

Through the Eyes of the Other: what Western theologians can learn from John  
Zizioulas' reading of the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers

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## **Summary/Abstract**

This project was inspired by a perceived discrepancy between the the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers and the theology imputed to them by Greek Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas. Alongside a lack of scholarly consensus on Cappadocian theology, there exists a broadly negative reaction to Zizioulas' reading of Cappadocians. In spite of this, there are many who seem happy to quote his interpretation or make use of his conclusions without serious inquiry into the background and influences behind that interpretation. This leads to further confusion about the theology advocated by both Zizioulas and the Cappadocians.

In order to simplify this confusing tangle of trinitarian theological ideas, this project clarifies the meaning and content of the Cappadocian category, seeking to identify both the specific Cappadocian Fathers and what, if anything, can be termed "Cappadocian theology." Further, this project examines the historical and academic context of the theology of John Zizioulas, restates his system through a trinitarian lens, and seeks to understand his probable approach by examining the mindset of the Eastern Orthodox Church in its dealings with patristic studies and theological authority and its perceptions of the West.

The project concludes that Zizioulas reads the Cappadocians from a specifically Orthodox perspective, not as authorities but as conversation partners. This approach, foreign to a western historical-critical approach, baffles many western scholars. Asking whether Zizioulas has read the Cappadocians correctly is to misunderstand the purposes behind his appeal to their theological ideas. As the Eastern Orthodox Church continues to grow in 'exile' in the West and increasingly interact with Western theology and scholars, it is imperative that theologians of both backgrounds communicate clearly about their assumptions and intentions in theological dialogue.

## DECLARATIONS

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

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This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MPhil.

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### **Abbreviations of Zizioulas' works**

*BAC - Being as Communion*

*CAO - Communion and Otherness*

*Lectures - Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*

“Doctrine” - “The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today” in *The Forgotten Trinity*

“Cappadocian Contribution” - “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution” in *Trinitarian Theology Today*.

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
0.1 The Question	1
0.2 Project Limits and Sources	1
0.3 Methodology	7
<b>Chapter 1 Zizioulas' Historical and Academic Context</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 Background, Zizioulas in Historical Context	11
1.1.1 Russian Émigrés and Greek Renewal	11
1.1.2 Zizioulas' academic career	18
1.1.3 Zizioulas and the Trinitarian Revival	21
1.1.4 Zizioulas and the Fathers	25
1.1.5 Summary of Zizioulas Trinitarian Theology	31
1.2 Reception, Zizioulas in Academic Context	38
1.2.1 Orthodox Reception	40
1.2.1.1 Eucharistic Ecclesiology	40
1.2.1.2 Personalism	43
1.2.2 The Monarchy of the Father	45
1.2.3 Zizioulas' Reading of the Cappadocians	46
1.2.4 Emphasis on hypostasis at the expense of ousia	51
1.2.5 Personhood as a category of being	53
1.2.6 Zizioulas' apophaticism (or lack thereof)	55
1.2.7 The Use of Zizioulas' Thought	57
1.3 Conclusions	59
<b>Chapter 2 The Cappadocian Category</b>	<b>63</b>
2.1 Who are the "Cappadocian Fathers"?	63
2.1.1 Amphilochius of Iconium	67
2.1.2 The Lives of the Three Great Cappadocians	69
2.2 Origin and Use of the Cappadocian Category	85
2.2.1 Origins of the Cappadocian Category English language scholarship	85
2.2.2 "Cappadocians" in Eastern Orthodox Tradition	90
2.2.3 "Cappadocian Theology" in Late Antiquity	93
2.2.4 "Cappadocian Theology" - Theories	97
2.2.4.1 Use without qualification	98
2.2.4.2 The 'Venn Diagram' Approach	99
2.2.4.3 The Rejection of "Cappadocian Theology"	103

2.3 Cappadocian Trinitarian Theology	105
2.3.1 Basil's Trinitarian legacy	105
2.3.2 Gregory of Nazianzus' Trinitarian legacy	109
2.3.3 Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian legacy	114
2.3.4 Influences on the Cappadocians	118
2.3.5 The "Cappadocian Contribution"	121
2.3.6 Use of the Cappadocian Category in the current project	124
2.3.7 Summary and Conclusions	128
<b>Chapter 3 - The Systematic Trinitarian Circle of Zizioulas</b>	<b>131</b>
3.1 Introduction	131
3.1.1 Reading Zizioulas	132
3.1.2 Systematic Zizioulas	141
3.1.3 Theological pre-suppositions	142
3.1.3.1 Theology and Liturgy	143
3.1.3.2 The 'how' and the 'what' of God	145
3.2 Zizioulas' Doctrine of the Trinity	147
3.2.1 Greek Persons	147
3.2.2 Cappadocian Contribution	150
3.2.3 Monarchy of the Father	153
3.3 Personhood and Otherness	156
3.3.1 God and the world	156
3.3.2 Otherness and Ekstasis	159
3.3.3 The Unique Person	163
3.4 Doctrinal Applications	165
3.4.1 Salvation	166
3.4.2 Church – Body of Christ	170
3.4.3 Creation	174
3.5 Conclusion: Church, Trinity and the Eschaton	177
3.5.1 The goal of the Eucharist, joining trinitarian life	177
3.5.2 Excursus: Eucharist, Bishop, Church	178
3.5.3 Recap	182
<b>Chapter 4 Zizioulas and Orthodoxy</b>	<b>185</b>
4.1 Zizioulas reads the Cappadocians	185
4.1.1 Orthodoxy and Authority	187

4.1.2 Orthodoxy and the Development of Doctrine	193
4.1.3 Orthodoxy and the West	198
4.1.4 Conclusions	202
4.2 Reading Zizioulas	203
4.2.1 Critiquing Zizioulas	204
4.2.2 Misreading Zizioulas	206
4.2.3 The Importance of Methodological Clarity	208
<b>Conclusion - The doing of Theology</b>	<b>212</b>
5.1 Summary	212
5.2 Implications	221
5.2 Changing the Question	225
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>229</b>

## **Introduction**

### **0.1 The Question**

This project was originally inspired by a desire to discern whether Zizioulas is correct in the theology, specifically of Trinity, that he attributes to the Cappadocian Fathers. This question proved inadequate as a research question as it carries in it some implicit assumptions that proved to be invalid. Firstly, and most importantly, the question assumes there is a “correct” interpretation of the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers. While much has been written on the subject, there is no scholarly consensus on this topic, and no single historical document containing a self-conscious presentation of the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers as such. This effectively makes the question of whether Zizioulas’ attribution is ‘correct’ null and void. Secondly, and subsequently, the term “Cappadocian” as a descriptor whether of trinitarian theology or of a set of ‘Fathers’ is, at best general and, at worst, so imprecise as to be effectively useless.

As a result of these difficulties with precision of language and theological content, the central question of this thesis can now be described as an attempt to understand Zizioulas’ summary and use of what he calls “the Cappadocian Contribution” to trinitarian theology and to trace the connections between that summary and the trinitarian theology generally attributed to the Cappadocian fathers in anglophone theological circles.

### **0.2 Project Limits and Sources**

Much of the information accessed for this study comes out of current and recent research; that research, in turn, influences the content and conclusions of this project. As this project reflects a historical moment, so the lives and works of the Cappadocians and Zizioulas have also been shaped and influenced by the historical context of the



theological discussions and debates in which they have been involved. As we study these, relatively small, windows into doctrinal and Church history, we keep in mind that Christian doctrine itself is a historical construct.<sup>1</sup> Engaging with historical (and contemporary) personalities through their context as well as their written legacies allows them to speak to us as individuals rather than merely as text or names. Catching a glimpse of the characters behind the text can give the old doctrines they defined a much needed new life in our understanding.

As an inquiry into how Zizioulas reads the Cappadocians and how he himself has been read, this project is specifically geared towards doctrinal and systematic rather than historical or patristic theology. Due to the subject matter, some questions of historical and patristic theology will be asked and briefly addressed, but the main focus on an enquiry into specific aspects of trinitarian theology and doctrinal discussion will be primary. As we explore the continuity or lack thereof between readings of Zizioulas and the Cappadocians, different aspects of Church history, historical characters, debates and issues will be touched on, especially as they directly affect the conception and development of O/orthodox doctrine in general and trinitarian doctrine in particular. This historical information provides background and context to help promote the better understanding of both the Cappadocians and Zizioulas. The conclusions of this project will, hopefully, be of some use to doctrinal, historical, systematic and perhaps even patristic scholars.

For the trinitarian theology of John Zizioulas, I have relied mainly on primary source material in the English language, specifically drawing from *Being as Communion*, his first major publication in English and the basis for much of the reception of his theology in the Western world, and *Communion and Otherness*, a more

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<sup>1</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, x.

recent publication containing an holistic, representative summary of his work and including a specific chapter on the Cappadocian contribution and a specific comment on some of the debate surrounding it. These two main sources will be supplemented by other articles and publications of Zizioulas' work, especially those that have a specific applicability to trinitarian discussion and/or the Cappadocian Fathers.<sup>2</sup> This seemingly narrow field of source material is necessary to limit source material to a manageable amount for this project. Zizioulas has published prolifically over the last several decades in a number of languages, and this project is not meant to be an exhaustive summary of his life's work. Indeed, such would not be possible for, as a living theologian, he is still publishing.

This primary source material will be supported by such articles and books on the life and theology of Zizioulas as have been published. These are limited, but growing, as a new generation of theologians begin to interact critically with his work. As Zizioulas is an Orthodox theologian, some significant works on Orthodox theology over the last century will also be consulted in this project. These will also include reflection on Orthodox self-understandings of their relationship with the West and such material as is available on an Orthodox approach to theology, tradition and authority as written for an anglophone audience in the twenty-first century. Such an understanding of Zizioulas' context will prove crucial to the conclusions of this project.

The choice to focus specifically on the publications and translations of Zizioulas and his critics in the English language reflects the purposes and limits of this particular project. Zizioulas chose to spend a significant portion of his life working in English

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2 These will include the following: John D. Zizioulas, 'The Teaching of the 2nd Ecumenical Council on the Holy Spirit in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective', in *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum*, ed. by J. S. Martins (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983); John D. Zizioulas, 'Doctrine of God', in *The Forgotten Trinity* (London: BBC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today, 1989); John D. Zizioulas, 'The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution', in *Trinitarian Theology Today*, ed. by Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995).

language contexts. Most of his significant works have been published in English, and his thought has had a profound effect on anglophone theology. This circumstance, in itself, offers an interesting example for the conclusions of the project about the development and use of theological thought. Highlighting this anglophone response to Zizioulas' theology, the research question and methodology of the project assume a certain ignorance of the inner workings of Orthodoxy, a particularly western approach to an Orthodox theologian who has made himself highly visible in the spheres of western theological discussion.

Although the issue of a comprehensive theology of the Cappadocian Fathers will be explored, and some attempt made to describe such a theology, this project is not patristic in nature. Therefore, it is not the intention or goal of this project to exhaustively describe or present Cappadocian theology as such. Instead, I am chiefly concerned with the reception, redaction and use of the Cappadocian category as described above, particularly as regards trinitarian theology. Because of their centrality to the research question, the lives, circumstances and certain specific works of Basil and the two Gregories will appear in the course of this project, but no expectation should be raised of a scholarly reading of primary texts. The desired outcome of our comparison and contrast of Zizioulas and the Cappadocians is rather to understand how the latter have been interpreted, and how Zizioulas meets his own ends in so doing.

In the attempt to better understand the Cappadocians, as both individuals and theologians, a large body of secondary source material will be drawn on. These will include historical, doctrinal, and patristic works, allowing us to gain a more complete picture of their lives, personalities, interests and theological priorities. As outlined above, this project is limited to the study of Zizioulas' theology as presented to the English speaking world. Similarly, secondary source material on the Cappadocians will

also be anglophone, focusing on the debate that is taking place in the English language in reception of and reaction to Zizioulas' theology. Emphasis will be placed on those authors who have interacted directly with Zizioulas' trinitarian theology and/or his interpretation and treatment of the patristic sources of his theology, specifically the Cappadocian Fathers.

In limiting this project to English language source material, I am also highlighting the changing context in which theological conversation is currently taking place. It seems likely that, at this point in history, information and education, especially in the developed world, are more accessible than at any other time. This has led to a greater number of people, with varying levels of education and qualifications, taking part in theological discussion and debate within progressively smaller spheres. Arguably, this also contributes to a certain level of misunderstanding or miscommunication across the cultural boundaries which meet in the English-speaking world. In the context of this project, the growing encounter between the Orthodox world and Western mindset which dominates much of the rest of the world will prove a crucial part of the conclusions of this project.

The decision to keep to anglophone source material also reflects the difficulties associated with the communication of intricate ideas through verbal means. Even within a shared language misunderstandings can take place, as different scholars use the same or similar terminology with, sometimes dramatically, different meanings or implications. Nowadays it is fairly standard for theologians to give detailed definitions of the chief terminology they use in a given project,<sup>3</sup> but even this degree of care does

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas is remarkably good at defining his terms. However, he notably never offers a definition of "the Fathers," an omission that seems odd in light of the fact that his book is addressed specifically to the wider Christian world (i.e. not Orthodox) who, it must be assumed, would largely not have a clear grasp of what is meant by the term.

not guarantee complete understanding.<sup>4</sup> In the case of this project, the varied reception and use of Zizioulas' thought in anglophone theology provides quite enough information from which to draw conclusions about the reception, transmission and use of theological ideas.

One final qualification is necessary before proceeding. Throughout this project broad contrasts are drawn between what I have generically termed a 'Western' theological approach and an 'Eastern' or Orthodox approach. Like all such generalisations, this distinction has the drawback of grouping many disparate approaches under one heading in order to contrast them with many other approaches under an opposed heading.

The term 'Western,' for example, encompasses Catholic, Anglican and other Protestant thought across Europe and the English speaking world. In the context of this project, however, the term 'Western' specifically references the fact that all such theologies have as an inescapable reference point both the Protestant reformations and the philosophical revolution known to history as 'the Enlightenment.' Whether accepted or rejected by them, no theologian operating within a culture intellectually affected by the Reformations and the Enlightenment can escape the long shadow of these pivotal points in the history of theological and philosophical thought.

By contrast, references to 'Eastern' and 'Orthodox' thought reflect a culture and theological history that did not experience either religious reformation or philosophical enlightenment. Physically and politically isolated from these thought movements, the Orthodox churches developed their theological priorities and approaches on significantly different lines. One must acknowledge, however, that 'Eastern' as a

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<sup>4</sup> See the fascinating series of publications of Tercescu, Papanikolaou, and Zizioulas himself, on the meaning of 'person.'

reference for a cohesive group is also, necessarily imprecise, as the Eastern and Orthodox churches have many distinct identities and splinter groups of their own.

Within the context of this project, however, Eastern and Western as descriptive terms will primarily be used to refer to respective academic and cultural traditions that that either have or have not been affected by the religious reformations of the 1500s and the philosophical enlightenment of the 1700s. The marks of this inheritance being most notably a logical, philosophically modern approach to research and academic argument, a reliance on reason as the ultimate intellectual tool, the assumption that a right (or true) answer exists and can be found, and a certain characteristic individualism. Awareness of this contrast is particularly important as these differing thought worlds are increasingly coming into contact with one another without due acknowledgement of their differences in approach and thus, in conclusions.

### **0.3 Methodology**

The method of this project is inductive rather than deductive. The comparison between Zizioulas' trinitarian theology and that of the Cappadocians is undertaken in a series of closer inspections offering images of Zizioulas, the Cappadocians, their respective takes on trinitarian theology and the scholarly reflections available on both. This method has allowed the thesis to produce a surprising conclusion not found in the original question, as the comparison between Zizioulas' take on the Cappadocians and the summary of Cappadocian theology prevalent in anglophone theology differs more in method and goals than it does in content.

In keeping with the inductive method, this thesis can be thought of as a series of images or ideas, each with its own chapter, drawn together at the end. The first chapter focuses on Zizioulas in his historical and scholarly context. By exploring his background, education and context, we are able to gather information that will be useful

in evaluating the influences on his theological reflection. These influences, in their turn, will effect the content and purposes of Zizioulas' theology.

The second chapter focuses on the concept of "Cappadocian" as a descriptor of a certain group of men and/or their joint theology. To facilitate the discussion of this topic, I have coined the term "Cappadocian category" to reference either or both of these uses as well as any additional use of the generic term, Cappadocian, to reference a grouping or idea associated with Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa.

This exploration of the Cappadocian category first seeks to identify who is included in this category, as others aside from these three core members are sometimes included. Secondly, some attempt is made to understand the background and influences on these men. As with Zizioulas, their context will have impacted their theological output. Thirdly, a summary of their trinitarian theology - both as individuals and as a group - is attempted to provide comparison with Zizioulas' summary.

The third image, explored in the third chapter, is that of the Systematic Trinitarian Theology of Zizioulas. This image arose in my mind spontaneously out of my study of Zizioulas' writings, as all of his theological reflection begins and ends with (or perhaps points forward and back to) his image of the Trinity. His doctrine of the Trinity is also intrinsically linked to his understanding of the 'Cappadocian Contribution' to trinitarian theology. It is in the sketching of Zizioulas' trinitarian circle, that the two images of Zizioulas and the Cappadocians begin to come together.

In the fourth chapter, a new image emerges from the connection identified in the third chapter. Zizioulas' theology is clearly dependant on his understanding of the Cappadocian contribution, but, although that understanding clearly bears some hallmarks of the summary of Cappadocian theology identified in the exploration of the

Cappadocian Category, it seems to function within Zizioulas' theological system in a way that is foreign to that summary. The final image of the project expands on the Orthodox theological world in which Zizioulas operates, and draws out the contrast in the assumptions prevalent in that world about how and why theology is done with the assumptions latent in the summary of anglophone scholarship on the Cappadocians in the second chapter.

The conclusion will review these four images and identify the lessons that can be learned about how we 'do' theology, and how we use the research and ideas of others, from this comparison. The pursuit of a clearer understanding of the John Zizioulas' reading of the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers has lead this project to some unexpected conclusions. Chief amongst these is the importance of understanding the methodological differences between Orthodox and Western theological academics. Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocian Fathers' trinitarian theology provides an instructional example of these differences, and presents some timely questions about theological interaction between Orthodoxy and the Western world. This is reflected in the final title of this project: *Through the Eyes of the Other: what Western theologians can learn from John Zizioulas' reading of the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers*.



## **Chapter 1 Zizioulas' Historical and Academic Context**

To begin our journey towards the intersection between the trinitarian theology of John Zizioulas and that of the Cappadocian Fathers, it is necessary first to understand the background and basic theology of each. This chapter seeks to build an image of John Zizioulas as a scholar, theologian and man of faith, whose life and theology have developed out of a specific tradition and are influenced by a theological and historical context. Zizioulas has emerged as an influential Orthodox theologian at a specific time and place in history. To understand his theology better, we will seek to understand its background and some of the major theological trends and personalities that influenced Zizioulas' development as an internationally known Orthodox thinker.

It is central to the methodology of this project to present and explore Zizioulas, and later each of the Cappadocians, as men for whom it was essential to explore and express their faith through intellectual investigation and reflection. All four of these men also share a tradition rooted in Greek philosophical ideas and steeped in scripture. Seeing how that context may have shaped Zizioulas allows us to find a better understanding of what driving values are behind the theories and conclusions of his theology which in turn contributes to the interpretation of his theology. Context also allows us to see how, in turn, his theology appears to be shaping the world around him and the writings of those who come after him.

So we begin by seeking out the history and background, not only of Zizioulas himself, but of the search for a "neopatristic synthesis" in which he casts himself as a participant.<sup>5</sup> This story has roots in the early 20th century history of both Russia and Greece before a young Zizioulas began his studies of theology. After exploring this historical background, we will turn to a summary of his career. With this context in

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<sup>5</sup> *BAC*, 26.

place, a basic summary of his theological system will follow.<sup>6</sup> This summary will focus on Zizioulas' trinitarian theology, as this area is the central theological concern of this project.

The second major section will turn to the academic context in which Zizioulas' theology now thrives, we will explore various examples of the reception and use of Zizioulas' theology, both positive and critical. This will be divided into broad categories of critique beginning with a specific look at the reception of and reaction to Zizioulas within his own Orthodox tradition. The remainder of the chapter will deal with a number of concerns regarding his interpretation and use of the Cappadocian contribution and other issues related to his trinitarian theology. In closing, we will consider, more generally, how Zizioulas' theology is used by others.

## **1.1 Background, Zizioulas in Historical Context**

### *1.1.1 Russian Émigrés and Greek Renewal*

According to John Behr "Orthodox theology was reborn in the twentieth century."<sup>7</sup> After a long period of "western captivity,"<sup>8</sup> Orthodox theologians in the mid-twentieth century shook off "the dry, scholastic exposition of formal dogmatic truths" that had characterised "Orthodoxy in the previous couple of centuries." Norman Russell also describes a long period of "western captivity" in which Orthodoxy lost its "sense of a living communion" with the Fathers under the influence of Western scholasticism.<sup>9</sup> Like Behr, Paul McPartlan connects this belief in the "Scholastic Captivity" of

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<sup>6</sup> A more complete summary will be offered in Chapter 3 below.

<sup>7</sup> Behr, "Faithfulness and Creativity," 159.

<sup>8</sup> Behr credits Fr. Georges Florovsky for the development of "western captivity" as a comprehensive understanding of Orthodox history immediately prior to his own time, "Faithfulness and Creativity," 159, footnote 1.

<sup>9</sup> Russell, "Modern Greek Theologians," 77.

Orthodox theology with Georges Florovsky. McPartlan also claims that Zizioulas shares this belief.<sup>10</sup>

This reading of Orthodox history is also reflected in Kallistos Ware's exploration of "What is theology?" He speaks of "two centuries" in which Orthodoxy has produced notable examples of "academic scientism".<sup>11</sup> Christos Yannaras expands on the same historical trend, specifically in the Greek context, in his book *Orthodoxy in the West*.<sup>12</sup> He identifies Vikentios Damodos (1700-52) as "the first Orthodox to write a theological *Dogmatics*,"<sup>13</sup> a style of writing that "became a model for all later Orthodox handbooks" even into the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> By the beginning of the nineteenth century, "Enlightenment attitudes" had pervaded "Greek intellectual life" through a series of Greek intellectuals who were heavily influenced by western and european ideas.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Ware identifies the *Dogmatic Theology* (1845-53) of Makarii Bulgakov as evidence of scholasticism in Russian theology, also the works of Chrestos Androutsos (1907) and Panagiotis Trembelas (1959-61) in Greece.<sup>16</sup>

According to Ware, scholastic theological reflection, although academically sound, neglected the "liturgical and mystical dimensions of theology."<sup>17</sup> This neglect began to be addressed in the mid-twentieth century when Orthodox thinkers such as John Meyendorff, Pavel Florensky, Georges Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky and others

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<sup>10</sup> McPartlan, *Eucharist*, 126.

<sup>11</sup> Ware credits Yannaras with the origin of this term for "scholasticism", "Orthodox theology today," 106.

<sup>12</sup> Yannaras, *Orthodoxy*, esp. 99-156.

<sup>13</sup> Yannaras, *Orthodoxy*, 100.

<sup>14</sup> Yannaras, *Orthodoxy*, 100-1.

<sup>15</sup> Yannaras, *Orthodoxy*, 139. In addition to Damodos, Yannaras mentions Eugenios Voulgaris (pp102-4), Nikephoros Theotokis (pp 104-6), Josipos Moisiodax (pp 106-7), Demetrios Katartzis (108), and Adamantios Korais "who gave his name to the Greek Enlightenment," 142.

<sup>16</sup> Ware, "Orthodox theology today," 106.

<sup>17</sup> Ware, "Orthodox theology today," 106. Yannaras bemoans the failure of eighteenth century Greek thinkers to see that the methods of "empirical science [were] more compatible with the experiential emphasis of Orthodox Church life than with Augustinian and Thomist intellectualism," *Orthodoxy*, 105.

began to develop theology in which “doctrine and spirituality go hand in hand.”<sup>18</sup> The necessity of this synthesis of doctrine and spirituality means that, in Ware’s opinion, theology “can never be *totally* systematic.”<sup>19</sup> Russell describes the revival of patristic theology among the Greek Orthodox theologians, as a movement away from “patristic fundamentalism,” the scholastic approach which used the Fathers “simply as proof texts.”<sup>20</sup>

The great names most often associated with this revival are Russian and Greek, and it is in the midst of this Orthodox theological revival that we can find the roots of the theological thought world which surrounded and, perhaps, inspired John Zizioulas. As we seek to illuminate his theological background we will focus on two important historical contexts. Firstly, the movement of Russian Orthodox exiles into the intellectual atmosphere of Paris in the early 20th century. Secondly, the developments within Greek Orthodoxy at a similar period. It is in the confluence of these two streams that we find, perhaps, the main sources of Zizioulas’ theology.

Given that this reawakening of Orthodox theology was in reaction to a “western captivity,” perhaps there is a sense of poetic justice in the fact that the twentieth century revival in Orthodox thought has its roots in Western Europe. As a result of revolution, all theological schools in Russia had been forced to close by 1918.<sup>21</sup> This period saw a mass exodus of perhaps a million Russians, a number containing “an inordinately large proportion of the old intelligentsia” from Czarist Russia.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology today,” 108. He goes on to expand, “theology should be linked with prayer, and it should be liturgical, mystical and apophatic.” These necessary characteristics of Orthodox theology will be important to remember as this project proceeds.

<sup>19</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology today,” 109.

<sup>20</sup> Russell, “Modern Greek Theologians,” 78.

