describes how the created-uncreated dialectic is at once bridged and maintained through the common prosopology of man and God. Man can never be God by nature, by what he is, but his destiny is to share in the life of God: to be a person like God by becoming who he is.184 We have already seen the characteristics of

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181 BAC 52-53
182 BAC 56
183 COA 166
184 See COA 165
the ecclesial hypostasis when we examined the nature of Christ, especially in his historical corporate identity, the Church: "The first and most important characteristic of the Church is that she brings man into a kind of relationship with the world which is not determined with the laws of biology." The chief characteristics of the ecclesial hypostasis of the person are that she or he is ontologically free, realized in ecclesial communion, eschatologically true, Eucharistic in nature and loving in action.

The ecclesial hypostasis is ontologically free because he or she is constituted by communion with the Holy Trinity in the person of Jesus Christ, by a share in the life of God. Therefore they are constituted by the love which the persons of the Trinity share, and have no need of nature to create their existence: "the nature does not determine the person; the person enables the nature to exist; freedom is identified with the being of man." The authentic person is realized precisely in the Church, because "in the Church man transcends exclusivism." The Church is the corporate identity of Christ, the locus and ground of authentic unity in diversity. It is in the Church that the human person is capable of being person rather than individual, because in Her all are united to the point of identity in Christ. The Church is the historical realization of Christ, through which God is revealed to be a communion of free persons in love. Thus for historical human persons, it is precisely in the Church that we can enter into this communion.

The ecclesial hypostasis therefore derives his or her truth, his or her ultimate identity, not from their nature, but from their destiny, just as the Church derives Her identity to be the eschatological reality of Christ through the Holy Spirit. The authentic person receives their personhood from the future: "not as that which he is, but as that

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185 BAC 56
186 BAC 57
187 BAC 57
which he will be; the ecclesial identity is linked with eschatology, that is, with the final outcome of his existence.188 The ecclesial hypostasis exists in history as an incorporation into Christ, the end of history: it is the promise and realization of the human person’s ability to overcome their biological necessity and share in the life of God with all other persons. The ecclesial hypostasis is ‘already but not yet,’189 “the faith of man in his capacity to become a person and his hope that he will indeed become an authentic person… faith and hope in the immortality of man as a person.”190

The supreme ecclesial and eschatological reality is the Eucharist, and so the authentic person is inherently Eucharistic in nature. Just as the Church is most fully herself in the Eucharist (as the ‘supreme sensible incorporation into Christ’), so the human being is most fully person in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist the person is drawn into the life of God, and is hypostasized by their ontological communion with Jesus Christ, that is, with His corporate identity, the Body of Christ. It is in the Eucharist that persons realize ontological communion with each other that is not limited by their biology, because that communion is precisely the communion of the Holy Trinity.

Zizioulas goes so far as to say that “all that I have said above to describe the ecclesial hypostasis as something different from the biological corresponds historically and experientially only to the holy Eucharist.”191 This is demonstrated in that “The Eucharist is the only historical context of human existence where the terms ‘father,’ ‘brother,’ etc, lose their biological exclusiveness and reveal, as we have seen, relationships of free and

188 BAC 59
189 See BAC 62
190 BAC 58
191 BAC 60
universal love." The very heart of the person is the Eucharist, and the Eucharist is the defining moment of the person as such.

The person is constituted as Eucharistic precisely because it is in the Eucharist that they are capable of real communion, that is, love. Love is the existential character of the ecclesial hypostasis, just as the love which flows from the Eucharist is the very heart of the existential reality of the Church. The authentic person is constituted not by nature but by love, just as Christ is constituted as a corporate identity, that is, by His love for all persons. The new way of being which the ecclesial hypostasis creates is the way of love: the way of authentic personhood. In Christ, and especially in the Eucharist, the Father "can concentrate on one person as the expression of the whole of nature, (and) sees in this person the hypostasis through which all men and all things are loved and in relation to which they are all hypostasized." Authentic personhood, that is, the personhood of Jesus Christ, is characterized by absolute love, a love so great that all things are brought into relationship in His love-- in His person. It is precisely this love which the ecclesial hypostasis actualizes. This love is the ultimate destiny of the human person, and so John Paul II declares that "The person is a being for whom the only suitable dimension is love."

How does baptism transform the person from biological to ecclesial hypostasis? First of all, because the ecclesial hypostasis is an essentially eschatological identity who receives his or her identity not only from the perspective of the future end of time, but from the future recapitulation of all things in Christ, "there is no question of the ecclesial hypostasis, the authentic person, emerging as a result of the human race, whether

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192 BAC 60
193 BAC 63
biological or historical." Baptism is a new birth into a relationship of communion with the Holy Trinity, and salvation is the bringing of this relationship to its fullness. This is a process in history, but if this process becomes limited to history, even in such a way that history naturally leads to the recapitulation at the 'end of time,' the work of salvation fails to be the work of a transcendent God (Jesus Christ the second person of the Holy Trinity) and becomes the work of human 'nature.' In this case, Jesus is seen as savior merely because he is Jesus the first century Jew, and not because of his relationship of Trinitarian communion with the Father and Spirit. More profoundly, Baptism is the work of the Holy Spirit, and if the eschatological dialectic between God and world, recapitulation and history, is denied then there can no longer be any room for the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. The ecclesial hypostasis is more than the ultimate telos of the human person; it is an entirely new way of being which can only derive from incorporation into the person of Jesus Christ.

However, this new birth is not a destruction of the old person but a transformation of old into new. Zizioulas is quick to point out that

It (the ecclesial hypostasis) implies a denial of the biological hypostasis. It accepts the biological nature but wishes to hypostasize it in a non-biological way, to endow it with real being, to give it a true ontology, that is, eternal life. It is for this reason that I stated previously that neither eros nor the body must be abandoned but must be hypostasized according to the 'mode of existence' of the ecclesial hypostasis.

The distinction between the level of personhood and the level of nature is key to understanding the relationship between the biological and ecclesial hypostasis. The biological nature of the person is in no way destroyed or denied, but it is re-ordered

195 BAC 59
196 See BAC 54-55
197 BAC 63
according to the new way of being. This is precisely what it means to say the Christ has
assumed the fullness of human nature without being limited by that nature. When the
biological nature of the human person is assumed into the person of Christ and therefore
hypostasized according to an authentically personal way of being (communion), “The
body, for its part, as the hypostatic expression of the human person, is liberated from
individualism and egocentricity and becomes a supreme expression of community-- the
Body of Christ, the body of the Church, the body of the Eucharist.” Salvation intersects
the human person precisely on the level of their personhood, and does not represent a
rejection of human nature, but rather a rejection of inauthentic personhood. Where
baptism creates authentic personhood, every element of human nature is re-ordered
according to the new way of being, and this way is the ecstatic, kenotic love of Jesus
Christ. By re-ordered, we mean precisely that the elements of human nature cease to find
their end or purpose in the individual’s nature, and find it instead in the other.

The ascetic elements of Christianity have as their goal the right ordering of the
biological hypostasis. Asceticism does not represent a denial of the body, or a negative
attitude towards it, but rather an affirmation of the true nature of the body in its capacity
for love. However, the hypostasis must be completely transformed: although human
nature remains, there is no possibility for the old way of being amongst the new:

That this signified not a parallel co-existence of the ecclesial with the biological
hypostasis but a transcendence of the latter by the former is apparent from the
harshness of sayings like those which demand of Christian the abandonment –
even the ‘hatred’- of their own relations.\(^{198}\)

The work of being transformed in personhood is accomplished, and yet not
completed in baptism. This is so precisely because the personhood received in baptism is

\(^{198}\) BAC 57
necessarily eschatological; it derives its content and form from the future. Zizioulas describes the ecclesial hypostasis as a “paradoxical hypostasis which has its roots in the future and its branches in the present.” The ‘already but not yet’ of eschatology pervades the human condition, and is brought to its climax in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the supreme eschatological event, and so it is in the Eucharist that the human person experiences most fully their identity as transcending the world and history while remaining thoroughly historical. An authentic sense of one's personhood demands asceticism, because it demands the “perception which is expressed by his refusal to locate the confirmation of the hypostasis of the person in this world, in the goods and values of this world.” The ascetical life of the Church is intrinsically tied to Her Eucharistic life, since both express Her eschatological nature as the promise of salvation for human persons. Zizioulas’ anthropology is nothing more and nothing less than the assertion that the Church is precisely the eschatological promise and realization of salvation as authentic personhood in Jesus Christ: “the Eucharistic community... proceeds to an act of ontology, to the assurance that the person has the final word over nature, in the same way that God the Creator as person and not as nature had the very first word.”