<sup>21</sup> Nichols, *Russian Diaspora*, 55. It is fascinating to reflect that the “revival” in Orthodox thought in the mid-twentieth century, not to mention the related if not resulting revival in trinitarian thought in the late-twentieth century, may never have happened, or have come about very differently if there had been no Bolshevik Revolution.

<sup>22</sup> Nichols, *Russian Diaspora*, 55.

Before long a significant portion of this Russian diaspora gathered together in Paris. The number was too large for the existing Orthodox place of worship in Paris and in the summer of 1924 the congregation acquired a large building, which was consecrated to St Sergius early in 1925.<sup>23</sup> On 30 April 1925 a new Russian school of theology was opened at St Sergius. The bishop gathered “the best teachers he could find among the Russian Orthodox Diaspora,” including Sergei Bulgakov, Georges Florovsky, John Meyendorff and Nicolas Afanasev, to teach at this new school of theology.<sup>24</sup> Soon these “émigré theologians”<sup>25</sup> began to develop a fresh expression of their theology in “the tradition of Philokalian spirituality.”<sup>26</sup> According to Behr, the western context for this revival meant that “this reawakening often developed in contradistinction to those things considered ‘Western.’”<sup>27</sup> When the “first ever Pan-Orthodox theological congress” was gathered in Athens in 1936,<sup>28</sup> the Russian émigrés introduced some of their new thoughts about the ancient theology of the fathers to the Greek Orthodox Church.

Meanwhile in Greece, the Zoe brotherhood had been established in 1907.<sup>29</sup> This movement, categorised by Mario Rinvulcri as part of “the new monasticism” in modern Greece,<sup>30</sup> was a renewal movement, somewhat puritan in style, that grew to incorporate schools, publishing and book stores, preaching and other community work.<sup>31</sup> “The chief purposes of *Zoe*” were “that the members should live Christ in their

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<sup>23</sup> Nichols, *Russian Diaspora*, 56.

<sup>24</sup> Nichols, *Russian Diaspora*, 56-7.

<sup>25</sup> Behr, “Faithfulness and Creativity,” 159.

<sup>26</sup> Russell, “Modern Greek Theologians,” 79. See also Louth “Theology of the *Philokalia*,” 351.

<sup>27</sup> Behr, “Faithfulness and Creativity,” 159.

<sup>28</sup> Nichols, *Russian Diaspora*, 157.

<sup>29</sup> Papakosta, *Eusebius Matthopoulos*, vii.

<sup>30</sup> Rinvulcri, *Anatomy of a Church*, 81-82.

<sup>31</sup> For a complete summary of the values and works of the Zoe Brotherhood see Papakosta, *Eusebius Matthopoulos*, vii-xvi.

lives” and “work for the awakening of Christian life among others.” To pursue these ends the brothers preached, instituted literary work, encouraged confession, and promoted catechetical instruction.<sup>32</sup> By the 1960s, the magazine of the Zoe brotherhood had a circulation of approximately 120,000<sup>33</sup> and the “indirect influence” of their work could be “seen in every corner of Greek ecclesiastical life.”<sup>34</sup> For all its emphasis on the revival of the Greek Orthodox faith, the Brotherhood itself was “organized on Western lines”<sup>35</sup> a circumstance which caused Christos Yannaras, who was a part of the movement in his youth, to become quite critical of the Brotherhood in later life.<sup>36</sup> In 1962 Zoe organised a symposium, inviting many Russian émigré theologians including Florovsky, Lossky, Schmemmann, and Meyendorff, whose book on Gregory Palamas<sup>37</sup> had already made a considerable impact.<sup>38</sup> Thus the theology and preoccupations of Russian Orthodoxy in Paris were again shared with a Greek audience.<sup>39</sup>

There was, however, another significant link between Greek theological life and the West in the later half of the twentieth century, a man, almost a hermit, Demetrios Koutroubis. For the greater part of his life, he held no formal post, nor was he ordained or officially recognised by Church structures.<sup>40</sup> As a young man Koutroubis had been attracted by the Jesuits, and with that order he trained at Roehampton and Heythrop in England with further studies in philosophy at Lyon. From there he was sent to Beirut to

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<sup>32</sup> Papakosta, *Eusebius Matthopoulos*, xi-x.

<sup>33</sup> Rinvolutri, *Anatomy of a Church*, 93.

<sup>34</sup> Rinvolutri, *Anatomy of a Church*, 92.

<sup>35</sup> Louth, “Christos Yannaras,” 331.

<sup>36</sup> Louth, “Christos Yannaras,” 331, 335. See also the chapter on “Extra-Ecclesiastical Organizations” in Yannaras, *Orthodoxy*, 217-250.

<sup>37</sup> John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (London: Faith Press, 1964).

<sup>38</sup> Russell, “Modern Greek Theologians,” 80. Many of these same men are also mentioned as members of the staff at the St Sergius Institute in Paris. See Nichols, *Russian Diaspora*, 57.

<sup>39</sup> Russell, “Modern Greek Theologians,” 80.

<sup>40</sup> Ware, Kallistos, “Athens to Walsingham,” 67.

teach.<sup>41</sup> After two years, his request to be released from the Jesuits was granted, and he returned to Greece and Orthodoxy early in 1954.<sup>42</sup>

When Koutroubis returned to his native country and faith he took with him “a sense of the exciting immediacy of patristic thought”<sup>43</sup> gathered from the Jesuits. From 1958 he lived in straightened circumstances with his mother, but it was in this situation that “his true work began.”<sup>44</sup> His home became “a little oasis,”<sup>45</sup> a place of theological conversation and Socratic teaching,<sup>46</sup> conversations which could carry on into the small hours of the morning.<sup>47</sup> Yannaras credits him with providing the first translations “of the great theologians of the Russian diaspora.”<sup>48</sup> With a member of Zoe, he began production of a journal called “*Synoro* (Frontier) which was very influential among Greek theologians” until it was discontinued in 1967.<sup>49</sup>

Koutroubis is credited with being a part of the recovery of patristic theology in Greece,<sup>50</sup> the revival of monasticism, especially on Mount Athos,<sup>51</sup> and “the search for answers to the problems of modern man by means of Orthodox Tradition.”<sup>52</sup> Under his influence and teaching a new generation of theologians received training in theology,

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<sup>41</sup> Ware, “Athens to Walsingham,” 67.

<sup>42</sup> Ware, “Athens to Walsingham,” 67.

<sup>43</sup> Russell, “Modern Greek Theologians,” 80.

<sup>44</sup> Ware, “Athens to Walsingham,” 67.

<sup>45</sup> Ware, “Athens to Walsingham,” 70.

<sup>46</sup> Yannaras, “Master Builder,” 72.

<sup>47</sup> Allchin, “A Vision of Unity in Diversity,” 73.

<sup>48</sup> Yannaras, “Master Builder,” 72.

<sup>49</sup> Russell, “Modern Greek Theologians,” 80.

<sup>50</sup> Yannaras, “Master Builder,” 72; and Allchin, “Vision of Unity,” 74.

<sup>51</sup> Allchin, “A Vision of Unity,” 74-5.

<sup>52</sup> Yannaras, “Master Builder,” 72.

philosophy, spiritual life and faith.<sup>53</sup> The most well-known of this theological generation of Greek Orthodoxy are Vasileios Gontikakis, Panayiotis Nellas, Christos Yannaras, and John Zizioulas.<sup>54</sup>

Athanasios Melissaris describes Zizioulas as a product of the movement toward a “neo-patristic” synthesis in 1960's Greece.<sup>55</sup> However, as we have seen the historical context of 1960s Greece was quite broad, and the search for a neopatristic synthesis was older than the 1960s and from a much broader context than Greece. Rather, the neopatristic synthesis mentioned by Melissaris was routed amongst the Russian émigrés who settled in Paris in the 1920s. Ware describes the “Neo-Patristic Synthesis” as one of two discernible major trends of Orthodox theology in the 20th century.<sup>56</sup> He identifies a nineteenth-century precursor to the neopatristic school, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, but begins the story of the neopatristic synthesis with its rise “to prominence at the First Congress of Orthodox Theology, held at Athens in 1936,”<sup>57</sup> an event already referenced above. Ware identifies Georges Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky as the two most important “protagonists” of the neopatristic trend.<sup>58</sup>

It is interesting to note here that Zizioulas studied under Florovsky, many years later, when the latter was teaching at Harvard University. Loudovikos, noting that Zizioulas studied under Florovsky and Tillich, observes that Zizioulas’ construction of

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<sup>53</sup> Ware describes him as “talking, listening, and in his discreet and subtle fashion altogether transforming the outlook of those who came under his spell,” “Athens to Walsingham,” 70, and again, “through his words of approbation, he unfolded before you an entire programme, a call, a vocation yet to be realised. . . . He had the precious gift of transfiguring time, of changing the present hour into . . . the hour of grace,” 71.

<sup>54</sup> Russell, “Modern Greek Theologians,” 80.

<sup>55</sup> Melissaris, “Patristic Ontology,” footnote 6, 486.

<sup>56</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 109.

<sup>57</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 110.

<sup>58</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 110. For more on the origins of the neopatristic synthesis, especially as relates to Florovsky, see Paul Gavriluk’s article “Florovsky’s Neopatristic Synthesis and the Future Ways of Orthodox Theology.”



patristic personalism seems to be located at the junction of “the Florovskian neopatristic synthesis” and Tillich’s attempt “to construct a Biblical personalism” in “answer to the ontological question put by philosophy in general.”<sup>59</sup> Ware includes Zizioulas in a list of contributors to the neopatristic trend in Orthodox theology in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.<sup>60</sup> He goes on to highlight that “just as there is variety within the patristic tradition itself, so there are divergent emphases among the ‘Neo-Patristicians’.”<sup>61</sup>

### *1.1.2 Zizioulas’ academic career*

Zizioulas has been described as “one of the most original and influential Orthodox scholars of our present time”<sup>62</sup> and “among the leading Greek Orthodox theologians in the world today.”<sup>63</sup> Knight calls him “one of the best known theologians of the contemporary Orthodox Church, a central figure on the ecumenical scene and one of the most cited theologians at work today.”<sup>64</sup> Brown describes *Being as Communion* as “the single most significant Orthodox academic theological work of the last half-century.”<sup>65</sup>

During a career spanning five decades, Zizioulas has produced an impressive amount of theological reflection on ecclesiology, anthropology and ecumenism from his patristic starting point. Nonna Verna Harrison commends his work as combining “patristic scholarship with speculative creativity,” and Melissaris has described his thought as “provocative and challenging.”<sup>66</sup> Christos Yannaras compares Zizioulas’

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<sup>59</sup> Loudovikos, “Person instead of Grace,” 685.

<sup>60</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 114.

<sup>61</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 115.

<sup>62</sup> Rostock, “Two Different Gods,” 1.

<sup>63</sup> Harrison, “Communion and Otherness,” 273.

<sup>64</sup> Knight, *Theology of John Zizioulas*, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Brown, “Anglophone Orthodox Theology,” 35.

<sup>66</sup> Melissaris, “Patristic Ontology,” 468.

“theological synthesis” to those “that defined Orthodox self-awareness in the patristic age.” Adding that, “no other theologian since Palamas has had a comparable impact on Orthodox thought.”<sup>67</sup>

Details of Zizioulas life between his birth in 1931 and his entrance into theological education in 1950, appear to be nonexistent in the English language. He first studied theology in Greece at the Universities of Thessalonica and Athens. He graduated from the latter in 1955. Rinvolutri, writing in the 1960’s, describes the theology course at Athens:

In a four-year course the Athens faculty expects its students to study equally and without specialization a vast field of subjects which include: The Old Testament, the history of the New Testament, New Testament interpretation, Dogma, Patristics, Canon Law, Church history, Byzantine archaeology, Ethics, the history and philosophy of religion, pastoral theology, the liturgy, catechism and rhetoric. The average Athenian theology graduate comes away with an encyclopaedic acquaintance with all the branches of his study but with no specialized knowledge and often without the ability to think with the independence of mind that should be acquired in the course of a university training.<sup>68</sup>

It is easy to see the fruits of so rigorous a foundation in theological education manifested in the later life and work of Zizioulas. His theological programme addresses or draws from most if not all of these topics on at least a basic level and many in depth. There is no way of knowing, of course, whether Zizioulas had “the ability to think with independence of mind” when he gained his degree in 1955, but he clearly had a thirst for theology. He continued his studies abroad in Switzerland, at Harvard, where he studied under Florovsky,<sup>69</sup> and at the Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies. He was awarded his doctoral degree by the University at Athens in 1965.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Yannaras, *Orthodoxy*, 289.

<sup>68</sup> Rinvolutri, *Anatomy of a Church*, 121.

<sup>69</sup> Yannaras, *Orthodoxy*, 289; also Russell, “Modern Greek Theologians,” 85.

<sup>70</sup> Melissaris, “Patristic Ontology,” 467.

His doctoral thesis was published in English in 2001 under the title *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries*. The subtitle clearly indicates Zizioulas' early preoccupation with issues of ecclesiology through the patristic lens.<sup>71</sup> His study of “early Christian texts lead Zizioulas to identify the very definition of the Church with the eucharistic supper.”<sup>72</sup> He concludes “that each eucharist was a complete eucharist and each local church was the full body of Christ,” headed by bishops who were themselves equal with their peers.<sup>73</sup> Even at this stage his career, the unity of the Church, for Zizioulas, was ontological, not based on “doctrinal agreement,” and centred on the Eucharist and the bishop.<sup>74</sup>

As a professor of theology, Zizioulas spent a considerable time in Britain. He taught at Edinburgh and then at Glasgow Universities. At the latter he spent more than a decade as the chair in systematic theology. He has also been a visiting lecturer at the University of Geneva, Gregorian University, and Kings College London<sup>75</sup> where he maintained an important and influential friendship with the late Colin Gunton.<sup>76</sup> Eventually he returned to Greece where he has been on the faculty of University of Thessalonica.

Zizioulas was still a member of the laity when the ecumenical patriarchate elected him to the position of Metropolitan of Pergamon in 1986. Pergamon being a largely defunct see in Turkey, Zizioulas has been able to continue with his academic life. He was a prominent figure in the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century

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<sup>71</sup> Russell, “Modern Greek Theologians,” 85.

<sup>72</sup> Yannaras, *Orthodoxy*, 284.

<sup>73</sup> Bathrellos, “Early Church,” 137.

<sup>74</sup> Bathrellos, “Early Church,” 138. Bathrellos whole chapter offers an insightful summary of Zizioulas’ doctoral dissertation. Another, shorter summary can be found in Yannaras, *Orthodoxy*, 284-286.

<sup>75</sup> Melissaris, “Patristic Ontology,” 467.

<sup>76</sup> Whose name can be found alongside that of “Father Georges Florovsky” on the dedication page of *CAO*.

and continues to participate in world theological discussion. His publications, both books and articles, span an astonishing number of years from his doctoral thesis in 1965 even up to the present day. His book titles include *Being as Communion*,<sup>77</sup> the above mentioned *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*,<sup>78</sup> *Communion and Otherness*,<sup>79</sup> and *Remembering the Future*,<sup>80</sup> but the collection of articles, lectures and addresses attributed to him, from some of which his books are derivative, is much more extensive.<sup>81</sup>

### 1.1.3 Zizioulas and the Trinitarian Revival

In his book *Rediscovering the Triune God*, Stanley Grenz proposes the official introduction into theological discourse of “the Zizioulas Dictum” : “being as communion.”<sup>82</sup> This phrase originated with Zizioulas and was the title of a collection of essays and other writing published in book form in 1986. Since that time it has become, in Grenz's view, “a methodological axiom on the order of Rahner's Rule.”<sup>83</sup> This comparison highlights the connection between the “dictum” and the “Rule”: both are shorthand for a certain understanding of the Trinity or the practice of trinitarian

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<sup>77</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Press, 1985).

<sup>78</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries*. trans. Elizabeth Theokritoff (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001).

<sup>79</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*. ed. by Paul McPartlan (London: T & T Clark, 2006).

<sup>80</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future: An Eschatological Ontology* (London: T & T Clark, 2008).

<sup>81</sup> A substantial bibliography of Zizioulas' works is provided in the bibliography. See also McPartlan's list, *Eucharist*, 310-15, and, more recently, Papanikolaou's list, *Being*, 209-14.

<sup>82</sup> Grenz, *Rediscovering*, 134-135.

<sup>83</sup> Grenz, *Rediscovering*, 134-135. Although not an expert in Rahner's theology, what little I have read suggests to me that Rahner's Rule is as subject to misunderstanding and potential misuse as is “the Zizioulas Dictum.”

theology. It is also possible that both represent important catalysts for the advancement of trinitarian theology in the late twentieth century.<sup>84</sup>

The story of the “trinitarian revival”<sup>85</sup> or “renaissance”<sup>86</sup> seems to begin with a discontent on a prevailing emphasis on God as One rather than God as Three or Trinity.<sup>87</sup> This imbalance in conversation about God has been described as an East/West divide. The narrative suggests there has been a “decline, fall, and revival of trinitarian thought in the West.”<sup>88</sup> The root of the East/West or Greek/Latin divide is usually traced to the work of Théodore de Régnon in the late nineteenth century.

Barnes has described de Régnon as “the most influential and yet least known of Catholic historians of doctrine.”<sup>89</sup> This influence comes primarily through his four-volume study of the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>90</sup> In what appears to have resulted in a catastrophic semantic misunderstanding, de Régnon used the term “Greek” to describe “patristic theologians writing in both Greek and Latin,” and the term “Latin” to refer to “scholastic theologians” whose influence was strong in his own time.<sup>91</sup> In later scholarship these terms came to be associated with the terms “East” and “West,” respectively, and to associate the first with the Cappadocians and the second with Augustine. This appears to be the source of the general association of a movement from “three to one” in trinitarian thought with the Cappadocians and from “one to three” with Augustine. According to according to Kristin Hennessy this understanding, de

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<sup>84</sup> Kärkkäinen mentions Rahner in connection with Barth, “Trajectories,” 10, and Zizioulas in connection with “social trinitarianism,” 13-4. Holmes mentions both in the introduction to his article discussing “problems” with social trinitarianism, “Three Versus One?” 77-8.

<sup>85</sup> Holmes, “Three Versus One,” 77.

<sup>86</sup> Kärkkäinen, “Trajectories,” 7.

<sup>87</sup> Kärkkäinen, “Trajectories,” 7. Holmes, “Three Versus One,” 77.

<sup>88</sup> Ables, “Decline and Fall,” 163.

<sup>89</sup> Barnes, “De Régnon Reconsidered,” 51.

<sup>90</sup> De Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*. 3 vols. bound as 4. Paris: Victor Retaux, 1892-1898.

<sup>91</sup> Hennessy, “An answer,” 179.

Régnon's paradigm, has been based on a false understanding of de Régnon's project. Indeed, de Régnon never intended to privilege "Greek" thought over "Latin," but wished to bring them together, seeking a "rapprochement" of these two theological approaches, historical and modern.<sup>92</sup>

From this backstory, the narrative of the trinitarian revival moves forward to the mid-twentieth century and the work of Rahner and Barth.<sup>93</sup> Rahner objects to Augustine's "psychological analogy" of the trinity and the Western tradition that developed from it, preferring instead the Greek tradition which "had preserved the emphasis upon the persons and their distinctions."<sup>94</sup> Barth was chiefly interested with the revelation of the trinity through the "economy of salvation."<sup>95</sup> According to Kärkkäinen, both these theologians sought "to ground the Trinity in revelation and salvation history rather than abstract speculation."<sup>96</sup> Their theology found expression in a "turn to history"<sup>97</sup> that has caused the relationship between the immanent and economic trinity to become a central point of concern in ongoing discussion of trinitarian theology.<sup>98</sup> Travis Ables also includes Lossky as an important catalyst in the trinitarian revival. A participant in the "neo-patristic synthesis,"<sup>99</sup> Lossky's *Mystical Theology*, in the original French, "bears significant traces" of de Régnon's influence which were "largely effaced" from the book when it appeared in English.<sup>100</sup> As Rahner

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<sup>92</sup> Hennessy, "An Answer," 181. A project echoed by Zizioulas in the Introduction to *BAC*, as we have seen as discussed elsewhere in this chapter. This breaking down the source of the East/West, Greek/Latin divide supports the project of Lewis Ayres who seeks to argue that this division "is of far less significance than is usually thought," *Nicaea*, 6.

<sup>93</sup> Holmes, "Three Versus One," 77, 79. See also Hill, who colourfully describes the theologians of the trinitarian revival as "downwind of Rahner and Barth." "Divine Persons," 149

<sup>94</sup> Ables, "Decline and Fall," 164.

<sup>95</sup> Ables, "Decline and Fall," 164-5.

<sup>96</sup> Kärkkäinen, "Trajectories," 10.

<sup>97</sup> Kärkkäinen, "Trajectories," 11.

<sup>98</sup> Kärkkäinen, "Trajectories," 12.

<sup>99</sup> Ables, "Decline and Fall," 166.

<sup>100</sup> Hennessy, "An Answer," 180.

also read de Régnon, but did not reference it, the source of this influential and misappropriated paradigm “went unnoticed” by “English-speaking readers.”<sup>101</sup>

After Barth and Rahner came Moltmann, whose theology, arguably was the first source of what has come to be known as “social trinitarianism,” “trinitarian personalism,”<sup>102</sup> or “communion theologies.”<sup>103</sup> It is here that Zizioulas, through *Being as Communion*, enters the trinitarian revival. Ables casts Zizioulas as “a transitional figure” in the history of trinitarian doctrine in the twentieth century who was responsible for “constructing the personalistic type of trinitarianism that becomes ubiquitous in the 1980’s,” and describes him as “enormously influential,” helping to “solidify a disparate number of sources into a markedly unified narrative on trinitarian thinking.”<sup>104</sup> According to Stephen Holmes, Zizioulas “is repeatedly appealed to by social Trinitarians,” although it is possible that “he did not begin the movement.”<sup>105</sup>

Almost a decade has passed since Grenz christened “being as communion” the “Zizioulas Dictum.” So far his suggestion seems not to have taken amongst his peers. It is otherwise with the language of Zizioulas’ trinitarian theology. Since the 1990’s the words “being” and “communion,” as well as “personhood” and “otherness,” together with the corresponding ideas of communion and relationality in theological, trinitarian and ecclesiological discussion appear so often as to be almost ubiquitous.

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<sup>101</sup> Ables, “Decline and Fall,” 166.

<sup>102</sup> Holmes, “Three Versus One,” 79. <sup>102</sup> Holmes specifically references the publication in English in 1981 of Moltmann’s *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, five years earlier than *BAC*. Ables also touches on the contribution of Moltmann to the movement sometimes called “social trinitarianism,” but for which he prefers the terminology of “trinitarian ‘personalism’,” 167-9. Moltmann is also credited in relation to the rise of conversation about trinitarian ‘persons’ and their ‘relations’ by Hill, “Divine Persons,” 149-50.

<sup>103</sup> Kärkkäinen, “Trajectories,” 12.

<sup>104</sup> Ables, “Decline and Fall,” 168. Ables also touches on the contribution of the theology of Jürgen Moltmann to the movement sometimes called “social trinitarianism,” but for which he prefers the terminology of “trinitarian ‘personalism’,” 167-9. Moltmann is also credited in relation to the rise of conversation about trinitarian ‘persons’ and their ‘relations’ by Welsey Hill, “Divine Persons,” 149-50.

<sup>105</sup> Holmes, “Three versus one,” 79. I would argue that “social trinitarianism” is an umbrella term for such varied understandings of the Godhead, as well as practical implications of those understandings, as to prohibit it ever being a single, coherent “movement.”

Given the roles of Rahner, Barth and Moltmann, it seems Zizioulas is not the sole cause of the trinitarian revival or even the or only source of “communion theologies,” but he is clearly influential participant in the discussion. Reading the Trinity in terms of relationality and love has, arguably, been instrumental in the recent rise in the popularity of trinitarian theological discussion.<sup>106</sup> This is especially apparent in the ecclesiological application of such an understanding of the Godhead.<sup>107</sup> Understanding the Trinity as a community of love has been seen by many as an opportunity to describe the people of God as a loving community in God’s image, and the churches of which they are a part as images of personal and loving trinitarian life.<sup>108</sup> This novel, relational understanding of the Trinity has provided a practical use for this ancient and too-often irrelevant doctrine about the nature of the Christian God.

#### *1.1.4 Zizioulas and the Fathers*

While Grenz and others like him point to Zizioulas as the author of this understanding of the communal nature of the Godhead, Zizioulas attributes the ultimate philosophical basis of his relational theological programme to “the Cappadocian Fathers,” the collective term for fourth century bishops Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>109</sup> It was these men, according to Zizioulas, who brought about an ontological revolution in both sacred and secular Greek thought through their radical redefinition of the terms of Greek ontological philosophy.<sup>110</sup> In so doing, they gave birth to a completely new way of looking at, speaking of, and understanding God as Trinity.

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<sup>106</sup> According to Kärkkäinen the way in which Zizioulas “has highlighted the centrality of communion in defining personhood has been enthusiastically adopted by all theologians.” Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity*, 96.

<sup>107</sup> A practical application which Kärkkäinen connects with a “Western mindset” preoccupied with theology that is “practical” and “can be ‘applied’ to ‘real’ life,” “Trajectories, 14.

<sup>108</sup> This trend is most fully embodied by Miroslav Volf, *After our Likeness*.

<sup>109</sup> Zizioulas has also included Amphilochius of Iconium in this list, although his role appears to be more principally in receiving letters from Basil. See Zizioulas, “Cappadocian Contribution,” 44.

<sup>110</sup> Those terms include *ousia*, *prosōpon*, and, most importantly for Zizioulas, *hypostasis*.