The implications of Zizioulas’ anthropology become much clearer as he is placed into dialogue with other thinkers. Arguably the most important and influential anthropology for Western theology is that of St Augustine. Zizioulas’ anthropology represents a significant challenge to Augustine’s anthropology, but is not a simple denial.

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199 BAC 59
200 BAC 62
201 BAC 64-65
of that anthropology. The question which Zizioulas raises is soteriological: how does Augustine ground salvation without compromising human freedom?

The difficulty which Zizioulan anthropology points out in Augustine's theology is an insufficient dialectic between creator and creation. Augustine borrows elements of Neo-Platonism to establish a systematic in which God is the ultimate reality and all other realities or beings derive their being from God through procession. Essentially, the world and God are bound by *nature*. However, Augustine holds man, rather than God, as the one who is necessary. Man derives his authentic being and nature from God. Therefore, Augustine's soteriology relies on a theology of grace. Augustine's theology is often described as a 'two-plane theory' in which the plane of God's being is opposed to the plane of fallen creation. These parallel planes do not intersect, but the human plane is elevated by grace to the level of God's nature. Fallen existence is inherently opposed to, or more properly, is a privation of God's grace, which is the substance of being. Creation is completely reliant upon grace for its being and eventual salvation. In this way Augustine protects God's transcendence from necessity because it is man who is utterly necessitated upon God. God is protected from the change and evil of the world and the world is good because it shares in God's goodness- in his nature.

For Augustine, the dialectic between God and man is *natural*: everything that is fallen in nature is deprived of goodness, truth and beauty because it does not share in God's being through grace. Thus the reality of the world is *opposed* to God by its nature (or perhaps, lack of nature). The result of this dialectic is that salvation becomes an elevation and an absorption into God. Communion with God is not the ground of otherness, but is the destruction of otherness by a unity of nature. For Augustine, the
persons of the Trinity are unified by substance (nature), although they share distinct roles (persons). The dialectic which Augustine creates between creator and creation is a dialectic of privation, and therefore salvation seems to consist in the elimination of that dialectic. Precisely what does this mean for anthropology?

According to Augustine, pre-fallen man is able not to sin because of grace. Adam’s relationship of communion with God gives him the capacity (the nature) to choose to remain in communion with God. However, Adam willed sin in spite of his knowledge of the good. The result of this sin is the loss of God’s grace, which means the loss of man’s capacity for freedom. By original sin, human nature is disordered, although not destroyed. Man is no longer able to choose not to sin, unless he is given grace by God. So far, this is not difficult for Zizioulas to accept, because relationship with God is the ground of authentic personhood (freedom). Because the human’s nature has been disordered, salvation requires an act of God which re-orders his nature. Man cannot earn salvation for himself, but grace is given as an unmerited and even unexpected gift.

If the person’s nature is elevated by grace, then the person receives a share in God’s own nature; their being becomes a sharing in God’s being. The great difficulty here is the question of man’s freedom. The person is free to receive God’s grace or not; however, the effect of grace is not a two-way relationship, but a unity in nature. By God’s will alone, the human is pre-destined toward God in the depths of their nature. This seems to suggest that human nature is prior to the human person; that being precedes the particular being, the person.

Zizioulas’ essential criticism here is that for Augustine, grace intersects humanity on the level of nature, and that the person is subsequently bound to follow that nature.
Zizioulas counters that the person is drawn into a relationship with God in the person of Jesus Christ, and that this relationship represents a new way of being. This relationship enables the person to hypostasize their nature according to love. Human nature must become like divine nature, but not as an absorption into divine nature. It is the freedom of human personhood which allows the human person to hypostasize their nature like God. It is not enough for man’s nature to be redeemed if this redemption does not first derive from a relationship of free communion between God and man.