The Cappadocians are not the only centrally placed patristic authorities within Zizioulas' theological programme. He draws heavily on several other Fathers, the first of which, historically speaking, are Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyon,<sup>111</sup> who pre-date the Cappadocians by at least two centuries. According to Paul McPartlan, Zizioulas sees this period of church history as specifically relevant for the situation of the Church in the late twentieth century, offering reflection on a post-Apostolic age in an 'ecumenical' context.<sup>112</sup> Ignatius appears most often as an important source relating to Zizioulas' eucharistic/ecclesiological theology.<sup>113</sup> Irenaeus appears alongside Ignatius, as well as independently, as another ancient source relating to Eucharist, liturgy and ecclesiology.<sup>114</sup> Both men also appear at other points along the way of Zizioulas' theological constructions, it is clear he knows and values them both deeply and well.

Chronologically next in the list of the Fathers important to Zizioulas is Athanasius of Alexandria,<sup>115</sup> whose principal period of life and work preceded the Cappadocians by roughly a generation.<sup>116</sup> Although his ecclesiological life was turbulent, Athanasius still found time to produce an impressive body of theological writings.<sup>117</sup> He is regarded by many as an important predecessor to the Cappadocians themselves,<sup>118</sup> although Hanson decidedly says that "none of the Cappadocian

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<sup>111</sup> I will refrain here from inserting exhaustive lists of page numbers, a quick glance in the index of either *BAC* or *CAO* will provide a significant list of references to each. This applies also to Maximus, Athanasius and Augustine mentioned below.

<sup>112</sup> McPartlan, *Eucharist*, 124-5.

<sup>113</sup> For example: *BAC*, 83, 157, 160, etc.; *CAO*, 79-80, 91, 148, etc. See also, McPartlan, *Eucharist*, 169-70, 187.

<sup>114</sup> For example: *BAC*, 16, 83, 116, 189, etc.; *CAO*, 43, 79-80, 223, etc.

<sup>115</sup> *BAC*, 17, 87, 100-1; *CAO*, 17, 31-2, etc.

<sup>116</sup> There is some overlap of time, however, as there is evidence that Basil attempted to correspond with Athanasius, Toom, *Classical Trinitarian*, 129; also Hanson, *Search*, 678.

<sup>117</sup> Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 39ff.

<sup>118</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 264; Kelly, *Doctrines*, 258; O'Collins, *Tri-Personal*, 131-2.

theologians derived their theological tradition directly from” Athanasius.<sup>119</sup> This opinion is echoed by Christopher Beeley who, in his exploration of the pneumatology of each of the Cappadocians, asserts that Basil’s understanding of the Spirit derives from the Eusebian tradition, not Athanasius.<sup>120</sup> He also states that Gregory of Nazianzus “had little if any contact with the work of Athanasius,”<sup>121</sup> and Gregory of Nyssa was only influenced by Athanasius through his relationship with the Antiochenes.<sup>122</sup>

In the greater scheme of Zizioulas’ understanding of the theology of the Fathers, Athanasius is important as providing the “first leavening” of the monistic, Greek understanding of the relationship of God to the world: the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.<sup>123</sup> The Cappadocians were to provide the second. This first leavening is not the only appearance of Athanasius in Zizioulas’ writings. He appears often in Zizioulas’ discussions of trinitarian theology, especially Logos theology. His contribution is usually described as it was interpreted or developed by the Cappadocians.<sup>124</sup>

Moving into the late fourth and early fifth centuries, Zizioulas also makes some mention of the famous Latin Father Augustine of Hippo. In contrast to his references to Greek Church Fathers, when Zizioulas mentions Augustine he is more consistently critical or obviously negative than constructive or positive. It is clear that Augustine is not in any way constitutive of Zizioulas’ final theological programme;<sup>125</sup> rather Zizioulas tends to use Augustine as a foil, a straw man, or an example of how the “authentic Greek tradition” was changed or compromised by later developments,

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<sup>119</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 678.

<sup>120</sup> Beeley, “The Holy Spirit,” 93.

<sup>121</sup> Beeley, “The Holy Spirit,” 101.

<sup>122</sup> Beeley, “The Holy Spirit,” 105.

<sup>123</sup> McPartlan, *Eucharist*, 145; *BAC*, 39; *CAO*, 17. The role of the Cappadocians in this schema is to provide the “second leavening . . . by identifying the ‘ontological “principle” or “cause” of the being and life of God’ with ‘the person of the Father.’” McPartlan, *Eucharist*, 145. More on this later.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. *BAC*, 83, 87. *CAO*, 32, 121-2, 204.

<sup>125</sup> McPartlan, *Eucharist*, 124.

especially as it relates to the unity of the Godhead being found in *ousia* versus *hypostasis*.<sup>126</sup> Indeed, the Introduction of *Communion and Otherness* begins with a swipe at Augustine for his emphasis on “the importance of consciousness and self-consciousness in the understanding of personhood,”<sup>127</sup> and from this starting point Zizioulas begins the process of building the central argument of the book.

Perhaps the last of these most significant Fathers to the Zizioulan programme is Maximus the Confessor, who was active in the seventh century. Zizioulas frequently alludes to Maximus, sometimes referencing his development of various Cappadocian ideas.<sup>128</sup> Maximus is also an important interpreter of the patristic tradition in general.<sup>129</sup> Zizioulas considers that “the great achievement of [Maximus] was to attain the most developed and complete reconciliation between the Greek, Jewish and Christian concepts of truth.”<sup>130</sup> He also devotes several pages in *Communion and Otherness* to the exposition of a “Maximian ontology,” which he sees as to some extent a development of ideas already seen in the Cappadocian Fathers.<sup>131</sup>

Although not an exhaustive list of the Fathers Zizioulas references, these are certainly the names most often to be encountered in his writings. It seems clear that he has studied his tradition deeply. This has not protected Zizioulas from the accusation of providing “only minimal citations from the Greek Fathers,” an activity that is “incumbent upon him” as an Orthodox theological thinker. John Wilks is obviously desirous of the opportunity to “evaluate the evidence,” an opportunity denied to critics of Zizioulas’ work due to a lack of precise or comprehensive references to the Fathers

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<sup>126</sup> *BAC*, 100, see also 88, 95, etc. *CAO*, 1.

<sup>127</sup> *CAO*, 1.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. *BAC*, 52 n.

<sup>129</sup> *BAC*, 61-3n.

<sup>130</sup> *BAC*, 92.

<sup>131</sup> *CAO*, 19-26.

he so often speaks of.<sup>132</sup> It is less than obvious exactly who the Greek Fathers are. Some attempt will be made to form an answer to this question in an exploration of Orthodoxy theology below.

It is these voices, ranging over the early centuries of Church history, that Zizioulas brings into theological conversation, which he first joined in the 1960's. In the introduction to *Being as Communion*, which itself is a collection of articles published in other places and other languages over the previous sixteen years, Zizioulas presents himself as a contributor to the movement mentioned above, a "neo-patristic synthesis" capable of leading the West and the East nearer to their common roots."<sup>133</sup> It is perhaps not a coincidence that he also mentions "the late Fr Georges Florovsky" as one who insisted that "authentic catholicity of the Church must include both the West and the East," just before he sets forth his own contribution to the "neo-patristic synthesis."<sup>134</sup> His use of the phrase is an obvious reference to its use by others. As has been mentioned above, Florovsky, under whom he studied for a time at Harvard, was a great advocate of this project.<sup>135</sup>

Against this background of a quest for a neopatristic synthesis combining the common history and belief of the Church of yesterday and today, East and West, Zizioulas opens his influential book *Being as Communion*. As he explores the significance of "Personhood and Being," Zizioulas presents the Cappadocians as the pivotal starting point. Unfolding their 'contribution,'<sup>136</sup> both to trinitarian theology and the accompanying philosophical revolution, he opens the door to his own unique effort

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<sup>132</sup> Wilks, "The Trinitarian Ontology of John Zizioulas," 74.

<sup>133</sup> *BAC*, 26.

<sup>134</sup> *BAC*, 26.

<sup>135</sup> McPartlan, *Eucharist*, 124.

<sup>136</sup> *BAC*, 16-19, 35-41; *CAO*, 113-149.

to create a genuinely ecumenical understanding not just of God, but also of the Church as a whole, the Body of Christ.

While Zizioulas roots his theology of personhood in a patristic philosophical revolution that was born out of fourth century trinitarian debate,<sup>137</sup> the emphasis of his overall system is on ecclesiology and ecumenism rather than trinitarian doctrine,<sup>138</sup> these themes, especially ecclesiology will be taken up again later in our exploration of the reception of Zizioulas, particularly within the Orthodox community. In this way Zizioulas' theology, like that of the Fathers he cites, is “rather *practical* and *pastoral*” than merely a doctrinal exercise in philosophical synthesis or speculation.<sup>139</sup> Thus the nuanced and systematic presentation of his reading of the Cappadocians' trinitarian theology in *Being as Communion* is merely a set piece, an introduction to the system of practical theology he constructs around the subjects of freedom, love, personhood, community, church and ecumenism.

This section has shown how Zizioulas has played an important part in the rise in the volume and popularity of trinitarian theology over the final decades of the twentieth century and continuing into the twenty-first. His influence is particularly noticeable in the fact that this resurgence of trinitarian theology has often tended to speak of God the Trinity in terms of relationship, love and communion. The irony of this apparent great effect of Zizioulas' writings on trinitarian theological discussion is that, as is noted above, it is not the goal of his theological programme to construct a theology of the Trinity. Instead, both *Being as Communion* and *Communion and Otherness* are primarily concerned rather with issues of ecclesiology and ecumenism. Nevertheless, the theology of the Trinity that Zizioulas presents can be seen as the cornerstone for his

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<sup>137</sup> *BAC*, 16ff. See also “Cappadocian Contribution” which appears again in *CAO*, 155-170.

<sup>138</sup> Emphases which again reflect the probably influence of Florovsky, whose life and work reflected a great preoccupation with these issues. Nichols, *Russian Diaspora*, 156-162.

<sup>139</sup> Melissaris, “Patristic Ontology,” 471.

entire theological programme, only a section of the whole picture, but it is certainly a vital section. As this project is focused on trinitarian doctrine, a short summary of this aspect of Zizioulas' theology will be presented here.<sup>140</sup>

#### *1.1.5 Summary of Zizioulas Trinitarian Theology*

Throughout Zizioulas' theological programme, he writes frequently of “the Greek Fathers.”<sup>141</sup> Although he is generally precise about the meanings of terms, he never defines who is meant by “the Greek Fathers.” When quoting or referring directly to a thought he has taken from them, he most frequently references those we have mentioned above: Ignatius, Irenaeus, Athanasius, the Cappadocians or Maximus the Confessor. In the case of his trinitarian theology, Zizioulas primarily references the Cappadocians, a term he does define.<sup>142</sup> He clearly references Basil directly when speaking of the pivotal redefinition of *hypostasis* in terms of *prosopon*.<sup>143</sup> As he opens up his interpretation of the Cappadocians,<sup>144</sup> he refers to them as a group regularly in the text.<sup>145</sup> These reoccurrences are interspersed with relatively few specific references to each.<sup>146</sup> It is worth noting, however, that in response to claims that he has ‘misread’ the Cappadocians, he has produced a short defence of his reading which is much richer in footnotes and direct references than is his original text.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> This summary is primarily derivative of *BAC*, but with reference to various other primary and secondary sources. A much fuller account of Zizioulas' theological programme will be presented in Chapter 3 below.

<sup>141</sup> For example: *BAC*, 26, 35, 40, 43, 55, 70, 80, 82, 85, 94-5, 99, 101, 200, 218, 227, 235; *CAO*, 9, 20, 64, 127, 162-3, 254.

<sup>142</sup> *BAC*, 17. In *CAO*, he includes Amphilochius of Iconium, 155.

<sup>143</sup> *BAC*, 87-8; *CAO*, 157.

<sup>144</sup> I focus here on Chapter 4 of *CAO*, this being a reprint of his article specifically on the “Cappadocian Contribution,” and therefore containing, perhaps, his most concise statement of his reading of the Cappadocians.

<sup>145</sup> *CAO*, 156, 157, 158, 159, 161, 162, 163, 165, 166, 168, 169, 170.

<sup>146</sup> To Basil on pp 157, 158 and 163; to Nyssa on p159; and to Nazianzus on pp 161 and 162.

<sup>147</sup> *CAO* 171-7. The referencing here is denser in general, not only of the Cappadocian individuals.

The basis of Zizioulas' programme and the structure of his argument hinge on this semantic change: Basil's utilisation of an *ontological* word (*hypostasis*) to refer to the divine persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This semantic change relocates the source of the "being" of God from a pre-existent or hyper-trinitarian divine "substance" (*ousia*) to the divine "person" (*hypostasis*) of the Father.<sup>148</sup> As a result, the divine *ousia* could then be understood as a constituted by the three persons of the Trinity together rather than constituting them. For Zizioulas, the crucial result of this change is that "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.*"<sup>149</sup>

In this new definition, pioneered by the Cappadocians, *hypostasis*, which had originally been a synonym of *ousia*, retained definite ontological connotations referring to being.<sup>150</sup> The term person (*prosōpon*), with which Basil connected *hypostasis*, had no ontological content. Instead, *prosōpon* was originally used rather in reference to the outward appearance or definable characteristics of a given human than to the essential make up of qualities of his or her being.<sup>151</sup>

Suffice it to recall that only a generation before the Cappadocians the term *hypostasis* was fully identified with that of *ousia* or substance. . . . St Athanasius makes it clear that *hypostasis* did not differ from *ousia*, both terms indicating 'being' or 'existence'. The Cappadocians changed this by dissociating *hypostasis* from *ousia* and attaching it to *prosōpon*.<sup>152</sup>

By aligning the more individual, personal *prosōpon* with the decidedly essential, ontological *hypostasis*, that which differentiates one partaker in divine (or human) nature from another is raised in importance from outward appearance to a constitutive

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<sup>148</sup> *BAC*, 87-8; *CAO*, 157.

<sup>149</sup> *CAO*, 166, emphasis original.

<sup>150</sup> "Within classic Greek Philosophy substance (*ousia*) and *hypostasis* were synonymous, but meaning an existing being of a specific nature." Weinandy, "Zizioulas," 408. See also Wilks, "Trinitarian Ontology," 65, 75.

<sup>151</sup> *BAC*, 27-35.

<sup>152</sup> *CAO*, 157-8.

element. “The relational sense of *prosōpon* perdured, but this relational meaning acquired all the metaphysical connotations of the term *hypostasis* – that which makes something to be what it is, that which constitutes something in being.”<sup>153</sup>

In making this new association of terms, Basil (the Cappadocians), according to Zizioulas, endowed the relational concept of *prosōpon* with the ontological, concrete, ultimate existence associated with *hypostasis*.<sup>154</sup> This changed the ultimate identification of the trinitarian 'persons' from a pre-existent divine *ousia*, shared by all three, to the *hypostasis* of the Father as the ultimate cause.<sup>155</sup> Because of this “historic revolution . . . in the history of philosophy,”<sup>156</sup> the language of “ontology” regularly recurs in Zizioulas' writing and in discussion of his work.<sup>157</sup> According to Melissaris, “Zizioulas specifies ontology in the metaphysical sense of the transcendence of beings by being, i.e., in the sense of going beyond what passes away into what always and truly is,”<sup>158</sup> but he went further than this traditional meaning by making “personhood” an ontological category.

This conclusion is also reached by Harrison who notes that in Zizioulas' “conceptual framework, the person is clearly the primary ontological category rather than the nature and its qualities.”<sup>159</sup> Groppe similarly states that, for Zizioulas, person “is the ultimate ontological category” in God.<sup>160</sup> It is worth noting that some have come to a completely different reading of Zizioulas. Jesson, for example, states that “For Zizioulas, trinitarian personhood has no ontological character,” and again that “no

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<sup>153</sup> Groppe, “Creation *Ex Nihilo*,” 467.

<sup>154</sup> *BAC*, 39.

<sup>155</sup> *BAC*, 41; *CAO*, 161-2.

<sup>156</sup> *CAO*, 157.

<sup>157</sup> McPartlan points out that Greek thought is characterised by “a concern with *ontology*. For Zizioulas ‘ontological’ and ‘existential’ are synonyms,” *Eucharist*, 128.

<sup>158</sup> Melissaris, “Patristic Ontology,” footnote 14, 486.

<sup>159</sup> Harrison, “Communion and Otherness,” 274.

<sup>160</sup> Groppe, “Creation *Ex Nihilo*,” 479.



ontological content can be applied to the hypostases.”<sup>161</sup> Person is thus either the highest ontological category in God, or has subsumed ontology altogether.

It is this interpretation of a dramatic shift in the ontological understanding of the triune God that is at the core of Zizioulas' theological construction. He postulates that when “the Cappadocians” endowed *hypostasis* with this new meaning and made the Father the ultimate cause, they brought about two logical conclusions. Firstly, God does not exist by necessity: “God does not exist because He cannot but exist.” Secondly, God is free to choose to love, or not: “God is not in communion, does not love, because He cannot but be in communion and love.”<sup>162</sup> These two theses lead Zizioulas to define the “hypostatic” meaning of person as necessarily encompassing “communion” and “freedom.”<sup>163</sup>

Freedom, then, is a necessary quality of the *hypostasis*. By this Zizioulas means more than just the facility of choice, it is “the freedom to be oneself, uniquely particular.”<sup>164</sup> Freedom is found in its most perfect form in the *hypostasis* of the Father. For it is the Father who freely and voluntarily chooses to exist.<sup>165</sup> Likewise, the Father chooses to beget the Son and bring forth the Spirit, and to be in relationship with them. It is important to note here that “divine nature does not exist prior to the persons, as a sort of possession of the Father who grants it to the other persons.”<sup>166</sup> Instead, “divine nature exists only when and as the Trinity emerges, and it is for this reason that it is not ‘possessed’ by any person in advance.”<sup>167</sup> Only when the Son and Spirit respond in freedom and confirm their relationship with the Father does divine nature itself emerge.

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<sup>161</sup> Jesson, “Two or Three,” 8.

<sup>162</sup> *BAC*, 18.

<sup>163</sup> *BAC*, 18; *CAO*, 119.

<sup>164</sup> *CAO*, 122.

<sup>165</sup> *BAC*, 41.

<sup>166</sup> *CAO*, 140.

<sup>167</sup> *CAO*, 140.

In this way, the Trinity originates, finding its ultimate source in the complete freedom, the *hypostasis*, of the Father.<sup>168</sup>

In contrast to the divine state, the absolute freedom of the Father, human beings cannot but live; they are born without freedom. They live with the consequences of the Fall. The refusal of Adam to answer the call of God into free and loving relationship reversed the priority of *hypostasis* and nature in human beings. Adam chose to be oriented towards himself rather than out of himself and towards God.<sup>169</sup> This priority of nature over *hypostasis* in humans causes “the conflict that exists between the human being and its own nature.”<sup>170</sup>

For Zizioulas, this is the great tragedy of the biological *hypostasis*, while a *hypostasis* is meant to express itself in relationship with others and thus freely constitute its own unique nature, those born into the human race are robbed of this freedom. They even lack the ability to choose whether to exist. Ultimately this means that a process of self-examination about the challenges of life inevitably terminates in the conclusion that the only truly free choice left open to the biological *hypostasis* is that of self-annihilation.<sup>171</sup> Since human beings exist by necessity, to choose not to exist is the only independent choice left open to those trapped in biological existence. “The conflict between *hypostasis* and nature cannot be resolved until death is conquered for all and for ever.”<sup>172</sup>

Because of this human beings are not born “persons” in Zizioulas' definition. The only way an individual can obtain true freedom, and thus full personhood, is

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<sup>168</sup> BAC, 41.

<sup>169</sup> BAC, “viewed from the point of view of ontology, the fall consists in *the refusal to make being dependent on communion*, in a rupture between thought and communion,” 102, italics original. See also *Lectures*, 98-101, and *CAO*, 41-3.

<sup>170</sup> CAO, 55.

<sup>171</sup> This conclusion is famously reached by the character Kirilov in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*. Zizioulas quotes the passage when building his argument. BAC, 42.

<sup>172</sup> CAO, 64.

through being reborn (baptised) by their own choice, into a new mode of being.<sup>173</sup> Thus it becomes clear that individuals outside the baptised membership of the Church are not (and cannot be) *hypostases*, “persons,” in Zizioulas' theological meaning of the word. They have no freedom. They cannot but be. Without a life-affirming relationship with the source of *hypostatic* existence, they have no hope of gaining their own unique particularity.<sup>174</sup>

As we have seen, Zizioulas specifically designates the first person of the Trinity as the “cause” of the other two. Thus the Father is understood as the ultimate source of the Trinity and, by extension the world, through divine *hypostasis* rather than *ousia*. According to Zizioulas, it was a “mode of expression” that gave “ontological content to each person of the Holy Trinity without endangering its biblical principles: monotheism and the absolute ontological independence of God in relation to the word.”<sup>175</sup> Thus the Fathers could say that God the Father brought the world into being *ex nihilo* through relationship, through the free choice of a “person” to create and be in relationship, rather than through the impersonal, pre-determined or “natural” result of a substantial source.<sup>176</sup> “Divine freedom is thus eternally constituted as a mutual self-emptying and self-offering grounded in the plenitude of divine life” which finds its source in the Father “like everything else.” It follows that the divine persons “are also related to each

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<sup>173</sup> BAC 49-50.

<sup>174</sup> It is in the centrality and importance of this concept of the 'person' as fully free that Schroeder sees a great possibility for the expansion of Zizioulas' thought into a theology of suffering and hope. Distantly echoing Psalm 8, Schroeder explains Zizioulas' description of “the dialectic of capacity and incapacity” by pointing out that humans possess both the incapacity of absence in relationships (the state of animals) and the capacity to be in relationship (the divine state). It is in the journey between the two that humanity discovers the true freedom of choosing the divine way of being. For Schroeder this is “*freedom as suffering*, the capacity for the *anthropos* to freely embrace incapacity, and thus embrace suffering.” C. P. Schroeder, “Suffering Towards Personhood,” 261. Schroeder appears to miss, however, that for Zizioulas, this divine way of being can only be realised within the Body of Christ: the fellowship of the Church.

<sup>175</sup> This last reference to God's “ontological independence” is over against the ancient Greek monistic conceptions of the universe. BAC, 37.

<sup>176</sup> BAC, 39.

other through the divine essence” which “*remains ontologically dependent on the persons.*”<sup>177</sup>

As we have seen, the primacy of the *hypostasis* as an ontological category in Zizioulas’ theology is derived from his understanding of the use of *hypostasis* in Cappadocian trinitarian theology. However, he develops his understanding of *hypostasis* in relation to the Christological formations of the Council of Chalcedon.<sup>178</sup> The “oneness” of Christ’s nature was defined in terms of one *hypostasis*, one person, rather than a single substance.<sup>179</sup> Christ does not bring or expound a new understanding of person, “he realizes in history *the very reality of the person.*”<sup>180</sup> The definition of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Christ allows human beings to exist “not on the basis of the immutable laws” of nature, but rather “on the basis of a relationship with God” as demonstrated in Christ.<sup>181</sup>

Melissaris has noted that “the indissolubility of the person is more finely argued in Zizioulas’ Christology, which is less developed in comparison with his Trinitarian theology, and less well known too.”<sup>182</sup> Drawing on the Council of Chalcedon, the discussion of the union of the two natures in Christ provides fertile ground for “a sound theological theory of personhood according to Zizioulas, one that acknowledges our ecstatic and relational nature, without sacrificing the uniqueness of each person.”<sup>183</sup> Papanilolaou also echoes, more distantly, the importance of the person of Christ in

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<sup>177</sup> Harrison, “Communion and Otherness,” 279, emphasis added.

<sup>178</sup> McPartlan, *Eucharist*, 168.

<sup>179</sup> *CAO*, 37.

<sup>180</sup> *BAC*, 54.

<sup>181</sup> *BAC*, 56.

<sup>182</sup> Melissaris, “Patristic Ontology,” 478.

<sup>183</sup> Melissaris, “Patristic Ontology,” 479.

Zizioulas' theology. Because "God in the person of Christ has 'become history'," it is in the person of Christ that humanity can make the connection with the Godhead.<sup>184</sup>

## **1.2 Reception, Zizioulas in Academic Context**

Scholarly writing and reflection on Zizioulas' theology in the English language reflects a broad range of reactions, uses, and critical engagement. The intellectual depth and theological detail of his programme demand respect even from those who wish to offer criticism.<sup>185</sup> His work has given rise to comment from specialists in many academic disciplines, reflecting the breadth of his programme. The literature reviewed in this section is therefore eclectic, reflecting the concerns of historical, doctrinal and systematic theologians as well as patristic scholars. This examination of the academic reception, critical and constructive, of Zizioulas' theology is divided into broad categories indicative of the major theme of the reception or criticism being addressed in each section.

As Zizioulas writes out of his own Orthodox context, the first section below is dedicated to responses to his work from other Orthodox thinkers, not all of whom are happy with Zizioulas' representation of Orthodoxy.<sup>186</sup> This section will focus on two main categories of Orthodox responses to Zizioulas. These are the theological theme of eucharistic ecclesiology and Orthodox reaction to Zizioulas' personalism. Orthodox thinkers will also be mentioned in other categories of reception mentioned below where their concerns are not specifically in reference to Orthodoxy.

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<sup>184</sup> Papanikolaou, "Existentialist in Disguise," 604. See also Groppe, "Creation *Ex Nihilo*," 475. Christology finds a more full expression in Zizioulas' ecclesiology and pneumatology. The Church is itself the Body of Christ, and Christ is made manifest as a corporate personality within the realised eschatology of the eucharistic gathering of the Church community. *BAC*, 157.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Ables, "Very Idea," 673; and Loudovikos, "Person instead of Grace," 684.