The first demand of communion is authentic otherness. If the otherness of God and his creation derives only from the fallenness of creation, then communion between God and man already demands human sin. A doctrine of grace which operates on the level of nature already leads to a difficulty in accounting for salvation. The debates of the scholastics circle around the problematic of grounding the intrinsic goodness of the human person without binding God to human categories. The disputes over the priority of faith and reason, will and intellect, and idealism and realism represent at bottom the difficulty in simultaneously protecting God’s immanence and transcendence within a closed ontology; they betray an insufficient dialectic between creator and creation. This insufficiency is brought to its height in the theology of moderns like Karl Rahner, whose anthropology could be said to characterize the fundamental human capacity as openness to grace. Thus, the salvation which grace effects is nothing more than the fulfillment and realization of human nature. Rather than a new way of being, salvation becomes the natural climax of the old-- but this is not salvation at all! In the closed ontology which Augustine introduces, theology seems to struggle to establish salvation which neither abandons human being into God’s own nor ‘humanizes’ God.
It is easy for Augustinian theology to effect an image of grace as substance or nature, but he would assert that this is not so. When pressed, Augustine and virtually all of his followers would claim that grace is fundamentally God's presence. Grace is essentially *relationship*. In this way they are not so far from Zizioulas (as they might point out). However, the idea of grace redeeming nature poses the difficulty of understanding how relationship redeems substance. It would seem logical that being would redeem being and relation redeem relation. However, western theology at first glance predicates salvation upon the being of God, perhaps by his nature or perhaps by the absorption of all being in Christ; but when pressed it seems necessary to assert that the being, or nature, of creation is essentially redeemed through *relationship*. This, then, is the great contribution of Zizioulas' anthropology: if grace is relationship (if God is love), then those who are redeemed by that relationship must *be relation*—that is, they must be *hypostases*. And if this is so, then the person is prior to nature just as relation is prior to being. The relationship we call grace is not a substance or a nature but is a relationship—*a hypostasis: the person Jesus Christ*. For Augustine, God's nature is prior to his being a communion of persons, but if salvation is a relationship (communion in the person of Jesus Christ), then both God and humanity must fundamentally be *persons*.

This does not represent a rejection of Augustinian anthropology, or any of the other theologies mentioned. Far from being denied, these 'natural' theologies must receive their proper grounding in a 'personal' theology of the sort Zizioulas provides. Salvation does demand an elevation of human nature—*it demands a transformation of every aspect of human existence*, but the transformation of human nature which the natural anthropologies provide must be predicated upon love. It is authentic personhood,
a new way of being through communion with Jesus Christ, which transforms human
nature. Human nature is not opposed to God’s own nor is it absorbed into God’s own, but
rather the freedom of the ecclesial hypostasis allows the person to hypostasize every
aspect of their being according to love. In the Church, and therefore for the human
person, love is the source and summit of every other dimension. Reason, volition,
emotion, desire, passion, action: all these find their proper place when baptized in love,
that is, in the person of Jesus Christ.
V
Implications

"I hope to have communion with the people, that is the most important thing."
- Pope John Paul II

I will now point out the implications of Zizioulas’ thought for several areas of theology. These conclusions do not represent Zizioulas, but my own attempts to apply Zizioulas’ thought to three particularly pressing questions of contemporary theology. The first implication concerns the nature of the Church in light of ‘communio’ theologies and the discussion of the relationship between the local and the universal Church. The second implication concerns Petrine primacy, and is particularly relevant in terms of its import for the promising dialogue between East and West. The final implication concerns moral theology and its relationship with anthropology.

The Church as Communion

Contemporary ecclesiology seems to be wholly focused on the relationship between local and universal Church. This discussion manifests itself in many issues, such as inculturation and authentic diversity in liturgy, collegiality and papal infallibility, or a proposed disparity between the universality and the relevancy of Church. These questions betray the underlying drive to clarify the nature of the relationship between universal and local Church. John Zizioulas is no exception, as the relationship between local and universal, unity and diversity, is of the utmost concern in his theology.