<sup>186</sup> Melissaris, "Patristic Ontology," 469.

The reception of Zizioulas' work goes beyond the boundaries of his own church. Zizioulas has studied and worked in countries other than his native Greece, and is, arguably, one of the best known and most influential Orthodox theologians in the world.<sup>187</sup> He presents himself as a contributor to ecumenical reconciliation<sup>188</sup> and has himself been a part of the World Council of Churches.<sup>189</sup> In response to his work there are many from other traditions and denominations who wish to challenge, change or use Zizioulas' insights and theological conclusions, demonstrating again that his theology speaks to many contexts outside the Orthodox tradition as well as within.

Some authors have shown concern over the implications inherent in Zizioulas' anthropology (cf. the biological *hypostasis*), his doctrines of creation and sin, and the way in which he treats of the divine economy, but many choose to base their critique of Zizioulas on some aspect of his trinitarian theology. As trinitarian theology is the central theological concern of the present project, our review of the reception of Zizioulas' work will focus on critiques that address this theme. For the sake of clarity these critiques will be divided into the following broad categories of criticism: the monarchy of the Father, Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocians, emphasis on *hypostasis* at the expense of *ousia*, personhood as a category of being, and Zizioulas' apophaticism (or lack thereof). The final section dealing with academic reception of Zizioulas will focus on a few instances in which his ideas or conclusions are used by others in to contribute to their own theological ideas.

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<sup>187</sup> Knight, *Theology of John Zizioulas*, 1.

<sup>188</sup> As already seen in the Introduction to *BAC*, 26.

<sup>189</sup> Yannaras, *Orthodoxy*, 289.

### 1.2.1 Orthodox Reception

As we have seen, Zizioulas joined the world of Orthodox theology in a time of great change. His sizeable contribution and has been enormously influential.<sup>190</sup> This is especially true of a younger generation of Orthodox theologians, some of whom have been “deeply and for a long time connected with him at almost all levels of academic life.”<sup>191</sup> For Nicholas Loudovikos this deep knowledge of and respect for Zizioulas calls for “not only an agreement, but also . . . a dialogue.” He exemplifies a concern for the future of Orthodox theology in his desire “to engage Orthodox theology with the most important aspects of the modern intellectual inquiry.”<sup>192</sup> As Zizioulas has been such a formative influence in the development of a new generation of theologians, Loudovikos uses him as a conversation partner, even a foil, as he seeks to hone his own theology.

#### 1.2.1.1 Eucharistic Ecclesiology

In the introduction to *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas acknowledges that readers of the book may recognise some “fundamental presuppositions” characteristic of “eucharistic ecclesiology,” but he qualifies this admission with the claim that studying these presuppositions “in the light of the history of theology” will reveal “some fundamental differences” from the “eucharistic ecclesiology” of Afanasiev and his followers.<sup>193</sup> It would appear that Zizioulas does not wish to be considered as one of Afanasiev’s followers, but however much Zizioulas may wish to distance himself from “eucharistic ecclesiology,” he has been described as “its most well-known exponent.”<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Yannaras, *Orthodoxy*, 289. Also Brown, “Anglophone Orthodox Theology,” 35; Ables, “Decline and Fall,” 168.

<sup>191</sup> Loudovikos, “Person instead of Grace,” 684.

<sup>192</sup> Loudovikos, “Person instead of Grace,” 684.

<sup>193</sup> *BAC*, 23. Eucharistic ecclesiology, often captioned ‘the Eucharist makes the Church,’ is a particular theological approach to ecclesiology that emphasises the central importance of the practice of the Eucharist as constitutive of the being of the Church.

<sup>194</sup> Papanikolaou, “Integrating,” 173.

Clearly, though Zizioulas wishes to emphasise the distinctive reading of his own version of eucharistic ecclesiology, he has not succeeded in detaching himself or his theology from this stream or category in late 20th century Orthodox theology.

For Ware, Zizioulas provides “a fuller treatment of ‘eucharistic ecclesiology’” than does “Afanassieff.”<sup>195</sup> Ware does note some criticisms of and weaknesses in Zizioulas eucharistic ecclesiology firstly with reference to his emphasis on the authority of the bishop within the Church without corresponding references to other holy men and women. He also notes Zizioulas’ neglect of confession, spiritual guidance and the tradition of the *Philokalia*.<sup>196</sup> However, even with these drawbacks, “no other dominate model of ecclesiology has emerged in contemporary Orthodox thinking capable of replacing or seriously challenging the ‘eucharistic’ standpoint of Metropolitan John.”<sup>197</sup>

Aristotle Papanikolaou choses Zizioulas’ theology as a primary conversational partner as he explores “current challenges in Orthodox ecclesiology” and seeks a way forward. Papanikolaou carefully detaches Zizioulas’ ecclesiology from his trinitarian theology in an effort to sidestep the debate about his patristic reading.<sup>198</sup> When he later comes to a discussion on the relationship of bishop and congregation in Zizioulas’ ecclesiology, he is able to address the practical problems<sup>199</sup> and conciliar implications surrounding this relationship without referencing the monarchy of the Father which the relationship of bishop and church mirrors in Zizioulas’ programme. Papanikolaou clearly finds Zizioulas a fertile conversation partner on the topic of ecclesiology, but he

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<sup>195</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 115. I have included the alternative spelling of “Afanasiev” that Ware uses.

<sup>196</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 116.

<sup>197</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 116.

<sup>198</sup> Papanikolaou, “Integrating,” 175.

<sup>199</sup> “It is not clear at this point why Zizioulas could not simply identify the parish as the local church and the diocese as that which is constituted by the many local churches,” “Integrating,” 177.



does feel it necessary to add to or edit some of Zizioulas' positions. Papanikolaou seems to feel that some aspects of his ecclesiology are impractical and idealistic and fail to address the actual situations and real issues facing the Orthodox church in current times.

Loudovikos, who describes himself as a member of "the younger theological generation in Greece," has also identified Zizioulas as one who contributed to "eucharistic ecclesiology."<sup>200</sup> In his understanding this puts Zizioulas on one side of a division between the "institutional/eucharistic dimension of the Church and its 'spiritual' dimension" which Loudovikos connects to Origen via Pseudo-Dionysios.<sup>201</sup> Using the works of Pseudo-Dionysios, Loudovikos associates the institutional/structural understanding of or approach to understanding the Church with eucharistic ecclesiology and the contrasting spiritual/charismatic understanding with a stream of Orthodox theology he titles "therapeutic ecclesiology." For Loudovikos, Zizioulas represents the first of these two approaches.<sup>202</sup>

For Loudovikos this dichotomy is unfortunate, and he argues that the theology of the Aregopagite, as corrected and transmitted by Maximus the Confessor, offers a more holistic approach to ecclesiology.<sup>203</sup> As Maximus is one of the main patristic sources on which Zizioulas tends to draw, this criticism is pointed. He goes on to dissect ontological terminology of *eikon* and *mimesis*, concluding that the manifestation of the Church in the eucharist cannot be absolutely identified (as, he argues, Zizioulas does) "with her eternal being, this would be analogous with the absolute identification of divine essence with divine acts/energies - something that we avoid."<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Loudovikos, "*Eikon* and *mimesis*," 123.

<sup>201</sup> Loudovikos, "*Eikon* and *mimesis*," 123.

<sup>202</sup> Loudovikos, "*Eikon* and *mimesis*," 124.

<sup>203</sup> Loudovikos, "*Eikon* and *mimesis*," 125.

<sup>204</sup> Loudovikos, "*Eikon* and *mimesis*," 135.

### 1.2.1.2 Personalism

In a discussion surrounding the meaning of “person” in Zizioulas’ theology, Loudovikos argues that “the Maximian definition of the human person” is “completely different from that of Zizioulas and his fellow personalists.”<sup>205</sup> He is referencing the “concept of the transcendental person as radical freedom, opposed to nature as dark necessity.”<sup>206</sup> This, Loudovikos describes as “mainly a Western invention” which he connects with Fichte, Schelling, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Buber and Levinas before noting that it has also been adopted by Vladimir Lossky.<sup>207</sup>

Reading the Cappadocians, Loudovikos notes that “prosopon was not in the Greek patristic tradition opposed to atomon in the modern way Zizioulas uses them,” and “the identification of person with hypostasis occurred for historical and pastoral reasons and not for ontological ones,” an argument at least partially based on the lack of references to direct primary sources explaining such an ontological reading in Zizioulas’ works.<sup>208</sup> Zizioulas’ theology manages to point “in the right theological direction,” but his “fundamental conceptions “rarely move beyond modern philosophy.”<sup>209</sup>

Loudovikos’ critique of Zizioulas has been answered, to some extent by Alexis Torrance. She describes Loudovikos as one of Zizioulas’ “most outspoken critics” whose article, “Personhood instead of Grace and Dictated Otherness,” offers “the most detailed and wide-ranging criticism of its kind yet to have appeared in the West.”<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Loudovikos, “Person instead of Grace,” 687.

<sup>206</sup> Loudovikos, “Person instead of Grace,” 685.

<sup>207</sup> Loudovikos, “Person instead of Grace,” 685.

<sup>208</sup> Loudovikos, “Person instead of Grace,” 690.

<sup>209</sup> Loudovikos, “Person instead of Grace,” 698. “He is thereby able to please both the fundamentalist and the modernising Orthodox theologians: the former because of the abolition of nature, and the latter because of the abolition of knowledge and repentance, because he tends to identify almost any inner spiritual struggle with psychologism.”

<sup>210</sup> Torrance, “Personhood and Patristics,” 702.

Torrance detects some weaknesses in Loudovikos' article, including citations that appear to be taken out of context or even misquoted.<sup>211</sup> This is especially true with regard to Loudovikos' portrayal of Zizioulas' understanding of the category of "nature" in contrast to "person." Torrance describes Zizioulas' position as "a lot more nuanced than Loudovikos' near caricature will allow," and points out that, for Zizioulas, salvation is the fulfilment of nature in relationship to Christ, rather than the escape from nature portrayed by Loudovikos.<sup>212</sup>

With regard to Loudovikos' concern that personhood in Zizioulas is, in fact, dictated otherness rather than free communion, Torrance again checks the references used by Loudovikos and concludes that "if anything, reciprocity is key to the divine life" in the passage involved, rather than an illustration of the Father dictating otherness in relation to the Son and the Spirit.<sup>213</sup> Torrance concludes that "it is hard to accuse Zizioulas and hence many other Orthodox personalists as non-patristic or as wildly unfaithful to the heritage of the early church."<sup>214</sup>

Torrance's critique of Loudovikos' article in this instance exposes significant misreadings of Zizioulas. Loudovikos has identified common ground between Zizioulas (not to mention the unnamed "fellow personalists") and certain personalist philosophers of the last century. Zizioulas has certainly read Martin Buber and E. Levinas, he discusses both at length in his essay "On Being Other"<sup>215</sup> and contrasts them with Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre.<sup>216</sup> Common ground, however, does not equal agreement,

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<sup>211</sup> Torrance, "Personhood and Patristics," 702.

<sup>212</sup> Torrance, "Personhood and Patristics," 702.

<sup>213</sup> Torrance, "Personhood and Patristics," 704.

<sup>214</sup> Torrance, "Personhood and Patristics," 705.

<sup>215</sup> *CAO*, 47-50.

<sup>216</sup> *CAO*, 47.

and Torrance's demonstration of Loudovikos' "near caricature" and apparent mis-readings of the passages in Zizioulas' works that he cites<sup>217</sup> demonstrate a failure to appreciate the differences between "person" and "personhood" in Zizioulas' theology and "person" in "personalist" philosophy.<sup>218</sup>

### *1.2.2 The Monarchy of the Father*

Starting from the implications of the Cappadocian ontological revolution in trinitarian philosophical language, Zizioulas goes on to construct his anthropology, ecclesiology, soteriology and ecumenical suggestions. As we have seen, his complete theological programme, like his understanding of the Trinity, finds its source in the *hypostasis* of the Father. Zizioulas is not without his detractors in regard to this aspect of his trinitarian theology. Harrison, for example, suggests that "Zizioulas emphasizes the primacy of the Father as cause so much that he has not thought through sufficiently the implications of the fact that the Son and Spirit are equally personal and thus ontologically free."<sup>219</sup> According to Groppe, Zizioulas finds himself in a dilemma at this point for he has equated "ontological freedom" with "unorigination." It is this ontological freedom, the ability to make free choices, that fully constitutes a truly hypostatic person, but the Cappadocians, writing against Eunomius, clearly identify unbegottenness with the Father alone.<sup>220</sup>

Another concern related to Zizioulas' emphasis on the Father as sole cause of the Trinity is raised by Thomas Weinandy. He is pleased to affirm the insight that he sees in Zizioulas that the trinitarian persons exist in communion with each other and the world. He also agrees that the word "'person' by its very nature is a relational concept."<sup>221</sup> He

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<sup>217</sup> I have checked these references and fully agree with Torrance's reading.

<sup>218</sup> More on Zizioulas understanding of "person" and "personhood" below and in Chapter 3.

<sup>219</sup> Harrison, "Communion and Otherness," 279.

<sup>220</sup> Groppe, "Creation *Ex Nihilo*," 480.

<sup>221</sup> Weinandy, "Zizioulas," 410.

then proceeds to offer some criticism, primarily aimed at Zizioulas' description of the Father as *arche*, cause, of the Son and Spirit (and consequently of the Trinity). Zizioulas identifies the "one God" with the person of the Father rather than the unified divine substance. This looks good at first, but when Zizioulas goes further, speaking of the Father's free choice to cause the Son and the Spirit to exist, Weinandy senses the possibility of this doctrine being interpreted to mean that the Father, in fact, existed without Son and Spirit before choosing to cause them.

In seeking a corrective to this error, Weinandy suggests that the Father, being eternally Father "Freely affirms his Fatherhood and in so doing simultaneously and freely, in accordance with who he is as the Father begets the Son and spirates the Spirit."<sup>222</sup> In the footnote at the end of this line, Weinandy compares such a free choice to a human being's free choice "to affirm who I am and so freely live out of who I am."<sup>223</sup> Weinandy further elucidates his corrective on Zizioulas' doctrine of the monarchy of the Father by clearly stating that the Father is cause of the Son and the Spirit "not in the sense that he had before him two options and freely choose one over the other."<sup>224</sup> Interestingly, if Weinandy's corrective were to be adopted, it could seriously undermine Zizioulas' central principle of absolute freedom of choice. Surely, if the Father did not have "two options," necessity would be introduced into the Godhead. This would destroy Zizioulas' ideal of God (in the *hypostasis* of the Father) being the perfectly free person in whose life (with the Son and Spirit) the baptised Church can join, and so find salvation.

### *1.2.3 Zizioulas' Reading of the Cappadocians*

It is difficult to miss the debate about Zizioulas' reading of patristic sources, particularly the Cappadocians. Some example of it has already been seen above, in

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<sup>222</sup> Weinandy, "Zizioulas," 412.

<sup>223</sup> Weinandy, "Zizioulas," footnote 19, 415.

<sup>224</sup> Weinandy, "Zizioulas," 412.

Loudovikos' critique of Zizioulas reading of Maximus and Papanikolaou's nod in the direction of the debate. This is, perhaps, the area in which there is the widest and most varied response to Zizioulas' work.

Harrison and Groppe question the internal consistence of Zizioulas' emphasis on the Father as the ultimate cause. Weinandy and others like him question Zizioulas' doctrine of the Father on its own terms and by virtue of its theological implications. There are others who wish to challenge Zizioulas' attribution of that doctrine, as he describes it, to "the Cappadocians." As has been noted above, Zizioulas, while crediting this group with the philosophical revolution that is the genesis of his trinitarian theology, consistently cites Basil as a primary source. It therefore comes as no surprise that those who take exception to his reading of "the Cappadocians" often do so by highlighting how Zizioulas' theology is not in harmony with the theology of Nyssa or Nazianzus.

Nigel Rostock is one such individual who wishes to question the validity of the asserted Cappadocian origin of the centrality of the monarchy of the Father in the Trinity. He notes that "locating the unity" of the trinitarian persons in the Father "doesn't appear to be normative of the Cappadocians."<sup>225</sup> Instead, relying heavily on Nazianzus, Rostock proposes that the actual "Cappadocian" position is that "the unity of the one Godhead is revealed in the divine *ousia*."<sup>226</sup> He bolsters his assertion with references to Basil and discusses further developments of the doctrine of the Trinity through the theology of Augustine. While Rostock challenges the legitimacy of Zizioulas' emphasis on the monarchy of the Father, he attributes this imbalance rather to the entire Orthodox tradition than to Zizioulas as an individual.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Rostock, "Two Different Gods," 6.

<sup>226</sup> Rostock, "Two Different Gods," 8.

<sup>227</sup> Rostock, "Two Different Gods," 3, 4, 5.

In undertaking his own critical analysis of Zizioulas, Nageeb Awad sets out to explore, compare and contrast the trinitarian theology of Basil with that of Gregory of Nazianzus. In his article, “Between Subordination and Koinonia,” Awad specifically explores the interpretation of Zizioulas' theology as giving undue priority to the Father, as we have already noted in the case of Weinandy and Rostock. Awad's concern, however, is to show that Zizioulas' reading is more or less consistent with the writings of Basil. It is *not* however, consistent with the *Five Theological Orations* of Nazianzus.

Awad draws specific attention to Gregory's use of the terms “source/principle” (*aitia*) and “cause” (*arche*). Basil, Awad argues, does not distinguish between these two, but Gregory does. While Gregory, like Basil maintains the Father is the “cause” of the other two, he does not similarly consider the Father to be the *source* of the other two. Instead, for Gregory “the Father is the *arche* (originator/cause) of the Son and the Spirit,” but “the Father is not the *aitia* (source/principle) of the Godhead itself.”<sup>228</sup> The Father is not “God” while the others are “God from God,” rather all three together are the Godhead, and none can be conceived of without the other. In contrast to Basil's “patro-centric” trinitarian construction, Nazianzus' trinitarian persons live in “koinonia,” all together the three-in-one.

Lucian Turcescu also wishes to challenge Zizioulas' reading of “the Cappadocians,” but while Rostock and Awad contrasted Basil's theology (representative of Zizioulas) with that of Nazianzus, Turcescu offers challenges to Zizioulas' concept of “person” centring around his own understanding of the fourth century mindset and his related reading of Gregory of Nyssa. Turcescu challenges three specific points in Zizioulas' theological understanding of person. Firstly, while Zizioulas says that a person must not be understood as a combination of properties of substance, Turcescu argues that the concept of a person as a combination of substantial properties would

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<sup>228</sup> Awad, “Subordination and Koinonia,” 194.

have been very much current at the time of the Cappadocians.<sup>229</sup> Secondly, according to Turcescu, Zizioulas' describes the individual as “partial, because it is subject to addition and combination,” and contrasts this to a person, who is “free from such boundaries.”<sup>230</sup> To contradict this, Turcescu claims that “the individual being subject to addition and combination” was “an important feature of the concept of person.”<sup>231</sup> Thirdly, against the claim that a distinction between person and individual is necessary, Turcescu again lists primary source material, primarily Nyssa's *Ad Graecos*, as proof that Nyssa, at least, made no such distinction in his use of language between ideas of person and ideas of an individual or “particular” substance.<sup>232</sup>

In a counter-article, Papanikolaou sets out to answer Turcescu's arguments on a number of levels. He concedes that it may be true “that a relational ontology of trinitarian personhood does not exist in the Cappadocian Fathers,”<sup>233</sup> but argues that Turcescu does not succeed in discrediting Zizioulas. One of the chief reasons for this, according to Papanikolaou is Turcescu's choice of Nyssa as a foil for Zizioulas. While Zizioulas does consistently reference the Cappadocian Fathers in his writing, Papanikolaou has rightly noted that “if one were to eliminate the references to Gregory of Nyssa in the works where Zizioulas most develops his relational ontology of trinitarian personhood, there would be little, if any, substantive change.”<sup>234</sup> What Papanikolaou does not comment on is the appropriateness of Zizioulas' use of the “Cappadocian” stamp for a theology that does not appear to fully represent the three generally referenced by that title.

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<sup>229</sup> Turcescu, "Person' Versus 'Individual'," 530.

<sup>230</sup> Turcescu, "Person' Versus 'Individual'," 531.

<sup>231</sup> Turcescu, "Person' Versus 'Individual'," 531.

<sup>232</sup> Turcescu, "Person' Versus 'Individual'," 533-534.

<sup>233</sup> Papanikolaou, “Existentialist in Disguise," 602.

<sup>234</sup> Papanikolaou, “Existentialist in Disguise," 602.



Going on to contrast Turcescu's reading of Zizioulas with his own interpretation, Papanikolaou finds that Turcescu's reading is “in need of greater nuancing”<sup>235</sup> at a number of different points. In particular, Papanikolaou points out that Zizioulas does not reject the use of a combination of qualities to define one individual from another, but he does insist that what makes a human being “unique” is something unquantifiable and undefinable. This certain something is made manifest when a person is fully constituted as unique in relationship to the Father/Godhead.

While Turcescu accuses Zizioulas of drawing his personalist and existentialist insights from modern theology more than the patristic sources he claims, Papanikolaou points out that Zizioulas makes no secret of this fact. For Papanikolaou, Zizioulas is following in the great tradition of the Fathers themselves by engaging with the current philosophy and concerns of his day in light of and in dialogue with the Christian tradition. “He is talking about the authoritative texts of the tradition in light of the questions, challenges, and prevailing philosophical currents of his time.”<sup>236</sup>

For those who do debate over Zizioulas' patristic reading and interpretation, John Wilks asks this question: “to what extent must contemporary re-applications of the Trinity adhere to the teachings of the past if they are to be valid?”<sup>237</sup> This question provides an excellent starting point for analysing this problem, but perhaps it is necessary to go one step further and explore the reasoning behind the re-appropriation and continued use of such ancient concepts at all. Is the purpose of such reasons to re-create the understandings of the past in order to perpetuate them, or do we seek rather to understand their content in context and translate and reinterpret ancient teachings in our own contexts as cultural and historical beings? Existing in the same tradition as the Cappadocians and seeking to translate and transmit their ideas to a new age, it would

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<sup>235</sup> Papanikolaou, “Existentialist in Disguise,” 603.

<sup>236</sup> Papanikolaou, “Existentialist in Disguise,” 605.

<sup>237</sup> Wilks, “Trinitarian Ontology,” 82.

appear that Zizioulas is subject to criticism of the accuracy of his patristic reading simply because he has read patristic theology and used it as part of a living tradition.

#### *1.2.4 Emphasis on hypostasis at the expense of ousia*

Of course it is not only contemporary philosophical currents with which Zizioulas interacts in creating his theological programme. His deep engagement with patristic sources guarantees that he will also be interacting with the terms and ideas of ancient Greek philosophy. The core terminology of his system are derivative of Greek philosophy, through the Fathers, and among these terms *ousia* and *hypostasis* play central roles. Because of the centrality of the redefinition of the *hypostasis* for Zizioulas, there are those who feel that he gives insufficient attention and emphasis to the necessary place of the *ousia* in trinitarian theology.

According to Wilks, “Zizioulas has a highly negative attitude to the possibility of any role for the *ousia* in the Trinity.”<sup>238</sup> His overwhelming interest in the Cappadocian ontological revolution and the resulting usefulness of *hypostasis* as an ontological category in God means that, while Zizioulas defines *ousia* in relational terms, it “is only a very minor part of his ontology.”<sup>239</sup> His focus is, instead, on the constitutive nature of communion and *exstasis* within the divine life. Harrison has seen a similar lack of balance in Zizioulas' treatment of the divine *ousia*. Using Zizioulas' own starting point she asserts that, as the three divine *hypostases* are “related to each other through the divine essence. It follows that nature or essence cannot be emptied of content as much as Zizioulas would like.”<sup>240</sup>

In contrast to Zizioulas' reading of the Fathers, Wilks goes on to state, rather baldly, that the patristic understanding of “*ousia* is about more than the communion

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<sup>238</sup> Wilks, “Trinitarian Ontology,” 79.

<sup>239</sup> Wilks, “Trinitarian Ontology,” 78.

<sup>240</sup> Harrison, “Communion and Otherness,” 279.

together of the *hypostases*.”<sup>241</sup> Wilks clearly feels that Zizioulas provides insufficient references for his claims to the contrary. Because of this, Zizioulas' “conclusion that the *hypostases* are ontologically pre-eminent to the *ousia* is impermissible.”<sup>242</sup> In fact, Wilks' reading of the Fathers has brought him to quite a different conclusion. He even goes so far as saying, in direct contradiction of Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocians, that they “taught that the basis of unity was the *ousia*”<sup>243</sup> not the *hypostasis* of the Father.

For Zizioulas, it seems, the important distinction of these two ontological terms is directly related to the problem of Greek monism. The Son (and Spirit) are distinct from the Father in *hypostasis*, but must be identical to the Father in the divine *ousia* which is at once common to all three and utterly unlike the substance of the created world.

So, whenever the question of the ontological relationship between God and the world is raised, the idea of *hypostasis*, from now on ontological in an ultimate sense, must be completed with that of substance if we do not wish to fall back into ontological monism. The identification of God with the Father risks losing its biblical content unless our doctrine of God includes not just three persons, but also the unique *ousia*.<sup>244</sup>

With his emphasis on *creatio ex-nihilo*, Zizioulas stresses the importance of the divine *ousia*, but he also maintains that no one can know “the essence of God, apart from God himself.”<sup>245</sup> It is not possible to know the “what” of God's being, God's essence or *ousia*. Instead Zizioulas focuses on “how” God exists for “there is no *ousia* in the nude, that is, without hypostasis.”<sup>246</sup> In Zizioulas' understanding *ousia* cannot be prior to *hypostasis* because “divine nature does not

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<sup>241</sup> Wilks, “Trinitarian Ontology,” 80.

<sup>242</sup> Wilks, “Trinitarian Ontology,” 82.

<sup>243</sup> Wilks, “Trinitarian Ontology,” 82.

<sup>244</sup> *BAC*, 89.

<sup>245</sup> *Lectures*, 57.

<sup>246</sup> *CAO*, 125.

exist prior to the divine persons,”<sup>247</sup> but the unity of the Trinity is in the relationships of the Trinity which make up their essence.

### *1.2.5 Personhood as a category of being*

As Papanikolaou has stated, “criticism of John Zizioulas's relational ontology of trinitarian personhood generally rebukes him for attempting to dress his philosophical personalism and existentialism with Cappadocian language and parade it as patristic.”<sup>248</sup>

However, while some decry the modern re-invention and re-interpretation that they sense in Zizioulas, others find his treatment of the patristic sources to be creative and stimulating.<sup>249</sup> Russell uses Zizioulas as a refreshing example of a contemporary Orthodox theologian moving away from the “use of the Fathers simply as proof texts” toward a discussion that sets the Fathers “in their historical context.”<sup>250</sup> Interpreting the Fathers in context allows them to speak more directly to a contemporary audience. “Otherwise they remain imprisoned in the past, the authors of dead formulaic statements.”<sup>251</sup> Russell praises the “neopatristic synthesis” which Zizioulas is seeking to contribute to and his willingness to dialogue with Western as well as Eastern Fathers and traditions.<sup>252</sup>

Although he is careful to state that he approaches the subject “from a position of respect for Zizioulas’s contribution,” Travis Ables detects a “surprising instability in Zizioulas’s thought” on the subject of the ontology of communion.<sup>253</sup> He objects to the lack of a definition of the terms “ontology” and “being” in Zizioulas’ work, and feels that

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<sup>247</sup> CAO, 140.

<sup>248</sup> Papanikolaou, “Existentialist in Disguise,” 601.

<sup>249</sup> Melissaris, “Patristic Ontology,” 469.

<sup>250</sup> Russell, “Modern Greek Theologians,” 78.

<sup>251</sup> Russell, “Modern Greek Theologians,” 79.

<sup>252</sup> Russell, “Modern Greek Theologians,” 87.

<sup>253</sup> Ables, “Very Idea,” 673.

“being seems to be both nature, the overcoming of which constitutes freedom and communion; and . . . freedom, the overcoming of nature.”<sup>254</sup> Ables goes on to deconstruct Zizioulas’ uses of the terms “substance” and “nature,” which he also feels Zizioulas has failed to clearly define.<sup>255</sup> Bringing Levinas into the conversation, Ables is at pains to prove that “Zizioulas’s conception of freedom” from substance breaks down under the examination of his system which actually “exemplifies” rather than “upset[s] a substantialistic understanding of personhood.”<sup>256</sup>

Awad is another who is uncomfortable with Zizioulas’ theology of personhood. He questions “the validity of Zizioulas’ reduction of personhood into mere communion and whether or not this produces a coherent understanding of the ontological relation of ‘being’ and ‘communion.’”<sup>257</sup> Although Awad connects Zizioulas’ understanding of “personhood” to his reading of the Cappadocians,<sup>258</sup> he claims that Zizioulas begins “his theological understanding of ‘personhood’ from the doctrine of the church.”<sup>259</sup> Awad’s questions of Zizioulas’ reading of the Cappadocians have been noted above. He sees a conflict between Zizioulas’ stress on the Father as “a causal origin of the Godhead” and his “other stress on the ontological primoridality of the communion of the three *hypostases*.”<sup>260</sup> He argues that, contrary to Zizioulas definition of freedom, “a *free* person . . . should be able to turn away from being always in a specific mode of communion with others and still be rendered a person.”<sup>261</sup> In direct opposition to the

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<sup>254</sup> Ables, “Very Idea,” 674.

<sup>255</sup> Ables, “Very Idea,” 674.

<sup>256</sup> Ables, “Very Idea,” 677.

<sup>257</sup> Awad, “Personhood as Particularity,” 2.

<sup>258</sup> Awad, “Personhood as Particularity,” 2, 4.

<sup>259</sup> Awad, “Personhood as Particularity,” 3.

<sup>260</sup> Awad, “Personhood as Particularity,” 8.

<sup>261</sup> Awad, “Personhood as Particularity,” 14.

monarchical, hypostatical source of the Godhead advocated by Zizioulas, Awad wishes to emphasise that particularity among the three *hypostases* should not be understood in as as “one-sided linear mediation,” but rather as “reciprocal correspondence and influence.”<sup>262</sup>

#### *1.2.6 Zizioulas' apophaticism (or lack thereof)*

It is this question that leads to the final aspect of Zizioulas' theology of God that will be considered here. Within the discussion and debate surrounding the theological programme of Zizioulas one strand of questioning is less prominent. While many choose to critique his doctrine or his reading of the Fathers, there seem to be relatively few that raise questions in regard to the boundaries of the discussion itself. Perhaps those boundaries are implicit in the light-handed way in which Zizioulas treats the divine *ousia*, but there is still some room for challenge in this area.

Although Zizioulas has said that “the notion of person, if properly understood” may be “the only notion that can be applied to God without the danger of anthropomorphism,”<sup>263</sup> the question of how this notion is to be “properly understood” bears consideration. How far can theological language and discussion go in defining God before the line into what cannot be known of God is crossed? Miroslav Volf describes the danger of equating humanity too closely with the divine when he notes that while there is a “vast amount of reflection” on the correspondence between the divine community and human relationships there is also a “virtual absence of reflection on the inherent limits of all such correspondences.”<sup>264</sup>

In spite of the danger of making God in the image of man, Volf maintains the importance and centrality of human analogies to the divine life. As those created in the

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<sup>262</sup> Awad, “Personhood as Particularity,” 21.

<sup>263</sup> *CAO*, 224.

<sup>264</sup> Volf, “Social Program,” footnote 11, 419.

image of God human beings should certainly “seek to be like God in their mutual relations.”<sup>265</sup> Understanding what it is to be in God's image necessarily includes some understanding of God within Godself. The fact is, we must speak of God in some way. This being the case, Volf asserts that “the question is not whether the Trinity should serve as a model for human community,” but rather how and “to what extent it should do so.”<sup>266</sup> The branch of theology that generally treats of the inherent limitations in language when applied to God is often known as apophaticism.

There is certainly room to explore “the alleged downplay of apophaticism by Zizioulas,”<sup>267</sup> to a much greater extent than has already been done. Although few authors that have responded to Zizioulas have devoted extended discussion to the question of what can actually be said about God, the question is still worth asking. According to Wilks, Cappadocian theology would maintain that “God's very substance cannot be known, it is only the *hypostasis* that is known.”<sup>268</sup> This leads to the question, if the *hypostasis* is in any way ontologically constitutive of the being of God through the communion between the trinitarian persons, has this discussion entered an apophatic no-go area?

Papanikolaou suggests that “Zizioulas himself is not negating the importance of apophaticism for theology, but affirming the priority of ontology over apophaticism.”<sup>269</sup> Instead, Papanikolaou identifies a “threefold distinction in speaking of the existence of God. We can speak of 1) that God exists, 2) the *what* of God's existence, or 3) the *how* of God's existence. For Zizioulas it is the *what* of God, the *ousia*, that remains unknown and unknowable. The *how* of God's existence is, in contrast, necessarily a part of

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<sup>265</sup> Volf, “Social Program,” 404.

<sup>266</sup> Volf, “Social Program,” 405.

<sup>267</sup> Melissaris, “Patristic Ontology,” footnote 5, 485.

<sup>268</sup> Wilks, “Trinitarian Ontology,” 71.

<sup>269</sup> Papanikolaou, “Divine Energies,” 371.

theological discourse “since this personal existence is revealed and, hence, known experientially.”<sup>270</sup>

But while Zizioulas is accused by some of downplaying apophaticism in the discussion of God, others draw out the surprising introduction of apophatic language and ideas into anthropology that can be found in his theology. Harrison notes that, for Zizioulas, “the person is a mystery” that transcends “measurable qualities.”<sup>271</sup>

Melissaris also comments on Zizioulas' understanding of “the mystery of the human person” which he equates with “existential freedom.” It is necessary to maintain this mystery, says Melissaris, because it preserves the *imago dei* in humankind.<sup>272</sup>

### *1.2.7 The Use of Zizioulas' Thought*

In general, the wider world of theological discussion, especially those who are chiefly interested in ‘doing’ theology or finding a deeper more traditional grounding for practical theology, responds well and interacts freely with what Zizioulas offers. Many are eager to mine his work for those insights that inform, expand or support their own theological reflection. Others seek to build on the reflections or conclusions they find in Zizioulas' writing, sometimes by correcting or modifying his conclusions.

Generally, the focus of the discussion of these references to Zizioulas is directed toward the practical and theological usefulness of his thought. Although many acknowledge that there is some discussion about the validity of his reading of patristic sources,<sup>273</sup> they are content to leave that debate to others. These writers are still keen to utilise and apply his theology in the such areas as trinitarian doctrine, ecclesiology, anthropology and ecumenism without detailed inquiry into the challenges to Zizioulas'

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<sup>270</sup> Papanikolaou, “Divine Energies,” 373. This distinction between the *how* and *what* of God's existence is echoed by Awad who states that “Gregory believes that the doctrine of the Trinity is initially an apophatic discourse about God's *opera ad extra*, for human reason cannot fully grasp the nature of God per se.” Awad, “Subordination and Koinonia,” 191.

<sup>271</sup> Harrison, “Communion and Otherness,” 275.

<sup>272</sup> Melissaris, “Patristic Ontology,” 483.

<sup>273</sup> Cf. Grenz, *Rediscovering* 143-144; Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 75; Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity*, 97.



patristic interpretation. As background, these authors often give a summary of Zizioulas' description of the "Cappadocian contribution," without reference to its similarity or otherwise to any common understanding of the Cappadocians. Mostly, however, Zizioulas' theological programme and ecclesiological concerns are explored and drawn on with minimal reference to their credited patristic origins.

Patricia Fox acknowledges that there is some doubt as to "whether, in this era, it is possible to retain a concept of person coined in the theological world of the fourth century, now that the concept itself has acquired many new layers of meaning."<sup>274</sup> She then devotes some time to answering this question before moving on to begin her explanation of Zizioulas' theology. She clearly sees the variety and systemics of "his whole theological system," pointing out that it contains "not only an anthropology, christology, and pneumatology. . . but also an ecclesiology and a cosmology."<sup>275</sup>

Fox spends a considerable amount of time exploring Zizioulas' system, but her main aim seems to highlight his "elaboration of the Christian symbol of the triune God." She feels this symbol has "much to offer" to contemporary conversation about God. Her ultimate goal is to bring Zizioulas' theology into "mutual critical correlation"<sup>276</sup> with her other chosen source of theological insight, Elizabeth Johnson. In choosing a Roman Catholic feminist theologian as a foil for Zizioulas, Fox has chosen almost as great a contrast as would have been possible.

Jonathan Martin Ciraulo, acknowledging that criticism has been levelled at Zizioulas' interpretation of the Fathers, points out that "his point is not primarily historical but theological." For this reason, Ciraulo says, "his claims will be evaluated

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<sup>274</sup> Fox, *God as Communion*, 25.

<sup>275</sup> Fox, *God as Communion*, 52. Fox defines "cosmology" as "theology of creation," but Zizioulas rejects the root word "cosmos" for its monistic connotations in Greek philosophy. *CAO*, 253.

<sup>276</sup> Fox, *God as Communion*, 97.

on theological grounds.”<sup>277</sup> Ciraulo connects Zizioulas thought to “personalist and existentialist” thought, especially “his dialectic between necessity and freedom,”<sup>278</sup> but his employment of these philosophers in the cause of theology follows fellow Orthodox theologians Lossky and Yannaras.<sup>279</sup> Ciraulo describes Zizioulas as “firstly a bishop and a pastor” who is focuses on the concerns of the Christian community “*ad intra*.”<sup>280</sup> His understandings of the relationships among baptism, church and salvation can appear unnecessarily harsh or closed,<sup>281</sup> but Ciraulo uses them as a starting point for “advancing Zizioulas’ thought”<sup>282</sup> to illustrate how “the inexplicable mystery” that God’s grace “has overflowed the walls of the Church and infiltrated the entire cosmos.”<sup>283</sup>

It seems that the academic community of practical and systematic theologians, at least, is generally content to accept Zizioulas' patristic reading at face value. At the least, such theologians make use of his conclusions without taking a very detailed a look at how he came to them. As Zizioulas’ own programme is practically concerned with so many other subjects of theological interest, it is not surprising that many wish to make use of Zizioulas' programme with minimal reference to its patristic origins. His conclusions will inspire and appeal to many who lack any significant patristic background.

### 1.3 Conclusions

This chapter has undertaken to place Zizioulas’ life and work within his historical and academic context. Our exploration of the themes and sources of the

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<sup>277</sup> Ciraulo, “Sacraments and Personhood,” 993.

<sup>278</sup> Ciraulo, “Sacraments and Personhood,” 994.

<sup>279</sup> Ciraulo, “Sacraments and Personhood,” 995.

<sup>280</sup> Ciraulo, “Sacraments and Personhood,” 997.

<sup>281</sup> Ciraulo, “Sacraments and Personhood,” 994-6.

<sup>282</sup> Ciraulo, “Sacraments and Personhood,” 993.

<sup>283</sup> Ciraulo, “Sacraments and Personhood,” 1002.

neopatristic synthesis and the late twentieth century renaissance in trinitarian theology provides sufficient grounds to expect the theology of John Zizioulas to have a central place in trinitarian and patristic theological conversation for many years to come. The variety of readings of and reactions to his work makes it plain that the discussion of trinitarian theology and its Cappadocian origins which surrounds Zizioulas is neither insignificant nor simple. The considerable intricacy of many of the challenges to his work and the breadth of disciplines from which they come indicate that Zizioulas is not a thinker to be dismissed lightly or challenged without due consideration.

This summary of the reception and use of Zizioulas' trinitarian theology has demonstrated that he is by no means without his critics. These include scholars who object to a perceived lack of egalitarianism in his description of the Godhead, and those who feel he has compromised fourth century theology by connecting it too closely with twentieth century philosophy. There are also some who struggle with the distinctions made by Zizioulas between *ousia* and *hypostasis*, even more so with the conclusions he then draws from those distinctions. Others are deeply concerned about the meaning and implications of “personalism” and its insertion into conversations about trinitarian theology. Reflections about the appropriateness of the language Zizioulas uses to speak of God have been less fully developed, but it is possible to distinguish lingering concerns about making too categorical statements about the ontological nature of God, even in the apparently unspecific terminology of communion, love and relationship.

In this chapter we have taken the time to explore Zizioulas' historical background and scholarly context. We have seen how Zizioulas' theological project sits in the context of Florovsky's call for a neopatristic synthesis to be developed within Orthodox theology in the mid-twentieth century by tracing this call came to Zizioulas' native Greece. We have also reflected on the situation in Greek theological schools and religious culture at that time. All this provides us with valuable context for

understanding Zizioulas as a theologian. When we come, later in this project, to more closely examine the content of his theology, we will be in a better position to draw conclusions about the purposes and inspirations behind Zizioulas' work.

As we have explored various scholarly and theological reactions to Zizioulas summarised in this chapter, one key assumption appears to dominate criticism of his work. That is an assumption of the stability or continuity of certain absolute ideas or understandings of theological or dogmatic principles. This is evident, particularly in reactions to Zizioulas' reading of the Fathers, his use of ontological terminology, and his fidelity or otherwise to the absolutes of apophatic language. If there is truly such stability or the potential for overarching 'correct' interpretations of patristic authors, for example, the implication seems to be that the only possible theological activity within this paradigm would be to either restate the absolute or criticise another for misusing, abusing or misunderstanding it. The difficulty arises when we realise that, although scholars hold some understandings in common, there is rarely a single, unarguably correct reading, leaving theological conversation to be little more than argument over the meaning and value of terms.

In choosing to focus on Zizioulas' incorrect readings of the Fathers or inappropriate use of modern philosophy, his critics seem to miss the breadth and depth of his knowledge, crediting him with a naiveté at odds with the deeply intricate and widely influential theological system he has created.<sup>284</sup> Such criticism misses the fundamental fact that his project does not seek to restate patristic truths, but rather to use patristic insights and values to create a new way of seeing, sharing and communicating truths in the present time. In this Zizioulas is again in keeping with

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<sup>284</sup> Papanilolaou has pointed out that Zizioulas is aware of and interacts with modern personalist philosophies, "Existentialist in Disguise," 604.

Florovsky's neopatristic synthesis and the quest to revive "Christian Hellenism" as a mindset both for the practice of Christian theology and of ecclesiastical life.<sup>285</sup>

As we look forward to Chapter 2 and beyond, it is important to keep in mind both the academic and historical contexts of Zizioulas' theology. The context of the neopatristic synthesis in particular highlights again the debate surrounding the trinitarian aspects of Cappadocian theology and the place of the Cappadocians in Zizioulas' theological programme. For this reason, Chapter 2 will be devoted to the Cappadocian Category, including the lives and contexts of the Cappadocian Fathers, a short history of how the use of this category became common, and some characteristic aspects of their theology, both individual and shared. With the context of both Zizioulas and the Cappadocians in place, the third and fourth chapters will engage more deeply with the content of Zizioulas' theology and his reading of the Cappadocians.

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<sup>285</sup> Gavriluk, "Florovsky's Neopatristic," 114.

## **Chapter 2 The Cappadocian Category**

In the first Chapter we have encountered and engaged with John Zizioulas, his cultural and historic context, some of the themes of his theology, and some central criticisms that have been levelled at him. Given the focus of this project on the trinitarian aspects of his theology, it is plain that what Zizioulas terms “the Cappadocian Contribution” is central to and constitutive of his description of trinitarian personhood and relationships. Having established this basic understanding of Zizioulas, we will now turn our attention to the “Cappadocians.”

This Chapter is entitled “The Cappadocian Category, as it explores questions about the use of “Cappadocian” as a descriptor as well as trying to discover “who” are the Cappadocians and what is meant by the phrase “Cappadocian theology.” The word “Cappadocian” can be found as a descriptor of an geographic area, specific persons, a given theology, or a school of theological thought, among other things. The semantic range of the term became so unwieldy in the formation of this project, that I coined the phrase “Cappadocian Category” to make the endless references to its meaning and possible uses more simple. This is the second key image or idea of the thesis.

This Chapter will focus first on identifying the individuals usually indicated by the term “Cappadocian Fathers.” When these men have been identified and placed in their historical and relational context, the chapter will turn to seeking the origin of the Cappadocian category. Finally, some time will be spent in identifying what might be called “Cappadocian theology.”

### **2.1 Who are the “Cappadocian Fathers”?**

It hardly seems possible to overemphasise the importance which Zizioulas places on what he calls “the Cappadocian contribution.” According to him the “theological and philosophical originality” of the Cappadocians “sealed the entire

history of Christian thought,”<sup>286</sup> but it is not only “Christian thought” in which Zizioulas sees the stamp of Cappadocian genius, their contribution also involves “a radical reorientation of classical Greek humanism, a conception of man and a view of existence.”<sup>287</sup> Because of their involvement in the trinitarian debates of the fourth century, the Cappadocian Fathers’ influence reaches beyond theology to “affect the entire culture of late antiquity to such an extent that the whole of Byzantine and European thought would remain incomprehensible without a knowledge of this contribution.”<sup>288</sup>

Given the comprehensive nature of this claim, it would be reasonable to expect the Cappadocian theologians to figure prominently in texts recording and teaching the history of “Byzantine and European thought” or philosophy, but this does not seem to be the case. On the contrary, those who are unfamiliar with patristic and historical theology tend to also be unfamiliar with the “Cappadocian Fathers.” This lack of evidence for the influence of Cappadocian thought on today’s society offers a significant challenge to Zizioulas’ sweeping claims of philosophical revolution. He seems to be aware of this himself when he acknowledges that the “Cappadocian contribution still awaits its comprehensive and exhaustive treatment in theological - and philosophical - research.”<sup>289</sup>

To non-specialists the phrase “Cappadocian Fathers” could as easily refer to any number of important theologians from that geographic region of Asia Minor over any a given period of history. Even within the academic world, there is some variety in

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<sup>286</sup> “Cappadocian Contribution,” 44; *CAO*, 155.

<sup>287</sup> Given Zizioulas’ early relationship with Georges Florovsky, it is possible that he may have Florovsky’s ideal of “Christian Hellenism” in mind when describing this radical reorientation of Greek humanism. Cf. Gavriluk, “Florovsky’s Neopatristic Synthesis.”

<sup>288</sup> “Cappadocian Contribution,” 45; *CAO*, 155-6.

<sup>289</sup> “Cappadocian Contribution,” 45; *CAO*, 156.

specific lists of the individuals included in the Cappadocian category. In recent decades there has also been a rise in the number of scholars who qualify or even dismiss the use of the Cappadocian category. In spite of this, there are still three names that consistently appear on the list; these core members of the group are Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa.

These three are occasionally joined with various other thinkers contemporary to themselves in the listings, reflections and footnotes of a variety of scholars. For example, introducing his chapter on the Cappadocians, Richard Hanson observes in a footnote that there were other Cappadocian theologians in the fourth century beyond the three usually included in that category. He suggests that the category could also include Eusebius of Samosata and Amphilochius of Iconium, indicating that these two theologians shared a geographic and theological thought world with the three great Cappadocians. Hanson goes on to note that several theologians whose theology was decidedly opposed to Basil and the two Gregories were also, strictly speaking, Cappadocians. He names “Eunomius, Aetius and Gregory and George of Alexandria,”<sup>290</sup> in doing so he highlights the inherent lack of precision in the use of Cappadocian category.

Another who comments on the weakness of the Cappadocian Category is, John McGuckin, who, in the introduction to his intellectual biography of Gregory of Nazianzus, regrets that this Gregory’s distinctive theology has too often been neglected in favour of considering him together with the other two Cappadocians,<sup>291</sup> but when he comes to write his reference book on *The Orthodox Church*, McGuckin references the category himself. In a footnote of this reference work he, like Hanson, includes

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<sup>290</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 676, footnote 1. LaCugna also points out that “Eunomius was also a Cappadocian,” *God for Us*, 55.

<sup>291</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, xxi.



Amphilochius of Iconium in the group, but McGuckin does not stop there, also adding Peter of Sebaste and Macrina the Younger, the younger brother and older sister of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>292</sup>

McGuckin is not alone in suggesting Macrina the Younger could be included in the Cappadocian category. She is also mentioned as a possible “fourth Cappadocian” by Raymond Van Dam and Jaroslav Pelikan. Textual evidence or support for this particular addition is severely limited. As a woman Macrina took no part in the theological debates of her time, but her brother Gregory immortalised her in his writings, portraying a woman of surpassing piety and wisdom. There is also some evidence that she was largely responsible for the formative education of her brothers.<sup>293</sup> As the potential inspiration and first teacher of two influential bishops in the matters of doctrine together with the glowing tributes of Gregory of Nyssa, Macrina stands as a shadowy possibility behind at least two of the Cappadocian Fathers.

Like these scholars, Zizioulas also adds to the three main Cappadocians. His list of the Cappadocian Fathers is made up of four men. Like Hanson and McGuckin, Zizioulas includes Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium in his list of the Cappadocian Fathers; unlike them he adds only Amphilochius.<sup>294</sup> Given that Zizioulas’ Cappadocian Fathers is a list of four, it is necessary for us to consider Amphilochius in addition to the three main Cappadocians. It is the more appropriate to do so as Zizioulas is not alone in including Amphilochius in the Cappadocian category. We will consider this claim that Amphilochius should have a place among the Cappadocian Fathers before proceeding to consider the common uses of the Cappadocian category.

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<sup>292</sup> McGuckin, *Orthodox Church*, 176, footnote 115. Cf. Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 409.

<sup>293</sup> Van Dam, *Families*, 184-7; Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, 8-9.

<sup>294</sup> “Cappadocian Contribution,” 44; *CAO*, 155.

### 2.1.1 *Amphilochius of Iconium*

Amphilochius most often appears in English language scholarship as a supplement to the other Cappadocians rather than as a main figure in his own right.<sup>295</sup> While it is possible to find descriptions of him as the nephew of Gregory of Nazianzus,<sup>296</sup> or the cousin of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa,<sup>297</sup> the general consensus seems to be that he was in fact Gregory of Nazianzus' cousin.<sup>298</sup> Like his cousin and Basil, Amphilochius was educated and trained as a rhetor.<sup>299</sup> He practised law for a time in Constantinople, but returned home to care for his ageing father. He seems to have shown an interest in an ascetic and philosophical life of retirement. Both Basil and his cousin Gregory made some attempt to instruct and encourage Amphilochius in this ideal, but it was Basil who became a "spiritual father" to him.<sup>300</sup> It was also Basil who was responsible, at least in part, for his appointment as bishop of Iconium in 374.<sup>301</sup> He was a visible figure in the controversies of his time, present at the Council of Constantinople in 381, active in public speaking and teaching,<sup>302</sup> zealous in his

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<sup>295</sup> Those who mention him often reference Karl Holl's 1904 publication in German, *Amphilochius von Iconium in seinem Verhältnis zu den grossen Kappadoziern*. See Hanson, *Search*, 676, footnote 1; Louth, "The Cappadocians," 301, footnote 1; Butler and Burns, *Butler's Lives*, 192-3; Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication*, 37, footnote 108; Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, 182, footnote 83; Sterk, *Renouncing the world*, 287, footnote 99. Maxwell is somewhat different in this case. He presents a section devoted exclusively to a case study of Amphilochius, describing him as a "lesser known Cappadocian," *Christianization and Communication*, 36ff.