The understanding of the Church as communion has risen to the forefront of ecclesiological discussion, as communion seems the only proper way to understand
relationship which creates and maintains unity in diversity. The concept of the Church as communion is by no means a model unique to Zizioulas, and was one of the most central images of the Church asserted in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Communion ecclesiologies received another endorsement as authentically disseminating the faith of the Church through the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s 1991 *Communionis Notio: Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of the Church understood as Communion*. In this letter, then prefect Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger begins by stating that:

> The concept of *communion* (*koinonia*), which appears with a certain prominence in the texts of the Second Vatican Council, is very suitable for expressing the core of the Mystery of the Church, and can certainly be a key for the renewal of Catholic ecclesiology. A deeper appreciation of the fact that the Church is a Communion is, indeed, a task of special importance, which provides ample latitude for theological reflection on the mystery of the Church...  

How does Zizioulas’ theology of ecclesiology communion harmonize with the instructions of *Communionis Notio*, and how can it improve our understanding of communion ecclesiologies as set forth in the letter? First of all, let us note that the essential aspects of Zizioulas’ ecclesiology are asserted by *Communionis Notio*. Cardinal Ratzinger affirms the heart of Zizioulas’ ecclesiology when he states the following:

> Unity, or communion, between the particular Churches in the universal Church, is rooted not only in the same faith and in the common Baptism, but above all in the Eucharist and in the Episcopate.

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203 CN 11
...indeed, the unicity and indivisibility of the Eucharistic Body of the Lord implies the unicity of his mystical Body, which is the one and indivisible Church.  

The universality of the Church involves, on the one hand, a most solid unity, and on the other, a plurality and a diversification, which do not obstruct unity, but rather confer upon it the character of 'communion.'

These statements affirm Zizioulas' assertion that the Church's central identity is the body of Christ, that She is fundamentally an incorporation into His corporate identity, and that the unity of the Church is rooted in the Eucharist and the Bishop and is in an affirmation rather than a denial of diversity.

Let's leave aside the letter's statements regarding Petrine primacy, which are addressed below. The central difficulty which Communionis Notio poses to Zizioulas' ecclesiology lies in the following statement:

It (the universal Church) is not the result of the communion of the Churches, but, in its essential mystery, it is a reality ontologically and temporally prior to every individual particular Church.

Zizioulas' concern with this statement would be that it not be taken to mean that the universal Church precedes any local Church. However, if 'ontologically and temporally prior' is understood eschatologically, then the statement expresses that the universal Church is prior precisely in that it expresses the eschatological nature of the Church, and therefore her most fundamental truth. In the same way that the individual persons of the Trinity imply the priority of the Father, whose person is the source of communion, every local Church, as an authentically Catholic Church, already implies the

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204 CN 11
205 CN 15
206 CN 9
207 This idea is owed entirely to Father Robert Turner, and the subsequent discussion of this point derives from my reflection on and dissemination of his analysis of the matter.
universal Church. Zizioulas’ understanding of the personal nature of the Church (the person of Jesus Christ) significantly aids our understanding of Communionis Notio’s assertion of the priority of the universal Church. If the Church is essentially personal, then Zizioulas’ assertion that person precedes relation which in turn precedes being applies to the Church in the following way: the person of Christ precedes the Church as universal communion (because Christ’s identity is corporate, it already implies communion,) which precedes the being of the Church, which subsists in each local Church.

Zizioulas’ formulation that being is communion, and communion means hypostases allows us to understand that although the Universal Church is prior to the local; the local does not receive her nature or identity from the Universal Church. Being does not flow from general to particular, but is relationship between particulars- unity in diversity. The being of the Church is her communion, and each local Church participates in that communion, which cannot exist except through these local Churches. Thus, the Universal Church is more than a sum total of smaller parts, and the Universal Church is not a general category which is manifested in particular Churches. The Universal Church is a communion, and therefore a person- Jesus Christ. Thus, Zizioulas would agree that the Universal Church is not the result of the communion of Churches, but as a person, is prior to and the very source of that communion.