<sup>296</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 14.

<sup>297</sup> Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers*, 142.

<sup>298</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, 133, footnote 170. See also, Harrison, "Introduction," 17; Sterk, *Renouncing*, 288, footnote 105; Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, 44; Maxwell, *Christianization*, 36; Van Dam, *Families*, 53; Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 7; Butler and Burns, *Butler's Lives*, 192.

<sup>299</sup> Maxwell, *Christianization*, 37. Quasten, *Patrology*, 296.

<sup>300</sup> Sterk, *Renouncing*, 85. See also Radde-Gallwitz, 109, 138.

<sup>301</sup> Sterk, *Renouncing*, 85; Van Dam, *Families*, 143.

<sup>302</sup> For Amphilochius as a brief case study of the practice of "philosophical preaching" within the Church see Maxwell, *Christianization*, 36-39.

opposition to ‘Arian’ and ‘Macedonian’ theologies,<sup>303</sup> campaigning against “puritanical and ecstatic cults of the East,”<sup>304</sup> and presiding over a synod at Sida. He is last recorded at another council in Constantinople in 394, but his date of death is unknown.<sup>305</sup>

It is difficult to establish in what way or to what extent the theology of Basil and the others may have been influenced by Amphilochius. It seems likely that Van Dam has highlighted the chief contribution of Amphilochius to Cappadocian theology by pointing out that “Basil found his myriad questions most stimulating.”<sup>306</sup> One could speculate that these questions encouraged Basil to think or at least to write on subjects he may not have taken the time to focus on otherwise. He dedicated his treatise *On the Holy Spirit* to Amphilochius, and their friendship seems to have given him no little comfort in the twilight of his life.<sup>307</sup>

Beyond his role as inspirational questioner, it is difficult to establish any compelling reason for adding Amphilochius as a fourth to the traditional trio. Indeed, Hanson claims that Amphilochius “contributed nothing” to the theology of the three best known Cappadocians.<sup>308</sup> Van Dam considers him as a possible fourth Father on the basis of his education, intelligence and proficiency as a preacher of orthodoxy, but concludes that he was not “original or influential enough” as a theological thinker, to take that position.<sup>309</sup> Although demonstrably appreciative of his role as correspondent of

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<sup>303</sup> Butler and Burns, *Butler's Lives*, 192-193. Butler mentions a council at Iconium in 376 asserting the divinity of the Holy Spirit against the Macedonians, and his influence in persuading the Emperor Theodosius I to forbid the assemblies of the Arians. Chalmers relates an anecdote in which Amphilochius uses disrespect of the Emperor's own son as a parallel to illustrate the seriousness of the issue. Chalmers, *General Biographical Dictionary*, 139.

<sup>304</sup> Quasten, *Patrology*, 298.

<sup>305</sup> Quasten, *Patrology*, 297.

<sup>306</sup> Van Dam, *Families*, 144.

<sup>307</sup> Van Dam, *Families*, 144. More will be said on this subject below.

<sup>308</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 676, footnote 1.

<sup>309</sup> Van Dam, *Families*, 185. “At another council even he conceded that he was only borrowing from the authority of Basil's writings.”

Basil, Zizioulas fails to give any direct reference to anything written by Amphilochius in the article where he includes his name in his list of the Cappadocians.<sup>310</sup>

### *2.1.2 The Lives of the Three Great Cappadocians*

From the summary above, it seems clear that Amphilochius was a member of the same circles in which the three main Cappadocians moved. He was related to them by ties of family and friendship, and corresponded with Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus. With Basil he seems to have struck up a productive relationship, somewhat reminiscent of a young man and his mentor.<sup>311</sup> As his work survives primarily in fragments, it is difficult to form a complete picture of his probable part in what has come to be called Cappadocian theology. For the purposes of this project, therefore, whatever Amphilochius' contribution to the Cappadocian theological circle, we will continue to use the generally accepted list of three Cappadocian Fathers: Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. It is the lives and relationships of these three which we will now explore.

The birth of Basil of Caesarea is usually dated to 329 or 330. He was the second child and first son of a large family which Anna Silvas describes as “unarguably the most remarkable single family in the records of Christian piety.”<sup>312</sup> His brother Gregory followed some time later between 331 and 340. Their family belonged to a tradition which “possessed a religious memory reaching back in unbroken stages, through the Constantinian era, well into the third century.”<sup>313</sup> Perhaps the most significant figure in this family history was Basil and Gregory's grandmother, Macrina the Elder through

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<sup>310</sup> This omission is partially explained in *CAO* where Zizioulas states that “St Amphilochius' work survives only in a limited number of homilies and letters, some of them only in fragments.” *CAO*, 155. It must also be further noted that Zizioulas does reference Amphilochius directly in *CAO*, 175.

<sup>311</sup> Radde-Gallwitz twice refers to him as Basil's “protégé,” *Basil*, 9,18.

<sup>312</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 3.

<sup>313</sup> Rousseau, *Basil*, 4. See also Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 263.

whom “a stream of moderate Origenism, i.e. an intellectually engaged and potentially contemplative Christianity” entered the family.<sup>314</sup> In addition to this rich Christian heritage, the family was also well off financially.

Gregory, son of the bishop of Nazianzus, spent his formative years under the influence of his devout mother, Nonna.<sup>315</sup> Like Basil, his date of birth is uncertain, but can be placed as likely in 329 or 330.<sup>316</sup> Also like Basil, he studied at Caesarea before travelling abroad in search of further knowledge. Gregory of Nyssa also studied rhetoric in Caesarea sometime later than the other two, and it appears he received some part of his education and training in culture and philosophy from his brother, Basil.<sup>317</sup> It is probable that Basil and Gregory first met and formed their friendship when both were students in Caesarea.<sup>318</sup>

After his studies in Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus went to Alexandria with his brother Caesarios to continue his education. Basil went on to study rhetoric in Constantinople. When Gregory went on to Athens for further studies, he left Caesarios in Alexandria. Gregory spent some 10 years as a student in Athens. About half of that time Basil was also in Athens. It is probable that this was a golden era for their friendship, buoyed up by their shared Cappadocian roots and their common interests in philosophy and faith.<sup>319</sup> After Basil left Gregory in Athens to explore more ascetic

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<sup>314</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 4; see also Rousseau, *Basil*, 4.

<sup>315</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, places a great emphasis on this influence. He explores her identity as a Christian woman (3-7), Gregory's biblical references to her as Sarah (3, 19-20) and Hannah (15); and claims both that “Gregory was brought up to value an aristocracy of the spirit that flowed in the female line,”(7) and that “the formative stress that Nonna imposed on his young psychology is of major and indisputable proportions.”(24) See also Van Dam's treatment of “the most important woman” in Gregory's life, *Families*, 87-93.

<sup>316</sup> For reasons of simplicity all dates for the life of Gregory are taken from McGuckin, *Gregory*, vii-xi.

<sup>317</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 7; Meredith, *Gregory*, 2; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 409.

<sup>318</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 680; McGuckin, *Gregory*, 36; Van Dam, *Families*, 139. Van Dam calls them “the best of friends.”

<sup>319</sup> Van Dam, *Families*, 139. McGuckin calls their relationship “one of the most long-standing, famous, and stormy friendships in Christian history,” McGuckin, *Gregory*, 54.

options for his life, they were never again to spend such a long and settled time together, but those student years formed the ties that kept the two of them together long after politics and differences of personality estranged them.<sup>320</sup> When Gregory finally left Athens at the end of a decade he had not only studied “volumes of literature and notes on rhetorical technique,” but he had also “absorbed the whole gamut of literature, philosophy, ethics and the liberal sciences.”<sup>321</sup>

Unlike the other two, Gregory of Nyssa did not travel far in pursuit of education. This youngest Cappadocian is also unique in that his extant body of work, while considerable, highly intelligent and creative, gives little detail of his life or insight into his personality.<sup>322</sup> Aside from his significant relationship with Basil, it is clear he also held his elder sister, Macrina in great respect and deep affection.<sup>323</sup> It is not known what masters, other than Basil, Gregory may have studied under in Caesarea. Indeed, some have speculated that Gregory owed his education almost solely to Basil and, perhaps, their sister Macrina.<sup>324</sup> This narrow education in geographical terms does not appear to have been narrow in academic terms. Silvas has concluded from her study of his works

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<sup>320</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, 89. “Letters that began with jovial affection ended, after several years, with frustration and bitterness on both sides.” Rousseau offers a slightly different picture, asserting that the two remained friends, mostly through the efforts of Gregory, though they may not have been close in later life. Rousseau, *Basil*, 234-239. According to Hildebrand they “were able to preserve their friendship, though never again were they one of heart as when they studied together in Athens and retreated together at Annesi,” *Trinitarian Theology*, 24.

<sup>321</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, 82.

<sup>322</sup> This is illustrated by the uncertainty surrounding his dates of birth and death and by the fact that details of his marriage (or lack thereof) are drawn variously from a treatise on the virtues of virginity and a letter written by Nazianzus (*Ep.* 197) offering condolence on the loss of Theosebia. Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 410. More on this below.

<sup>323</sup> As evidenced by his *Life of Macrina* and his dialogue *On the Soul and Resurrection*. Van Dam argues that Gregory's portrayal of Macrina not as 'sister' but rather as theologian, ascetic, virgin, philosopher, “in terms of some of the Christian ideals of manliness” raises her almost to the level of a 'fourth Cappadocian father.' *Families*, 187. See also Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 409.

<sup>324</sup> Van Dam, *Families*, 68-9; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 409; Meredith only mentions Basil, *Gregory*, 3.

that he “underwent a thorough and wide training in rhetoric and philosophy, acquiring also the rudiments of science and more than the rudiments of medicine.”<sup>325</sup>

Basil returned to Cappadocia in 355.<sup>326</sup> Over the next ten years Basil made the transition from freshly trained rhetor and philosopher to committed ascetic, Christian, and priest. The figure of Eustathius of Sebaste seems to have been a constant background influence on Basil during this period. A family friend of long standing,<sup>327</sup> it was Eustathius who introduced Basil into the workings of church councils and, as a result, the debate on trinitarian theology.<sup>328</sup> It was also Eustathius whom he was following when he took a journey to visit monastic sites all around the Mediterranean between Asia Minor and Egypt.<sup>329</sup> He was baptised in 356 and ordained a presbyter in Caesarea in 362.<sup>330</sup> During the intervening years his time was divided between Caesarea and his family's home at Annisa in Pontus which had by this time become an ascetic community led by his elder sister Macrina the Younger.

Upon his return to the home of his parents after his time in Athens (c.358), Gregory of Nazianzus seems to have had some trouble settling to any steady occupation. He dabbled in teaching rhetoric. He sampled the ascetic life of Basil at his family home in Pontus<sup>331</sup> but found it too vigorous.<sup>332</sup> He tried living quietly on his

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<sup>325</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 8. Hanson more tepidly remarks that “he must at some time have acquired a good education and some knowledge of contemporary philosophy,” *Search*, 715. In an interesting contrast to Silvas, Van Dam suggests that Gregory included “allusions to philosophy, literature, science and even medicine” in order to compensate for what he felt to be the inadequacy of his education, *Families*, 69.

<sup>326</sup> Rousseau, *Basil*, 61.

<sup>327</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 4.

<sup>328</sup> Rousseau, *Basil*, 99; Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 20; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 263.

<sup>329</sup> Rousseau, *Basil*, 73-5, 83; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 263; see also Hanson, *Search*, 680.

<sup>330</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 266.

<sup>331</sup> Silvas places Gregory of Nazianus at Annisa with Basil and Gregory of Nyssa “probably in the same year of 358,” *Gregory*, 9. See also McGuckin, *Gregory*, 88.

<sup>332</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 325.

father's estates, devoting himself to the spiritual and intellectual pursuits he delighted in, but his father had other ideas. In 361, the elder Gregory firmly decided that, as his son had taken to no other established pursuit or career, he should be ordained presbyter. Later that year, the younger Gregory was also made priest. This action upset him so much, that he left Nazianzus without even delivering his greatly anticipated first sermon, taking refuge with Basil. This visit did not last long, as news that his father may have fallen into heresy brought Gregory back to Nazianzus to take up a ministry of reconciliation and promotion of orthodoxy.<sup>333</sup> He was kept busy with the affairs of his father's church until Basil summoned him to help with his campaign to become bishop of Caesarea.<sup>334</sup>

In spite, or perhaps because, of the significant influence of his ascetic elder brother and sister, Gregory of Nyssa chose to eschew the ascetic life favoured by Basil and Macrina. He also showed no early ambition to be ordained or serve the church.<sup>335</sup> Instead, he took up rhetoric as a career and settled down to a secular life. Gregory of Nazianzus famously disapproved of this choice, and wrote his younger namesake a

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<sup>333</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 325-6.

<sup>334</sup> It seems Basil wrote to summon him in such a way as to leave his letter open to the possibility that he was involved in a physical struggle against death rather than a political struggle to gain the see of Caesarea. The more emotional Gregory seems to have read his letter in this way, and rushed to what he imagined to be the deathbed of his friend, only to find him deep in his campaign to be made bishop. Gregory declined to be actively involved in sordid political manoeuvring and returned home, considerably hurt and disillusioned. McGuckin, *Gregory*, 171-172; Hanson, *Search*, 702.

<sup>335</sup> It seems he had already been serving as a reader; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 409-410. Silvas describes Gregory taking part, for a brief time, in the ascetic life undertaken by Basil and joining his brother in the theological circles surrounding Eustathius. She also speculates that his experience of "the distasteful council of Constantinople in 360, may have had little stomach for facing even more such turmoil at this stage," influencing his choice in favour of a secular life, *Gregory*, 9-13. See also Sterk, *Renouncing*, 82.



letter (*Ep.* 11) encouraging him to devote his talents to the service of the church rather than the pursuit of vain philosophy and rhetoric.<sup>336</sup>

It is generally accepted that the younger Gregory was married during this secular period of his life. This assumption seems to be based on textual evidence, chiefly from his early work *On Virginity* which suggests that he mourned his exclusion from the community of virginity. It has also been speculated that his wife was called Theosebia, and it was in response to her death that the older Gregory wrote his *Ep.* 197.<sup>337</sup> In an alternative reading, Silvas argues that Theosebia was Gregory's virgin *sister*, rather than his wife.<sup>338</sup> She agrees that he was at one time married, but goes on to speculatively conclude that his wife died young, before 371.<sup>339</sup>

Basil returned to Caesarea permanently in 365, a year Rousseau calls “crucial in Basil's life.”<sup>340</sup> This appears to have been the point at which he decided his ascetic life was to be lived in public ministry rather than in private retirement. For five years he functioned as priest under bishop Eusebius. During this time “he spent himself to form the Christians in Caesarea so that they would give flesh to his theological ideas about the nature of a Christian community.”<sup>341</sup> This ambition of Christian community was in some part realised in the construction of “the famous *Basileiados*.” This was a “new

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<sup>336</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 410; McGuckin, *Gregory*, 42-43. Some have pointed out that there is a considerable amount of irony connected to this particular letter. Meredith calls it “slightly ironical to find the most rhetorically self-conscious of all the Cappadocians criticizing his friend and namesake for just this particular weakness, especially when his own letter contains two quotations from Hesiod and from Euripides,” *Gregory*, 3-4. Van Dam describes Nazianzen's personal conflict over “his own contradictory feelings about Christianity and classical culture” and describes the letter as “disingenuous” and undermined by its own classical allusions, *Families*, 69.

<sup>337</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 410.

<sup>338</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 16. Van Dam points out that this speculation comes from Nazianzen's *Epitaph* 123 “for Theosebia, 'child of Emmelia and companion of the great Gregory,’” *Families*, 208.

<sup>339</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 15-23. She also speculates that a certain Cynegius may have been Gregory's son, but Van Dam considers this unlikely, *Families*, 218. In contrast, Hanson states “they had a son” with no supporting evidence, *Search*, 715.

<sup>340</sup> Rousseau, *Basil*, 133.

<sup>341</sup> Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 22.

city” including “a whole range of buildings for the care of the sick and the destitute, and for the distribution of surplus food to those in need.”<sup>342</sup> In addition to the provision of such practical assistance to the needy, the *Basileiados* was also a place of religious formation. The rule of life in this community was ascetic if not quite monastic in nature.<sup>343</sup> Rousseau characterises the *Basileiados* as a “social experiment” which, together with associated “relations with civic authorities, a coherent system of ecclesiastical administration, and the theory and organized practice of the ascetic life,” provided a demonstration of “Basil's view of what a church should be like” at this early stage in his career. Crucially, it also illustrated “how his own authority and influence should be exercised” within his circle of influence.<sup>344</sup>

In light of this prominent social experiment, it is easy to see how Basil may have already been a highly visible and possibly influential character in the church of Caesarea when bishop Eusebius died in 370. This social project, his uneasy relationship with Eusebius and other local bishops and his own partisan group of ascetic supporters,<sup>345</sup> may in some part explain why Basil's electoral campaign for bishop is so often described in terms of controversy.<sup>346</sup> Hildebrand goes as far as to assert that “there was an air of illegitimacy surrounding Basil's eventual election”<sup>347</sup> as bishop of Caesarea. The final positive result was certainly not achieved without great effort on his

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<sup>342</sup> Rousseau, *Basil*, 139. See also Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 23.

<sup>343</sup> Rousseau, *Basil*, 144. See also Sterk, *Renouncing*, 70.

<sup>344</sup> Rousseau, *Basil*, 145.

<sup>345</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, 170. McGuckin references Gregory's description of Basil's ascetic disciples as “inexperienced hotheads.”

<sup>346</sup> Rousseau, *Basil*, 145. See also Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 23; McGuckin, *Gregory*, 169ff.

<sup>347</sup> Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 23.

own part and on the part of many of his friends and connections one of whom was his friend Gregory's father, the bishop of Nazianzus.<sup>348</sup>

The early years of Basil's relatively short episcopal career saw him hampered by a series of difficulties, both personal and professional. In 372 his influence was greatly diminished by the imperial decision to split his episcopal province in two.<sup>349</sup> In response to this event Basil made the decision to elevate both Gregory his friend and Gregory his brother to the office of bishop. Unfortunately, this political manoeuvre did not have entirely happy results.

When the new bishop of Caesarea elevated his friend Gregory to a newly created see at the provincial town of Sasima Gregory preferred to stay and help his ageing father in Nazianzus.<sup>350</sup> When he elevated his brother Gregory to the see of Nyssa, Basil elevated him to bishop directly from secular employment.<sup>351</sup> Unlike his elder namesake, this Gregory seems to have been relatively content to remain in the position Basil gave him. According to Basil, he showed some reluctance and self-doubt about taking up the position,<sup>352</sup> but “once he accepted it, he did so conscientiously” and without a grudge.<sup>353</sup> Around 375/6, Gregory was attacked “on a charge of financial malpractice” and briefly exiled from Nyssa until 378.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 681. See also, Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 23. McGuckin describes the younger Gregory writing letters on his father's behalf in support of Basil, *Gregory*, 172-7.

<sup>349</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 105.

<sup>350</sup> It is this series of events surrounding Gregory's initial episcopal appointment that lead to the most fundamental break between Basil and Gregory. Behr categorises Basil's behaviour as “using” Gregory for his own ends, similar to his ruse of illness at the time of his election as bishop of Caesarea. Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 326. Rousseau points out that “we are perfectly entitled to ask why he let himself be consecrated in the first place,” *Basil*, 235.

<sup>351</sup> According to Sterk, the exact date is unknown, *Renouncing*, 83; Silvas gives a date of late 371, *Gregory*, 29.

<sup>352</sup> Sterk, *Renouncing*, 83.

<sup>353</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 29.

<sup>354</sup> Rousseau, *Basil*, 244. Rousseau sees this as part of an ongoing conflict between Basil and 'Arians', particularly Demosthenes.

These events, which soured the friendship between Basil and Gregory, were followed by Basil's estrangement from Eustathius, his former mentor, over the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.<sup>355</sup> Soon after this Basil also found himself accused of Sabellianism because of his relationship with Apollinaris. He distanced himself from this friend also, and, in an attempt restore his own credibility, "let Apollinaris bear the full weight of false accusations so as to clear himself."<sup>356</sup>

In addition to these personal losses, Basil also failed in his project to establish the influence of correct belief in the Christian world. One of these was the failure of his attempt to have Meletius recognised as the rightful bishop of Antioch in place of Paulinus.<sup>357</sup> Another was his six unanswered letters addressed to Athanasius, "insisting that the West should condemn Marcellus."<sup>358</sup>

The light many of these stories throws on Basil is less than flattering. He seems, at times, to have had what almost amounts to a mania not only for being right, but also for being *seen* to be right. While he presented himself as attempting to establish a common orthodox belief, it seems easier to conclude that he was merely trying to get everyone to believe as he did. McGuckin's book,<sup>359</sup> seeing Basil very much through the eyes of Gregory of Nazianzus, leaves the impression of a heartless, managing, sly, almost deceitful man, who was obsessed with power and position. Other authors offer a more sympathetic and balanced picture of the man. Hildebrand points out that with his new "authority and identity as bishop" it was difficult for him to "relate well with old

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<sup>355</sup> Beeley, "The Holy Spirit," 91.

<sup>356</sup> Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 24-6.

<sup>357</sup> "Basil wrote five letters to Athanasius within a year trying to persuade him to acquiesce in his plan to unify the Church. Athanasius never responded to Basil's letters, and his lack of response indicates what he thought of Basil's plan." Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 26.

<sup>358</sup> Toom, *Classical Trinitarian*, 129.

<sup>359</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*.

friends and teachers,” and uses his relationship with Amphilochius as a refreshing example of a positive relationship formed and maintained after he became bishop.<sup>360</sup>

It seems that Basil's time as bishop was not untainted by controversy, but his legacy is also not without its positive and productive aspects. In addition to his considerable works of social charity embodied in the *Basileiados*, he fulfilled roles both civic and religious through the preaching of orations and the writing of business letters to those in authority.<sup>361</sup> In addition to this he also found the time to write letters of theology and letters of friendship. Throughout his tenure in Caesarea he was active in the politics of both church and state, a distinction so blurred in his time as to be virtually non-existent. He died on or before 1 January 379, having served as bishop of Caesarea for less than ten years.<sup>362</sup>

With Basil's death, his friend Gregory takes centre stage in the story of the Cappadocians. He was more or less fixed at Nazianzus until 379 when, shortly after the death of Basil, for whose funeral he composed a characteristically stirring oration, he was summoned to the capital, Constantinople. The churches in the capital at that time were in the hands of the followers of Aetius and Eunomius,<sup>363</sup> who claimed that Father and Son are essentially unlike (*anomoios*). Gregory was invited to the capital to preach

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<sup>360</sup> Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 27. As Hildebrand describes this relationship in terms of “spiritual father” and “teacher,” it is still possible to speculate on why Basil, apparently, found it so difficult to submit to the authority of others, but willingly attempted to exercise authority and use influence almost universally within the sphere he was given.

<sup>361</sup> “Basil's contribution to the theological debates of the fourth century are only a fraction of his life's work.” Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 265.

<sup>362</sup> For a more thorough analysis of the debate surrounding the dating of Basil's death see Silvas, *Gregory*, 32-9; Rousseau, *Basil*, 360-2.

<sup>363</sup> Wickham emphasises the importance of this context saying that “the Cappadocian doctrine of God . . . is not explicable historically, nor indeed is really comprehensible, without reference to the Eunomians,” “Gregory of Nazianzus,” 21. LaCugna also emphasises this context, *God for Us*, 55.

the ‘Nicene’<sup>364</sup> faith, in accordance with the creed laid down by the council of Nicaea in 325.<sup>365</sup> He responded to the summons, opening a church on the property of his cousin Theodosia in the capital. He christened his new church Anastasia, and, in the latter months of 379, began his preaching campaign in Constantinople.<sup>366</sup>

The next two years were, perhaps, the busiest of Gregory’s life and career. He was caught up in all the controversy and conflict of church life in the capital city.<sup>367</sup> As a largely intellectual and idealistic man, Gregory appears to have been entirely unprepared for the political intrigue of ecclesial life in the capital. This is well illustrated by the episode of Maximus the Cynic, who was sent to Constantinople by Peter of Alexandria. Initially he made himself useful to Gregory. So much so, in fact, that Gregory publicly thanked him for his support.<sup>368</sup> Soon after this, both men left Constantinople. Gregory, claiming ill health, took a holiday in the country. Maximus returned to Alexandria to report to Peter. It seems that this report was less than favourable.<sup>369</sup> In any case, Peter sent Maximus back to Constantinople with letters appointing Maximus to the see, “bishops for the consecration, and enough sailors to ensure the successful outcome of these plans.”<sup>370</sup> The consecration, taking place at night, was discovered and interrupted. Although Maximus left directly after this

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<sup>364</sup> In utilising the terminology of “Nicene” versus “Arian” to describe various theologians or theological groupings, I in no way wish to ignore the subtleties that these terms cannot cover. The name of Arius is more or less inseparable from this conflict, though, like many other such designations, “Arian theology” likely became something very unlike the theology of Arius. Similarly, the “Neo-Nicenes” were neither uniform nor univocal, and the identification of such a group is more the result of hindsight and the desire to label and group individuals than it is a description of the state of things in the fourth century church.

<sup>365</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 327.

<sup>366</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, 240.

<sup>367</sup> Young mentions “Arian violence and hostile plots,” *From Nicaea*, 140.

<sup>368</sup> *Oration 25*. McGuckin, *Gregory*, 311. See also Meehan, “Introduction,” 12.

<sup>369</sup> Behr describes Peter as “outraged” at Maximus’ report that Gregory was “reluctant to claim the episcopal throne of Constantinople.” *The Nicene Faith*, 328. According to McGuckin Peter’s outrage was due to the fact that “Gregory’s dilatoriness arose because he preferred canonical allegiance to Antioch over Alexandria, a blatant disregard of his own canonical primacy.”

<sup>370</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 328.

incident, he continued to cause trouble for church politics in Constantinople by gaining the support of many of the Western bishops for his claim to the position of Archbishop.<sup>371</sup>

When the new emperor Theodosius arrived in his capital city late in 380,<sup>372</sup> one of his first acts was to offer Demophilus, the current bishop of Constantinople, the opportunity to retain his post by subscribing to the Council of Nicaea.<sup>373</sup> When Demophilus refused this offer, Theodosius sent him into exile. Within days, Gregory was taken to the Church of the Apostles, with suitable pomp, and installed there as the recognised imperial choice for the position of bishop of Constantinople.<sup>374</sup> The confirmation of this imperial appointment was one of the first acts of the Council that opened in Constantinople in May 381.<sup>375</sup> Initially this council was presided over by Meletius of Antioch, but, when he suddenly died, Gregory, as the new bishop of the imperial capital, took his place.<sup>376</sup> This was an unfortunate change. Gregory, idealistic and inexperienced in his new position, showed a certain naive inflexibility and lack of patience when confronted with the subtleties of the politics associated with both his positions. His belief in the central importance of personal purity and expectation that others would share his own values of refined and gentlemanly conduct made his leadership in the midst of conflict more a liability to the council than an asset.

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<sup>371</sup> Sterk, *Renouncing*, 130. See also McGuckin, *Gregory*, 324. Lines 831 – 999 of Gregory's autobiographical poem, *De Vita Sua*, deal with this Maximus episode. He clearly found the whole experience decidedly traumatic. Van Dam even goes so far as to suggest that it “helped him analyze his earlier relationship with Basil” by whom he had also felt betrayed. *Families*, 177.

<sup>372</sup> McGuckin has the date as 24 Nov, *Gregory*, x. Quasten puts it a month later on 24 Dec, *Patrology*, 238. Meehan's date is 21 Nov, “Introduction,” 13.

<sup>373</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 328.

<sup>374</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, 326-328. Interestingly, Meehan claims that Gregory “refused at that moment to occupy the patriarch's throne,” “Introduction,” 13. Perhaps he wished to wait for his confirmation to the position by church powers as well as state.

<sup>375</sup> Young, *From Nicaea*, 141.

<sup>376</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 329.

Having already seen off a contentious delegation of Macedonians,<sup>377</sup> the Council was again unsettled when delegates from Egypt, arriving late to the council, expressed displeasure with Gregory's roles both as bishop of Constantinople and as president of the council.<sup>378</sup> His episcopal position was soon challenged on the grounds that he had already been installed in as bishop of Sasima and, according to the Canons of Nicaea, could not be moved to a different see.<sup>379</sup> Disliking nothing so much as sordid conflict and the appearance of selfish ambition,<sup>380</sup> Gregory resigned both positions, as bishop and president of the council.<sup>381</sup> He returned, disillusioned, to Nazianzus, and spent the rest of his life there in retirement, composing letters, reflecting, organising his body of work<sup>382</sup> and writing on life and theology. He died in the winter of 390/91.

With the elder Gregory's return to Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa takes centre stage in the Cappadocian story. His return from exile to Nyssa could not have been separated by many months from the death of Basil, an event which signalled a marked change in Gregory's life. Recently returned to his see and settled there permanently, it is conceivable that Gregory, for the first time, felt he belonged to the role. He was no longer newly appointed; he was no longer under direct threat from Basil's opponents, and he was no longer living under the shadow of Basil himself. His older brother had

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<sup>377</sup> The Macedonians objected to Gregory's understanding of the Holy Spirit as equal to and consubstantial with the Father and the Son. Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 329.

<sup>378</sup> The Egyptians would likely have supported Maximus as the already consecrated, albeit clandestinely, bishop of the capital city.

<sup>379</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 330.

<sup>380</sup> Young, *From Nicaea*, 141. Meehan, "Introduction," 14. For a fuller discussion see McGuckin, *Gregory*, 350-66.

<sup>381</sup> He composed a touching oration of resignation for this occasion, *Oration* 42. McGuckin envisions him giving it, as a moving farewell to the council; *Gregory*, 361-369. In contrast, Wickham quite cuttingly describes this oration as "a wonderfully theatrical piece" in which Gregory "imagines (for it was never, of course delivered) himself telling the assembled bishops how unkind they have all been to him and bidding tearful adieu to the churches he had loved," "Gregory of Nazianzus," 12.

<sup>382</sup> Behr notes that he appears to have been "the first Greek writer" to compile "his own correspondence for publication, "collecting both his own and Basil's correspondence, together with an epistle explaining the rules of epistolography, in response to a request from his great-nephew Nicobulus." *Nicene Faith*, 331.



been his teacher when he was younger,<sup>383</sup> his patron when he became a bishop and, at times, his severest critic.<sup>384</sup> With Basil gone, Gregory stepped out of his metaphorical shadow, “assuming a role of ecclesiastical leadership in the region.”<sup>385</sup> Silvas even speculates that on his death-bed Basil may have charged his brother “to continue his defence and promotion of sound faith” and support “monks and virgins.”<sup>386</sup> It almost seems as though a check has been removed and the deep waters of Gregory’s private thought begin to flow freely.<sup>387</sup>

It is, of course, impossible to know if Basil indeed gave such a charge to his brother, but it does present an intriguing idea. With this apparent inheritance of his brother’s mantle, Gregory stepped into a wider sphere of influence. About this time he was invited to be present at the election of a new bishop in Ibora where he successfully helped ensure the selection of a pro-Nicene candidate.<sup>388</sup> While there, he was invited to perform a similar function in Sebaste<sup>389</sup> which was vacant following the death of former family friend Eustathius. He agreed to do so, but this time the outcome was not so happy. According to Silvas, “Gregory was acting as a scrutineer at the election when he was startled to find himself the one elected. Uproar followed.”<sup>390</sup> How this

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<sup>383</sup> See discussion of his education above. Van Dam emphasises his references to Basil as “father” as well as “teacher,” *Families*, 69.

<sup>384</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 410-1; Van Dam, *Families*, 151; Quasten, *Patrology*, 254.

<sup>385</sup> Van Dam, *Families*, 148. See also, Sterk, *Renouncing*, 96; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 411.

<sup>386</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 40.

<sup>387</sup> Some of the important works Gregory composed between 379 and 381 were the *Second homily On the Forty Martyrs*, the homily *Against Usurers*, *On the Making of Man*, the *Apologetic Defence on the Hexameron*, and the first two books of his *Contra Eunomium*. Behr goes as far as to suggest that “when Gregory finally began to write, he did so with the deliberate intention of deepening the contributions made by Basil,” *Nicene Faith*, 414.

<sup>388</sup> Sterk, *Renouncing*, 115.

<sup>389</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 411.

<sup>390</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 43. According to Hanson, Gregory was offered the see, considered it and refused it, *Search*, 761. Quasten states that he was elected to Sebaste, “which he had to administer for a few months much against his will,” *Patrology*, 255.

misunderstanding was put right has not been recorded, but Gregory did manage to return to Nyssa by about mid 380.<sup>391</sup>

The episode may seem devoid of all but humorous importance, but it does illustrate a few interesting things. Firstly, it shows that at this time Gregory was indeed in demand as a bishop and as a representative of the neo-Nicene cause. Secondly, although it is not clear how this serious misunderstanding took place, it does seem to provide evidence to support the contention that Gregory, however good a scholar and a pastor, was not a particularly good politician. Thirdly, it provides a telling snapshot of the world of the fourth century church and a reminder of the humanity and imperfection of that church and its bishops.

After his return to Nyssa, Gregory continued to write in support of the neo-Nicene cause. He was present at the Council of Constantinople in 381, but to what extent he participated in the proceedings is unknown.<sup>392</sup> Silvas speculates that a “special mission to visit the churches in Arabia and Jerusalem” mentioned in his letters 2 and 3 was likely undertaken at this time, perhaps at the behest of the council.<sup>393</sup> Following the Council of Constantinople, Gregory's doctrinal interests and theological compositions turned increasingly toward christology as a main doctrinal concern, but his inclination toward philosophy and mysticism also continued.<sup>394</sup> He last appears on the pages of

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<sup>391</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 44.

<sup>392</sup> Behr states that Jerome heard the first two volumes of Gregory's *Contra Eunomium* at the Council, *Nicene Faith*, 411. Meredith suggests that Gregory's “abilities and orthodoxy” made a “deep impression” at the council, an idea he draws from certain circumstances of imperial favour following his attendance there. These include orations at two separate, high profile, funerals and a mission to teach the deity of the Holy Spirit in Pontus. *Gregory of Nyssa*, 4-5.

<sup>393</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 48. See also, Sterk, *Renouncing*, 115.

<sup>394</sup> “Although he continued to write a number of short dogmatic and polemical works, the real fruit of his latter years are the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. . . and the *Life of Moses*.” Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 413.

documented history at a synod at Constantinople in 394, but we have no record of his death.<sup>395</sup>

As we have seen, the three Cappadocian Fathers were bound together by culture, by friendship and by family relationship.<sup>396</sup> However, the chief common denominator would seem to be Basil of Caesarea. As young men, he and Gregory of Nazianzus became close friends. Gregory of Nyssa was Basil's younger brother, and was among his brother's students during Basil's time teaching rhetoric in Caesarea.<sup>397</sup> Both Gregories owed their consecration as bishops to Basil, who acted from a number of motives when he elevated each to newly created sees in 372.

Though Basil and Nazianzus were contemporaries in terms of age, Basil consistently appears at the head of lists of the Cappadocian Fathers. Perhaps his death some 10 years before his friend has contributed to this primary positioning; while their public, theological and rhetorical lives may for a time have been contemporary, in the end Gregory followed Basil in terms of chronology, if nothing else. Gregory of Nazianzus arrived in Constantinople in 379 soon after Basil's death, and his most prominent historical and theological appearances surround the Council of Constantinople in 381. Gregory of Nyssa, on the other hand, although he attended and participated in church councils, stayed largely out of the theological spotlight that fell on his brother and his older namesake, until after Basil's death. His theology bears a distinct flavour of philosophy, systematics, and mysticism, and his extensive writings also include more scriptural commentary and philosophical reflection than either of the other two.

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<sup>395</sup> It is generally assumed Gregory died between 394 and 400. Silvas, *Gregory*, 57; Hanson, *Search*, 719; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 413.

<sup>396</sup> A depth of relationship echoed in Van Dam's *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia*.

<sup>397</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 8.

Despite the many connections between them, it is also plain that there were significant differences among their lives and personalities. It is not surprising that many speculate on the propriety of combining their separate lives and legacies into a single category whether that be as Cappadocian Fathers or as the creators of a unified Cappadocian theology.<sup>398</sup> Among the critical responses to the Cappadocian category there are those who have highlighted that this terminology is a distinctly modern innovation dating from the late nineteenth century.<sup>399</sup> We will turn now to the consideration of the history, use, and content of the Cappadocian category.

## 2.2 Origin and Use of the Cappadocian Category

### 2.2.1 *Origins of the Cappadocian Category English language scholarship*

As we have seen, much recent scholarship on subjects surrounding the Cappadocian Fathers has been highly critical of the academic commonplace of grouping the three together. It has become much more common to reject the idea that they represent a single common theological idea or construction. As a result, the Cappadocian category is now frequently deconstructed, dismissed or relegated to a footnote. It has become common for each of the three to be studied separately from the

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<sup>398</sup> Indeed, some authors refer to the phrase only in passing. See Ayres, *Nicaea*, 2, footnote 1, although he does note later in the book that there is some “significant overlap” in their theology and methods which “warrants the common term if used with caution,” 250-1; Coakley, who acknowledges that Nyssa is included among the “so-called Cappadocians,” *Re-thinking Gregory*, 7; Radde-Gallwitz, who also uses the phrase, “the so-called Cappadocian Fathers,” *Basil*, 11; McGuckin, who deplores the fact that Nazianzus is “lumped in” with Basil and Nyssa “as one of the Cappadocian Fathers,” *Gregory*, xxi. Beeley, who notes that Gregory of Nazianzus has been “somewhat artificially grouped” with the other two as “Cappadocian Fathers,” *Gregory*, viii. Rousseau, in his volume on Basil appears to ignore the designation altogether, and Barrios, in his collection of the personal letters of the three only uses the specific designation of “Cappadocians” in his Epilogue, *The Fathers Speak*, 220. Ludlow is not averse to using “Cappadocian Fathers” as a designation of three specific men, but not as a reference to any common theology, *Gregory*, 2.

<sup>399</sup> Louth describes it as derivative of Weiss and Holl, “The Cappadocians,” 291. See also Toom, *Classical Trinitarian Theology*, 128; Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 11-2, footnote 16.

others, and their individual theological systems and development are the subject of an increasing number of publications.<sup>400</sup>

This desire to move away from the use of the Cappadocian category, raises the question of the origin and historicity of the category to begin with. Lewis Ayres and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz date the rise in common references to the Cappadocians as a “unified group” to the 19th century,<sup>401</sup> but neither elaborate on the origin of the category. Andrew Louth identifies the grouping as “a product of modern scholars.” Dating its appearance in scholarly circles to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he specifically names Weiss and Holl as early users of the Cappadocian category.<sup>402</sup> This placement of the initial uses of the Cappadocian category in the nineteenth century is supported by the complete lack of its use in the work of prominent eighteenth century theologian Johann Lorenz von Mosheim who includes extensive footnotes on the lives and works of Basil and the two Gregories without ever referring to them as a group of Cappadocians.<sup>403</sup>

A search of English language publications on doctrinal and church history in the nineteenth century reveals a number of references to Basil, Nazianzus and Nyssa, but no clear use of the Cappadocian category as it came to be used in the twentieth century. Neither John Henry Newman nor Augustus Neander, both publishing in the 1840s, make any reference to the Cappadocians as a group.<sup>404</sup> In Neander’s narrative Basil and

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<sup>400</sup> A selection of such books follows: For Basil: Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*; Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*; for Nazianzus: McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*; Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity* and the edited collection *Re-reading Gregory of Nazianzus*; for Nyssa, Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa*; Coakley, ed., *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*.

<sup>401</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea*, 187, footnote 1; Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 11-12, footnote 16.

<sup>402</sup> Louth, “The Cappadocians,” 289, see also footnote 1, pg 301.

<sup>403</sup> Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History*, 132-133, footnote 1, for Basil; 134-135, footnote 2, for the two Gregories who do share a footnote based on their friendship and contemporary operation in ecclesiastical history.

<sup>404</sup> Newman, *Essay*. Neander, *General history*, vol. III.

Gregory Nazianzen do appear together, but only as their lifetimes were in many ways parallel and experiences shared between them.<sup>405</sup> Newman refers to Gregory of Nyssa as “a native of Cappadocia”<sup>406</sup> and also includes all three men in a list containing some dozen other “saints.”<sup>407</sup>

A few years later, Carl Ullmann’s biography of Gregory of Nazianzus also makes no mention of the Cappadocian grouping. Instead, the author gives a colourful description of the typical “Cappadocians” of the early fourth century as “cowardly, slavish, quarrelsome, suspicious people prone to avarice and sensuality, liars, and faithless.”<sup>408</sup> Ullmann uses this as a point from which to contrast “a succession of very distinguished Fathers of the Church” which came out of this supposedly degenerate region.<sup>409</sup> He does not, however, enumerate these “Fathers” or describe them as a specific, discrete group. Frederick Meyrick, speculating on the necessity of “dogma” in the 1880s does refer to both Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, but makes no mention of their relationship.<sup>410</sup>

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, George Fisher spends a fair amount of time discussing Basil and “the Gregories.”<sup>411</sup> He does group them together, calling these “three Cappadocian bishops” the “principal chiefs” of the “disciples of the Origenist School” who “did much to secure the prevalence of the Nicene doctrine.”<sup>412</sup> Fisher mentions each of the three separately and together in many places. He credits them with

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<sup>405</sup> Neander, *General History*, vol III, 78, 184, 201.

<sup>406</sup> Newman, *Essay*, 386.

<sup>407</sup> Newman, *Essay*, 17.

<sup>408</sup> Ullmann, *Gregory*, 14. Meredith also takes up this theme saying that Cappadocia “had a reputation for being rather boorish,” *Gregory of Nyssa*, 11.

<sup>409</sup> Ullmann, *Gregory*, 15.

<sup>410</sup> Meyrick, *Dogma*, 174-175.

<sup>411</sup> Fisher, *History*, 150.

<sup>412</sup> Fisher, *History*, 143.

connecting *hypostasis* to *ousia*<sup>413</sup> and refers at least twice to a theological idea held in common by “the Gregories.”<sup>414</sup> He refers to them again as “the Cappadocian bishops”<sup>415</sup> and once as “the Cappadocian theologians,”<sup>416</sup> but his use of the adjective seems to be focused more on their common area of origin than on an understanding of their shared theological identity.

In the second series of the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first published just before the turn of the century, each of the three Cappadocian Fathers receives individual treatment.<sup>417</sup> Their relationships are mentioned, but they are not grouped into a single category. On the contrary, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa each have a separate volume, and Gregory of Nazianzus shares a volume with Cyril of Jerusalem. Only two aspects of the Cappadocians’ appearance in this series suggest there was any scholarly idea of a unique relationship among these three bishops at the time these volumes were published. The first of these is found in the introduction to the life of Nazianzus which notes that he was “like the great Basil of Caesarea and his brother Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, by birth a Cappadocian.”<sup>418</sup> The second is a single-page genealogical table found at the beginning of the volume dedicated to Basil which includes “The Family of St. Basil” as well as “The Family of St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and of St. Amphilochius.”<sup>419</sup>

One glaring exception to the apparent late Victorian trend to not use the Cappadocian category is Adolf von Harnack’s *History of Dogma*. This work is also

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<sup>413</sup> Fisher, *History*, 143.

<sup>414</sup> Fisher, *History*, 143, 150.

<sup>415</sup> Fisher, *History*, 151.

<sup>416</sup> Fisher, *History*, 149.

<sup>417</sup> These volumes are referenced separately in the bibliography under their respective editors. Basil: Jackson; Gregory of Nazianzus: Browne and Swallow; Gregory of Nyssa: Moore and Wilson.

<sup>418</sup> Browne and Swallow, “Select Orations,” 187.

<sup>419</sup> Jackson, *St. Basil*, ix. It is worth noting that the inclusion of Amphilochius in this context again suggests a special relationship between him and the three more traditional Cappadocians.

different from the other works discussed here in that it was first written in German and later translated into English. Harnack speaks of “the Cappadocians” repeatedly throughout the first four volumes of his *History*. For the most part he includes no explanation of specifically who is to be included.<sup>420</sup> Alongside this apparently indiscriminate use of the Cappadocian category it is possible to find many direct references to the individuals included in that category.<sup>421</sup> It is only in the instance of his detailing the pneumatology of the late fourth century that it becomes clear who he means by “Cappadocians,” and then it is only through implication in the text.<sup>422</sup>

This marked difference between Harnack and contemporary theologians publishing in the English language seems to suggest that the use of Cappadocian terminology among English language theologians may have been an import from continental European theologians. This speculation is supported by the opinion of Louth, already noted above, who traces the use of the Cappadocian category back “at least” to Weiss and Holl, both German theologians working in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>423</sup> It is worth noting, however, that Fisher also shows a prototypical use of the term “Cappadocian” as a reference to these three men and their common ideas in a work published contemporary with if not prior to the appearance of Harnack’s work in translation. It seems, however, that the terminology was not in common use among English theologians, even into the early 20th century.<sup>424</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. III, 142, 151; vol IV, 84, 87, 88, 89.

<sup>421</sup> These references are rarely to Basil, see vol. III pg 301 and vol. IV pg 84, more often to Gregory of Nazianzus, vol. III 182-3, 185, 307, 309 and vol. IV 115, and most often to Gregory of Nyssa, vol. III pp 115, 180, 182, 183, 186, 259, 261, 272, 276-9, 296-303, 306-7.

<sup>422</sup> “Meanwhile it was just the Cappadocians who did most work toward getting the Orthodox conception naturalised in the Church, namely, Basil in his work against Eunomius (lib. III) and in the tractate “de spiritu sancto,” Gregory of Nazianzus in several of his orations (31, 37, 44), and Gregory of Nyssa in his amplifications of trinitarian doctrine.” Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. IV, 115.

<sup>423</sup> Louth, “The Cappadocians,” 301, endnote 1.

<sup>424</sup> Apart from a brief reference to Basil’s liturgy, Headlam and Gardner signally fail to mention the Cappadocians, even singly in their works dated 1909 and 1918 respectively.



While the adoption of Cappadocian terminology in the English language was, arguably, a continental import, Zizioulas is likely to have absorbed this terminology directly from continental sources. In a previous chapter we outlined the changes in Orthodox theology in the early and mid-twentieth century beginning with the immigration of Russian refugees from the revolution taking shelter in France. We also noted that theological education in Greece had been greatly influenced by German university models. Both of these circumstances make it possible, not to say likely, that the terminology came to Orthodox Greece, and thus Zizioulas, through these German and French sources.

### 2.2.2 “Cappadocians” in Eastern Orthodox Tradition

As an Orthodox theologian, Zizioulas writes within one of the most ancient Christian traditions. Indeed, Orthodoxy regularly presents itself as self-consciously correct, the true tradition.<sup>425</sup> One example of this can be seen in celebrated Orthodox Bishop Alexander Schmemmann’s reflection on the tasks of Orthodox theology in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>426</sup> In describing the need for the church to be missional, Schmemmann emphasises that Orthodox “participation in the ecumenical movement has as its goal to bring an Orthodox witness to the non-Orthodox” a witness that “implies the idea of conversion to Orthodoxy.”<sup>427</sup> This is in keeping with his “truly awesome claim” that “ours is the *true Church*.”<sup>428</sup> McGuckin also reflects this attitude, describing the denominational language that characterises the West from the reformation to the present as “the heart of ecclesiological heresy” from an Orthodox

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<sup>425</sup> Bouteneff’s *Sweeter than Honey* demonstrates this mindset throughout the book, describing Christ as the truth (25) and the Church as the interpreter of that truth (84).

<sup>426</sup> Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*, 117-28.

<sup>427</sup> Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*, 123.

<sup>428</sup> Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*, 123.

point of view which “rises only out of the ruin of ecclesial order,”<sup>429</sup> that is, separation from the “true Church.”

Given the possibility that use of the Cappadocian category originated in Western Europe, it may, in fact, be foreign to historical Eastern Orthodox tradition. The theological and liturgical traditions of the Orthodox and western churches have been separated for centuries. It is therefore entirely possible, not to say likely, that an 18th or 19th century innovation in western theology would have little impact on Eastern Orthodox theology. However, it is undeniable that Zizioulas makes repeated use of the Cappadocian category as he describes their contribution to trinitarian theology. In an attempt to discern whether he does so in keeping with his tradition, this section seeks to uncover any Orthodox precedent for the use of the Cappadocian category.

In seeking knowledge about Orthodox theology and tradition, it is important to note that, in the Orthodox tradition, liturgy of worship both embodies and informs the theology of the Church.<sup>430</sup> For this reason it seems appropriate to discover if there is any historical understanding of the Cappadocians as a discrete grouping within the traditional liturgical practice of the Orthodox churches.

In fact, the Orthodox yearly liturgical feast days do not include a feast day associated with the Cappadocian Fathers, nor are these three specific saints grouped together in any regular liturgical celebration. Instead, each of the three is celebrated on his own day: Basil, Jan 1; Gregory of Nazianzus, Jan 25; Gregory of Nyssa, Jan 10. Amongst the important saints and other historical events and figures celebrated within

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<sup>429</sup> McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 7. He describes Roman Catholicism and Protestantism from an Orthodox point of view as “two similar but variant forms of development of the same premises with the same styles of theologising and closely related patterns of worship” both of which are foreign to Orthodoxy. *The Orthodox Church*, 6.

<sup>430</sup> Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 1-39. The first chapter is more or less based around this idea. See pages 3, 6-7, 13-15, etc. This emphasis on the relationship between liturgy and theology can also be seen in other Orthodox theologians. Cf. Ware, “Orthodox Theology Today,” 105-7, also Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodoxy*, xix-xx, 5-6.

the liturgical calendar of the Orthodox Church, “the Cappadocians” are conspicuous by their absence.

Rather than being celebrated in a group as Cappadocians, Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus appear in the Orthodox liturgical calendar as two of the Three Great Hierarchs.<sup>431</sup> They are joined in this grouping by John Chrysostom rather than Gregory of Nyssa. The feast of the Great Hierarchs, celebrated on Jan 30, was established in the eleventh century as a means to bring an end to conflict between partisan groups loyal to each of these three theologians.<sup>432</sup> It would seem from this story that the legacies of Basil and Nazianzus were being propagated by conflicting partisan groups, a circumstance that suggests diversity in their theological legacies rather than uniformity.

The apparent diversity in the legacies of Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, together with the lack of any feast of the Cappadocians in the liturgical calendar, suggests that the employment of the Cappadocian category is not traditionally part of Orthodox faith and practice. This conclusion is supported by Louth’s observation that the “Cappadocian Fathers” is not “a traditional designation.”<sup>433</sup> This being the case, it seems initially to be out of character for Zizioulas, a deeply Orthodox theologian, to make uncritical use of the Cappadocian category in his own works, but it would seem he is not alone in doing so.