Nevertheless, Zizioulas asserts that “No Christian believer could participate in the unity of the Church throughout the world if he did not first belong to the unity of a particular local Church,” while Ratzinger states explicitly that

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208 EBC 153
Every member of the faithful, through faith and Baptism, is inserted into the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. He or she does not belong to the universal Church in a *mediate* way, *through* belonging to a particular Church, but in an *immediate* way, even though entry into and life within the universal Church is necessarily brought about *in* a particular Church.209

The disparity here is not terribly divisive, since both agree that the universal Church is experienced *in* a universal Church, but why does Zizioulas assert that the Universal Church can only be lived *through* a local Church. I propose that the difficulty here arises from the difference in existential realities between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Church. The simple fact is that the Orthodox Church’s essential expression of communion is the Council, while the western Church’s communion is expressed not only in Episcopal conciliarity and collegiality, but in the *person of the pope*. The lack of a consistent concrete reality that expresses the unity in the Eastern Church seems to leave Zizioulas groping to see any concrete manifestation of an individual’s direct participation in the universal Church, except through the mediation of the Bishop. The western Church could not deny that through their participation in the person of the Bishop, the individual Christian participates mediatelty in the communion of the Church. But through their participation in the person of the successor of Peter, they also live in the communion of the Church *immediately*. Therefore, the doctrine of Petrine primacy seems to be the key to fully reconciling Zizioulas’ ecclesiology with the western Church, and must prove to be the lynchpin for full communion between the east and west.

209 CN 10
In *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas describes the pope as “the stumbling block of ecclesial unity” in the same paragraph where he calls for the Church “to push the notion of communion to its ontological conclusions.” Recall that Zizioulas’ conception of unity centers on the Bishop, in whose person the whole Church is contained. The Bishop as president of the Eucharist is theocratic center of worship, and is the icon of Christ—*alter Christus*, the incarnation of Christ in His Church. The Church is Catholic because She contains the whole Christ in the Eucharist, and the Bishop as president of the Eucharist is the supreme sign of this unity. The Bishops are held in communion to the degree that they remain ‘of one mind’ in the *gnome* of Jesus Christ. The concrete expression of this communion is the Council, by which the Bishops exclude from communion those who have strayed outside the mind of Christ. Therefore, Zizioulas sees no need for a hierarchical center of the Church in the papacy, and suggests that the office of the papacy represents a denial of the proper nature of the Bishops.

In response, I propose that unity is more properly expressed and realized in a *person* than in a *council*, and in fact that authentic communion, that is, *ontological* communion, can only be expressed in a person. The unity of the Church is found only in the person of Jesus Christ—this cannot be denied. However, Zizioulas’ formulation of communion in the *mind* of Christ represents an *ideal* rather than an *ontological* communion. Each bishop represents an ontological communion, but the Bishops are held in a mere ideal communion. The eschatological truth of the Church is that She is one
ontological communion—one concrete unity, not an ideal unity of authentic communions. What better expression of ontological communion can there be than a person?

Thus, the Pope in his person is the expression and realization of the eschatological communion of the Church, the Vicar of Christ. The ontological character of the pope is the same as that of a Bishop by virtue of their common ordination. Their charisms are the same, and are summarily expressed in the formulation to teach, to govern, and to sanctify.\textsuperscript{211} The Pope is the president of the Eucharist of the universal Church, the theocratic center of communion. The Pope merely expresses and manifests the eschatological reality of the final unity of the Church as a unity to the point of identity in one person, the person of Jesus Christ. The Bishops remain in Communion with each other precisely in the person of Christ. Therefore they must remain in communion with the whole Church not only by being in one mind as manifested in the Council, but by being in the one person of Christ who is manifested in His Vicar. The Communion which the Pope represents is not destructive of diversity, but is the very ground of diversity. After all, diversity and communion can only be held together in a person. The Pope expresses the eschatological promise and reality that the Church is truly one body, because She is already united in one person. Precisely in the person of the successor of Peter, the communion of the Church has already been pushed to its ultimate and definitive conclusions. What first appeared a stumbling block proves to be the cornerstone of ecclesial unity.

\textsuperscript{211} I would point out here that it is of no small significance that the Charism of the bishop directly correlates to the universal Charism of holiness, since every person baptized into Christ receives a share in his life as priest prophet and king. This is a clear sign that the Church is ontologically unified in the very person of the Bishop—communion in the person of the Bishop is communion with Christ.
An effective Christian anthropology must be not only informative, but performative. It must result in a new way of being, meaning it must be capable of raising the horizon of human persons’ actions and character. Therefore moral theology remains in some ways the greatest test of any anthropology’s effectiveness. An effective anthropology must ground an effective moral theology. To understand this, let us remember that the goal of the Church is to articulate salvation in the person of Jesus Christ, and so this must also be the goal of moral theology. Moral theology is organically bound to praxis, as its aim is not the speculative good, but the good life, the good action, the good person. Nevertheless, this good must remain an expression of salvation, or Christian morality has no force. If the good which moral theology prescribes is not a realization of salvation in some way, then that good loses its intrinsic importance for the Christian. It is precisely the focus on salvation that represents the denial of relativism for Christianity, and if Christian morality loses this focus, it has no claim to make against relativism.

The implication which Zizioulas’ anthropology holds for moral theology originates in his assertion that the truth of the human person is the eschatological truth. This means that every moral truth is an eschatological truth, an expression of the ultimate identity of the human person. Morality cannot be predicated upon nature, but only on the person of Jesus Christ. He is the truth in history, and truth is known by way of relationship with him, by incorporation into him. Any truth about human ‘nature’ must be predicated upon the redeemed, that is, personal nature of the human, and not merely on
the person’s biological nature. In short, the dialectic between biological and ecclesial hypostasis must not be confused when the Church proclaims her moral teaching.

Moral teaching must draw us toward salvation as authentic personhood and not merely describe our nature. This much seems clear, but differentiating between what is fallen and what is redeemed proves much more difficult. The trouble with moral theology lies precisely in deciding which human ways of being represent the biological hypostasis, and which represent the ecclesial hypostasis. How can human persons who are ourselves faced with the givenness of our world and selves proclaim and live authentic personhood? The clear answer is Jesus Christ— all morality must derive solely from His person. He alone is the truth in history, and so in Him alone can we understand the authentic person. Yet moral theology remains confused.

It is here that Zizioulas’ proves terribly insightful. Moral theology in the last century has become very focused on the epistemological ground of truth. The discussion has become wholly focused on methods of attaining moral truth through rational inquiry or action. Modern epistemology has situated this dialogue squarely in the context of the subject-object dialectic, and as a result the individual conscience has become the realm of subjective moral truth. Objective moral truth is not denied, but the hope of knowing that truth as such has grown dim in the discourse of many moral theologians. Into the midst of this discussion Pope John Paul II issued his encyclical letter *Veritatis Splendor*, in which he asserts that the source of truth is the object, and not the subject. John Paul asserts that

In any event, it is always from the truth that the dignity of conscience derives. In the case of the correct conscience, it is a question of the *objective truth* received by man; in the case of the erroneous conscience, it is a question of what man, mistakenly, *subjectively* considers to be true.\(^2\)  

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This statement represents an explicit rejection of ‘subjective truth’ which has been received with great difficulty by many moral theologians. Their contention is that such a moral methodology simply does not respect the human person as a subject.

Zizioulas’ anthropology places this statement into a context which is perhaps more helpful. Zizioulas asserts that the objective truth is Jesus Christ, and that the character of knowing that truth is incorporation into His person. The ‘objective’ truth which the person must seek is Christ, a person, and seeking that truth is not an epistemological endeavor but a relational one. The limits of human epistemology are no longer meaningful when truth is understood as ontological communion. Exactly what does this mean for moral theology?

Truth is Christ, and Christ is His corporate identity: His Body, the Church. The criterion of truth is communion with the Church, the Body of Christ. Again, this is the reality of salvation: the ultimate goal of morality. Any moral methodology which results in a break in communion with the Church is therefore self-contradictory and intolerable. The goal of morality is salvation: and this salvation is exactly the ‘objective truth’ to which morality must be subject. Various moral methodologies may be helpful in making decisions in concrete situations, but these epistemological methodologies find their limits in the ontological truth. Simply put, those moral ‘theologies’ which seek to justify dissent from the moral teaching of the Church represent the height of absurdity. They would either set up the subject or some idol as a ‘truth’ contrary to the real truth, the person of Jesus Christ, or they would seek to reduce the communion of the Church to an epistemological rather than an ontological reality.
As we have seen, the Christian faith demands that being is not prior to relation-that the person is the ultimate category. Morality must first protect and cultivate the relationship between each human person and the Person of Jesus Christ in the Church. This is the quintessence of salvation, the goal of morality. Only in light of this relationship can human nature begin to be understood. If moral theology is to be serious about the truths revealed in the Church, it must become eschatological in its method by allowing the love of God which is at work to redeem all creation through Christ in the Church by the work of the Holy Spirit to be the supreme source of moral teaching. The ecclesial hypostasis as revealed in Jesus Christ is the source and summit of morality. The goal of morality is a new way of being: the Church. Catholic moral teaching seeks to create a communion of ecclesial hypostases- the communion of saints. It is in the saints, those who demonstrate the ecclesial way of being, that Jesus Christ is iconically revealed to us. Perhaps we should look there for our moral content. The sorely needed fresh voice of Fr. Robert Barron proclaims just this as he asserts:

To make clear the essence of the Christian moral life, it is not sufficient to remain, in the modern mode, at the level of natural moral excellence. We must rather look to concrete exemplars of the life of grace, the people whom the Church recognizes as saints. Thereby we see the good life in its densely textured facticity; we see the dynamics of grace on iconic display... Our determination of what we ought to do depends utterly on our determination of who we ought to be. And in the Christian context, that means being a saint. \(^{213}\)

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This thesis has been an attempt to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Christian anthropology which John Zizioulas creates in grounding the salvation of the human person in Jesus Christ. This anthropology is effective precisely in as much as it represents an organic composition of Zizioulas' ontological, eschatological, and ecclesial principles. This work does not suppose Zizioulas to be the final word on anthropology, nor does it pretend to definitively demonstrate the efficacy of his anthropology. Nevertheless, this work has pointed to the significant consequences of Zizioulas' thought for the contemporary discussion of Christian anthropology. Zizioulas particularly points out the weight of the eschatological and ecclesial dimensions of personhood, but above all exposes the significance of Christian prosopology as the necessary ground of Christian anthropology.

Although Zizioulas' anthropology is compelling, questions remain especially in terms of the concrete ethical and pragmatic content of that anthropology. Zizioulas forthcoming work *Remembering the Future: An Eschatological Ontology of the Human Person* shows promise in deepening our understanding in this area, but we can look elsewhere for answers as well. This thesis attempts to re-frame and refocus the discussion of Christian anthropology, and Zizioulas' is certainly not the only thinker to do so. Other thinkers who could represent particularly promising partners in this prosopological dialogue include Levinas and those who might be called Christian Existentialists. Above all this dialogue must benefit from the contributions of Karol Wojtyla, whose Christian anthropology as manifested both in his scholarly discourse and his magisterial teachings
and pastoral ministry as Pope John Paul II represent perhaps the most compelling and prophetic understanding of the human person of our age. Zizioulas’ prosopology can benefit greatly from John Paul’s conception of the person in action, and his *Theology of the Body* seems to represent nothing less than a concrete exposition of precisely how the human body can be hypostasized according to love. John Paul II asserts that “… man became the image of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons, which man and woman form from the very beginning.”

Zizioulas’ anthropology, and the general discourse of theological anthropology, can benefit greatly from the insights into the contribution of embodiment to communion and personhood. John Paul II’s anthropology can benefit in return from the grounding prosopology which Zizioulas so insightfully and patiently exposes.

Christian anthropology remains one of the most innovative and productive fields of theology, which is in many ways driving the contemporary renewal of Christian theology as a whole. Zizioulas’ thought represents an indispensable contribution to the contemporary anthropological conversation. In its organic simplicity and elegant splendor of both content and method, Zizioulas’ theology points to nothing more and nothing less than communion. Thus, Zizioulas’ proclaims that nothing is prior to the person; the personhood of God is the first and last word for Christianity.

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Acknowledgements

To Fr. Robert Turner, for his infinite inspiration and assistance

To Dr. John Ries, for so patiently directing this thesis

To Dr. Mark Smillie and Mr. Murphy Fox, for serving as the committee of readers

To Sr. Annette Moran, in memoriam- for broadened horizons

To the Carroll College faculties of Theology and Philosophy, in thanksgiving

To My parents, family, and friends for their constant support and encouragement

To Fr. Marc Lenneman, for his prayers and guidance

To Mother Adela, for her intercession

To my fellow students at Carroll College, for their love

To Katie and Crystine, for their understanding

To Val, for her excellent coaching

“I would like to conclude, inviting you, to keep your eyes fixed in the reason for your communion: love. And to remember that love grows through love, and that love triumphs by choosing freely and constantly to love at all cost.”

-Mother Adela Galindo