Vladimir Lossky, uses the Cappadocian category twice without comment in his influential *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, originally published in the 1950s.<sup>434</sup> Perhaps following Lossky and Zizioulas, around whom his book is based, Aristotle Papanikolaou makes frequent references to the Cappadocian Fathers

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<sup>431</sup> Also called “the Three Holy Hierarchs,” Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 5.

<sup>432</sup> Melton, *Religious Celebrations*, 859

<sup>433</sup> Louth, “The Cappadocians,” 289.

<sup>434</sup> Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 24, 33.

throughout his book, *Being with God*, which draws on the theology of both these men. In George Demacopoulos and Aristotole Papanikolaou's collection of essays on *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, four separate authors refer to the Cappadocians without comment or qualification<sup>435</sup> John McGuckin, in his formidable *Introduction to the Orthodox Church*, also uses the Cappadocian category.<sup>436</sup> He qualifies the term briefly in a footnote as "chiefly" referencing Basil, the two Gregories and Amphilochius, adding that "other theologians in their kin group included St Macrina and St Peter of Sebaste."<sup>437</sup>

This brief exploration of the use of the Cappadocian category in Orthodoxy has shown that the Cappadocian Fathers are not an historical grouping within Orthodox liturgical tradition. It seems, however, that this has not stopped Orthodox theologians from adopting the use of the category, at least over the last century. This indicates that Zizioulas' use of Cappadocian terminology is not as out of sync with his tradition as it may at first appear. Although it is not a traditional category within the history and tradition of the Orthodox Church, it seems to have gained acceptance among many Orthodox theologians of our time, and can easily be found in published literature from and on the tradition of the Orthodox church.<sup>438</sup>

### 2.2.3 "*Cappadocian Theology*" in Late Antiquity

Our exploration of the origins of the Cappadocian category in English language theological publications and in the Orthodox liturgical tradition has indicated that the use of this category to identify these three men and/or their common theology, is a

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<sup>435</sup> See Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, *Orthodox Constructions*, 123, 129, 172, 252.

<sup>436</sup> McGuckin, *Introduction*, 136.

<sup>437</sup> McGuckin, *Introduction*, 176, footnote 115.

<sup>438</sup> This includes the website [orthodoxwiki.org](http://orthodoxwiki.org) which includes a terse page on the Cappadocian Fathers linked from the longer pages devoted to Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa respectively. Accessed on 6 Jan 2014.

relatively modern construction. Perhaps it came into regular use as a convenience within historical and doctrinal theology, possibly designed to clarify the records of fourth century theological debates. In some ways, the use of “Cappadocian” to describe these men in particular would be an obvious choice, all three men were from prominent and related, Christian, Cappadocian families. They were all on the same ‘side’ of the great fourth century debates, indicating similarity among their theological ideas if not uniformity. The use of a common category seems logical, even surprisingly easy. In this section we will explore the possibility that, in addition to these practical reasons for inventing the Cappadocian category, it is possible to discern some historical grounds for grouping these three together.

In his article on the Cappadocians for *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, Andrew Louth constructs a brief explanation of the “interlocking lives” of the three. He describes the theological zenith in the life of each as “successive stages in the establishment of the orthodoxy sealed at the Second Œcumenical Council, which became the ideology of Theodosius’ Christian Empire.”<sup>439</sup> The Cappadocians were themselves caught up in the greater narrative of the Christian empire. Forever praised and remembered as champions of Orthodoxy, the Cappadocians, severally and together have been enshrined in the narratives of the fourth century. In their world, a world dominated by the contrast and conflict between orthodox and heretical beliefs, being on the ‘right’ side was everything.

As we have seen in a previous chapter, Basil of Caesarea preceded both his brother and his friend in death by at least 10 years. His death removed him from the theological debates leading up to the pivotal council of Constantinople in 381. In this Council and in the debate that surrounded and followed it, Basil’s legacy was taken up

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<sup>439</sup> Louth, “The Cappadocians,” 291.

by his brother and used by his friend. It is possible that this use and development of Basil's legacy by the two Gregories has contributed to the ease with which modern theologians have grouped these three together in a unified whole.

Unlike his brother and his friend, who each ended life in relative obscurity and had the opportunity to put their affairs in order, Basil was not in control of his own legacy. More recent scholarship has suggested that Basil's trinitarian theology was less in harmony with the other two Cappadocians and thus the prevailing orthodoxy of later years than might be supposed.<sup>440</sup> In commenting on Nazianzus' *Oration* 43, John McGuckin suggests that Gregory was using the request to compose a funeral oration for his friend as a rhetorical opportunity to establish Basil's theological purity as above reproach. He "carefully removes Macrina and Eustathios of Sebaste" from Basil's history, expunging the memory of Basil's early relationship with adherents to the *homoiousion* understanding of the nature of the Trinity.<sup>441</sup> Gregory also takes this opportunity to testify that Basil was "a sworn follower of the doctrine of the Homoousion of the Spirit of God,"<sup>442</sup> something Basil himself does not appear ever to have claimed.

McGuckin then notes in passing that "For centuries afterwards it has been a major supposition that the thought of the 'Cappadocian Fathers' is of a piece."<sup>443</sup> In so saying, McGuckin manages to suggest that this self-conscious editing by Nazianzus, establishing Basil's doctrinal purity and thus his harmony with the theology of Gregory himself, is a possible reason for a subsequent failure on the part of patristic studies and

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<sup>440</sup> This is a major theme of Stephen Hildebrand's *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*.

<sup>441</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, 372-373.

<sup>442</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, 374.

<sup>443</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, 374.

historical theology to notice the very real and profound differences between the theologies of Basil and his friend Nazianzus.

In our earlier exploration of the Cappadocians, we have seen how Gregory of Nyssa took up Basil's role in theological debate after his brother's death. In her introduction to Gregory's letters, Silvas describes how Gregory presented himself as the continuer of his brother's work, his "heir in doctrinal exposition," almost immediately after Basil's death.<sup>444</sup> She describes him as "welcomed by Basil's circle of episcopal colleagues,"<sup>445</sup> as he began to publish important doctrinal treatises, carrying on Basil's debates with Eunomius.

While Silvas suggests Gregory self-consciously took on the theological and doctrinal mantle of his brother, she does not explicitly say that Gregory, in doing so, is reconciling or modifying Basil's theology in a similar way to the suggestion of McGuckin in reference to Nazianzus. Meredith, however, does present Nyssa as a redactor of Basil's theological ideas. He mentions Gregory producing "a continuation (and partial correction)" of Basil's *Homilies on the Six Days of Creation* and also identifies an element of criticism in Gregory's "devotion" to his brother that "found particular expression in his subtle corrections and modifications of his brother's writings."<sup>446</sup> So it begins to make sense that Nyssa, carrying on the work of his brother, has sometimes come to be confused with him in hindsight. This is evident in the now widely adopted opinion that Basil's *Epistle* 38 was actually written by Gregory.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 40.

<sup>445</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 42.

<sup>446</sup> Meredith, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 5.

<sup>447</sup> Silvas, *Gregory*, 247. Zachhuber acknowledges that Gregory is now "often thought" to be the author, but contends that there is "no unambiguous evidence" to support this, *Human Nature*, 61. Plainly there is significant similarity in the trinitarian theologies of these two brothers that the contents of this letter can be attributed to either without too much difficulty.

G. L. Prestige describes Cappadocian theology as “worked out” by Basil, “preached” by Nazianzen, and “elaborated by the acute and speculative mind of” Nyssen.<sup>448</sup> This summary offers an effective way to understand how the three, perhaps sharing the same theological thread, and certainly sharing a similar theological cause, worked it out, each in his own individual way, for the triumph of orthodoxy. Given this narrative, and the theological interrelationships of these three figures in addition to their personal relationships, it seems there may be some justification for speaking of their theological legacy, at least, as having common elements, however much their theological ideas and values may appear to differ in individual analysis.

#### 2.2.4 “Cappadocian Theology” - Theories

Perhaps the chief problem with the use of the phrase “Cappadocian theology” has less to do with any absolute inaccuracy of the phrase, and more to do with the lack of any established definition or consensus about the content or meaning indicated in its use. Similar to our earlier exploration into the exact individuals included in the title “Cappadocian Fathers,” there are numerous interpretations and assumptions of the identity, validity and content of Cappadocian theology. Although it is becoming more common to qualify the use of the Cappadocian category, these assumptions and definitions are still not always explained. Newcomers to the study of this era and its associated doctrines may find this inconsistency confusing, highlighting again the complications forever attending the use of language.

Within the variety of uses of the idea of Cappadocian theology I would like to suggest there are three discernible categories. Broadly speaking these are divided between those who use the term loosely, those who seem to see a common core of theological understanding among the three, and those who reject the use of the category

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<sup>448</sup> Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 233-34



or ignore it completely. To place this project more fully within the context of scholarship, some examples of each will be noted here. Also we will seek to place Zizioulas within this context, and to define the understanding of “Cappadocian theology” which operates within the context of this project.

#### 2.2.4.1 Use without qualification

Firstly, there are those who use the term loosely, with little or no qualification. These authors often speak of Cappadocian theology as representative of the group as a coherent whole. A single source from one of the three is sometimes identified in the text or a footnote, but the idea or concept is described as Cappadocian. Also included in this category are uses of the phrase as a blanket term with no reference to a specific source within the texts of the three Cappadocians. These uses of the Cappadocian category are most often found in general or undergraduate texts on theology or church history, but they can also be found in doctrinal texts or treatises. This is especially true of early and mid-twentieth century texts written prior to the development of the trend to engage with each of the three separately. This usage can also be found in books focusing on developing doctrinal and/or systematic concepts which consequently engage little with the historical aspects of theology.

As a theologian who came of age in the mid-twentieth century, perhaps it is not surprising that Zizioulas falls mainly into this category. His essay on the Cappadocian contribution, which eventually became Chapter 4 in *Communion and Otherness*, identifies Basil, the two Gregories and Amphilochius, together with their dates of birth and death, as “Cappadocian Fathers.”<sup>449</sup> Having made this clarification, Zizioulas refers, throughout the rest of the essay, to both the Cappadocian Fathers and their theology as a unit. He includes scattered references to Basil and the two Gregories, but the

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<sup>449</sup> CAO, 155.

contribution they made is presented as a singular Cappadocian theology. Zizioulas rarely, if ever, speaks of differences in opinion or doctrine among the group, although he will occasionally emphasise one above the others with reference to a given topic or aspect of their shared theology.

In his construction of “a trinitarian theo-ontology,” Stanley Grenz follows Zizioulas’ reading of the Cappadocians closely, describing and explaining Cappadocian thought and theology with little or no differentiation between contributors.<sup>450</sup> Also approaching the Cappadocians through the lens of Zizioulas, Patricia Fox offers little or no critique of the category or exploration of any differences among the three. She appears content to accept Zizioulas’ reading without criticism.<sup>451</sup>

Another mid-twentieth century writer, J.N.D. Kelly, in his treatment of the Cappadocians and the doctrine of the Trinity, also seems to attribute a coherent theology to the three, at least in the area of trinitarian theology, but his references to all three in different places together with his assertion that “the other Cappadocians repeat and extend Basil’s teaching”<sup>452</sup> mean that Kelly is very nearly in the second group. He does reference a single theology shared by all three, but he also acknowledges that the three were individuals and their theology is not univocal.

#### 2.2.4.2 The ‘Venn Diagram’ Approach

The second approach to Cappadocian theology is perhaps the largest group. Occupying the middle ground, these scholars acknowledge differences among the individual Cappadocians, but also see similarities. In describing this group in terms of a Venn diagram, I have in mind the image of three overlapping circles wherein each pair

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<sup>450</sup> Grenz, *Named God*, 300-3.

<sup>451</sup> Fox, *God as Communion*, 37-9, 215-6.

<sup>452</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 261.

of circles has some common ground, but there is also a small central area in which all three overlap. Readings of the Cappadocians that fall into this group appear to operate with an assumption that, rather like a Venn diagram, there is a common, even harmonious, whole in which the separate theological worlds of each of the Cappadocians overlap. This area of overlap is usually concerned with the doctrine of the Trinity and the progression of debates on the doctrine of God in the fourth century.

The essence of this second position is summarised by Gerald O’Collins: “Without pretending that the Cappadocian writers (in particular, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa) formed a monolithic school of theology, we can find in them enough similarities and links to justify dealing with them together.”<sup>453</sup> Writers in this category sometimes mention all three individually and then come to a conclusion about their common understanding of trinitarian theology from the exploration of each. This approach can often be found in general or undergraduate explorations of historical theology, and, occasionally more nuanced or specifically trinitarian systematic or doctrinal works.

An example can be found in Richard Hanson’s *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*. Hanson begins his chapter on “The Cappadocian Theologians” with an acknowledgement that “though each differs clearly from the others in some respects, all have certain features in common.”<sup>454</sup> Interestingly, in a footnote on the same page, Hanson points out that Eusebius of Samosata and Amphilochius of Iconium were also “strictly speaking” Cappadocian theologians, but he does not specify if this is only in relation to geography or also in relation to theological content.<sup>455</sup> The chapter then

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<sup>453</sup> O’Collins, *Tripersonal God*, 131.

<sup>454</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 676.

<sup>455</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 676, footnote 1. He does, however, assert that Amphilochius “virtually owed his theology to the three great Cappadocians” and that he “contributed nothing” to their theology.

proceeds to offer a summary of “Cappadocian theology” followed by detailed reading of each of the three “great Cappadocians” together and separately. Elsewhere in a much smaller work, Hanson chooses to briefly describe the theology of the Cappadocians without taking the time to differentiate between them or explain the term.<sup>456</sup>

Another example of this second group is Catherine LaCugna in whose book, *God for Us*, there are numerous uses of the Cappadocian category in different combinations. She refers to the “Cappadocian response,”<sup>457</sup> “Cappadocian theology” and the “Cappadocian argument,”<sup>458</sup> the “Cappadocian formula,”<sup>459</sup> the “Cappadocian solution,”<sup>460</sup> and “the Cappadocians.”<sup>461</sup> In spite of this usage, which appears to belong rather in the first category, she is listed here because she demonstrates a clear understanding of the differences among the Cappadocians by spending time describing the specific arguments of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa against Eunomius,<sup>462</sup> who was also a Cappadocian.<sup>463</sup>

Joseph Lienhard clarifies “the Cappadocian Settlement” by means of exploring the use of *ousia* and *hypostasis* by each of the three Cappadocians.<sup>464</sup> In his volume, *God in Patristic Thought*, Prestige also references the “Cappadocian Settlement,” exploring it in the context of a sense of continuity and development in the thought of the Cappadocians. This indicates that he does have an understanding of a coherent whole to

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<sup>456</sup> Hanson, “Achievement of Orthodoxy,” 152-153.

<sup>457</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 57.

<sup>458</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 60.

<sup>459</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 67.

<sup>460</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 70.

<sup>461</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 53, 54, 61, 66, 70.

<sup>462</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 60-66.

<sup>463</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 55.

<sup>464</sup> Lienhard, “Cappadocian Settlement,” 105-7.

their theology, but in a developmental form.<sup>465</sup> Johannes Quasten, in his *Patrology*, groups “the Cappadocian Fathers” together in a single section. He provides a brief introduction to the group,<sup>466</sup> but goes on to describe the life, legacy and theology of each separately.<sup>467</sup>

John Behr also refers to the Cappadocian Fathers as a grouping, identifying the traditional three members and describing them as “instrumental in preparing the way for the resolution achieved at the Council of Constantinople in 381 and then in securing it.”<sup>468</sup> This clearly indicates that Behr has some understanding of a common theology and even a common operation amongst the three, but he also devotes considerable time to exploring the lives and theological concerns of each the three individually.<sup>469</sup>

Johannes Zachhuber’s study on *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa* includes a considerable section in which he explores “the Cappadocian Teaching” on his topic of interest. Within this chapter, although he does give individual references for sources and ideas, he regularly employs the idea of a unified Cappadocian theology, at least in the area of Trinity. This approach appears to be adopted in part to do the ambiguity with which scholarship regards the authorship of the letter known as Basil’s *Epistle* 38.<sup>470</sup> He explains his decision to do so early in the book saying that “the broad consensus which traditional scholarship has detected in them is warranted by their respective statements on that subject.”<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 231-4.

<sup>466</sup> Quasten, *Patrology*, 203-4.

<sup>467</sup> Quasten, *Patrology*, 204-36 for Basil; 236-54 for Nazianzus; 254-296 for Nyssa; and, interestingly, 296-300 for Amphilochius.

<sup>468</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 33.

<sup>469</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, Volume 2, Part 2.

<sup>470</sup> Zachhuber, *Human Nature*, 61.

<sup>471</sup> That is, trinitarian theology. Zachhuber, *Human Nature*, 19.

Finally, Frances Young clearly sees the Cappadocians' contribution to "Nicene orthodoxy" as cooperative. Young echoes the conclusions drawn above by describing the two Gregories as "consciously carrying on" the work of Basil and "perpetuating his influence."<sup>472</sup> With this background Young presents her chapter on the Cappadocians as a single narrative, distinguishing specific contributions that can be attributed to one or another among the three. She chooses this method of exploring Cappadocian theology even though she also acknowledges that "the tendency to treat the three together has been increasingly contested."<sup>473</sup>

#### 2.2.4.3 The Rejection of "Cappadocian Theology"

So we turn to the third approach to the use of "Cappadocian theology." This approach is both the most extreme and the most precise. These scholars consider the phrase to be a misnomer, rejecting or ignoring the Cappadocian category altogether. Instead they choose to study and write about these men as separate, although contemporary and related, theologians. Those who use this approach clearly feel that three different theological understandings should emerge from the study of three different theologians. These authors tend to be specialists writing for a post-graduate, academic audience. They are also likely to be historical or patristic theologians, but are occasionally concerned with doctrine or systematic theology as well.

Morwenna Ludlow's project in her volume on Gregory of Nyssa is to explore "how systematicians deal with the differences and similarities between the Cappadocian theologians."<sup>474</sup> Although her approach demonstrates academic curiosity about the way in which people use the Fathers in their own theological programmes, in asking this

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<sup>472</sup> Young, *From Nicaea*, 135.

<sup>473</sup> Young, *From Nicaea*, 135-6.

<sup>474</sup> Ludlow, *Gregory*, 14.

question and the approach she takes to answering it, she displays scepticism of the accuracy and efficacy of the use of the Cappadocian category.

Scepticism of the Cappadocian category is also displayed by Christopher Beeley who, in the introduction to his volume on Gregory of Nazianzus, notes that he “has been somewhat artificially grouped together with Basil and Gregory of Nyssa” under the title “Cappadocian Fathers,” a designation which “has tended to overstate their similarities.”<sup>475</sup> This negative view of the effect of the use of the Cappadocian category on the study of Gregory of Nazianzus is also expressed by McGuckin who feels that “the English school of theology” either “passed [him] over” or “lumped [him] in” with the other two Cappadocians.<sup>476</sup>

Another example of this approach is Sarah Coakley who does not appear to make any use of the Cappadocian category while discussing “disputed questions in patristic trinitarianism.” Instead, she includes the three Cappadocians in a list of “pro-Nicenes” with Ambrose and Augustine and describes the “doctrinal strategies” of this group as “apparently diverse.”<sup>477</sup> Coakley’s article is chiefly concerned with Lewis Ayres’ book on *Nicaea and its Legacy*, which falls mostly in this category as well, heavily qualifying the use of the Cappadocian descriptor to designate a common theology, although acknowledging similarities among the three.<sup>478</sup> He chooses to describe each separately and at length, acknowledging their traditional grouping,<sup>479</sup> and their similarities in operation.<sup>480</sup>

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<sup>475</sup> Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, viii.

<sup>476</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, xxi.

<sup>477</sup> Coakley, “Introduction,” 127.

<sup>478</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea*, 250, 292.

<sup>479</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea*, 187, footnote 1.

<sup>480</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea*, 145.

Andrew Radde-Gallwitz's book *Basil of Caesarea*, offers a slightly different approach to this category. Unlike Beeley and McGuckin, he does not decry the existence of the Cappadocian Category. He merely notes its existence with the slightly derogatory adjective "so-called,"<sup>481</sup> and goes on to discuss Basil as an individual thinker. However, he tempers this emphasis on Basil's individuality by noting the importance of remembering that Basil "was not simply an individual thinker that can be studied apart from his context," but he rather "shared the language of the church—the grammar of its prayer, liturgy, and faith." It is in this context that he helped to "define Christian doctrine."<sup>482</sup>

The scholars in this final group often offer fresh perspective on the lives and legacies of each of the Cappadocian Fathers, engaging with merits and flaws of each man individually. The growth of this approach to the Cappadocian category over the last ten or twenty years has highlighted the need for a clearer understanding of the Cappadocian category by pointing out that in some ways this category is essentially useless or even potentially damaging. Their critique makes it increasingly difficult to use or reference the Cappadocian category without at least some qualification or acknowledgement that there are differences among these three famous and influential, fourth century theologians.

## **2.3 Cappadocian Trinitarian Theology**

### *2.3.1 Basil's Trinitarian legacy*

Even a brief look at the main points of Basil's life gives the impression of a strong and confident personality, never weary in doing what he saw as right, good or necessary. He seems to have possessed a considerable share of what some might call

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<sup>481</sup> Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 11.

<sup>482</sup> Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 13. This observation brings the attention of the reader back to that important Orthodox emphasis on prayer and liturgy as vital sources of theology.



common sense and others might term worldly wisdom. His theological position was not stagnant, but developed throughout his career in response to question, need and his own developing understanding. His political manoeuvring which gained him the see at Caesarea, seems oddly at variance with his dedication to good works and his fascination with monasticism. He left behind a body of work that includes homilies, doctrinal works (including the famous *On the Holy Spirit*, addressed to Amphilochius), some exegetical material and a voluminous body of correspondence numbering over 300 letters.

Although he does refer to Basil's theology as "not entirely consistent," Hanson points out that this is to be expected in the work of one who was "a pioneer in theology."<sup>483</sup> Rousseau, in discussing the *Contra Eunomium*, describes it as "written from a Homoiousian and Eustathian point of view."<sup>484</sup> This association with Eustathius and his party seems to have had a formative effect on the early trinitarian theology of Basil, perhaps explaining why Hanson might feel his theology lacks consistency: it changed over time moving from a *homoiousian* to a *homoousian* position.<sup>485</sup> In contrast to this Dünzl appears to feel that Basil's trinitarian understanding was already taking on its permanent character at the time he was writing the first volume of his *Contra Eunomium* about 363/364.<sup>486</sup> Similarly, Hildebrand claims that the theology in the *Contra Eunomium* of the 360s is reflected in letters written shortly before his death some 25 or more years later.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 699.

<sup>484</sup> Rousseau, *Basil*, 99.

<sup>485</sup> See also Dünzl, *Brief History*, 106.

<sup>486</sup> Dünzl, *Brief History*, 108.

<sup>487</sup> Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 22. He later expands this brief description into a four stage outline of development that he sees in the trinitarian understanding of Basil. He describes Basil's theological moves from a *homoiousian* to *homoousian* position followed by his use of *prosopon* and then *hypostasis* for the "purpose of expressing that which is three in God," 31.

In exploring Basil's *Against Eunomius* 1-2, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz notes that, for Basil, the Son was consubstantial with the Father,<sup>488</sup> differing from the Father only in the "distinguishing marks" of "fatherhood and sonship, respectively."<sup>489</sup> Hildebrand describes this as a difference between substance and properties, the Father and Son are not different in substance "but in number and in the properties that characterise each."<sup>490</sup> Alongside this emphasis on the Son's consubstantiality with the Father, the Son is also co-eternal: there was no time when the Son did not exist.<sup>491</sup> All this would indicate equality between these two trinitarian persons, but Basil also maintains that the Father is "cause and principle of the Son's being," thus allowing for the Father to be "greater" in a causal sense.<sup>492</sup>

Radde-Gallwitz explores Basil's pneumatology through the medium of *Against Eunomius* 3 and *On the Holy Spirit*. He notes that Basil (and Eunomius) were eager to "stick to the letter of scripture" in attempting to articulate a theology of the Holy Spirit.<sup>493</sup> Using biblical references, Basil connects the Spirit to the concept of holiness or "Sanctity itself."<sup>494</sup> He emphasises the cooperation between the Son and the Spirit, thus supporting the thesis that the Spirit is inseparable from the Father and the Son.<sup>495</sup> He is also clear that the Spirit is on the divine side of the "absolute gulf between the divinity and the creation."<sup>496</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 65-6.

<sup>489</sup> Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 69.

<sup>490</sup> Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 65.

<sup>491</sup> Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 72.

<sup>492</sup> Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 72.

<sup>493</sup> Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 81.

<sup>494</sup> Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 84.

<sup>495</sup> Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 87-8. See also, Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 184.

<sup>496</sup> Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 120. See also, Hildebrand, *Basil*, 89.

As perhaps the most striking example of his pioneering character, “Basil's most distinguished contribution towards the resolving of the dispute about the Christian doctrine of God was in his clarification of the vocabulary”<sup>497</sup> employed in the debate. When using them in a trinitarian context, he distinguishes clearly between *ousia* and *hypostasis*.<sup>498</sup> Tarmo Toom also credits Basil with an important contribution to the delineation of these two terms within the context of trinitarian theology.<sup>499</sup> Hildebrand states that Basil made a distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* “as a remedy for both Sabellianism and Arianism.”<sup>500</sup> Zizioulas continually emphasises this delineation of Basil’s when describing the contents and the importance of the Cappadocian contribution to theology.<sup>501</sup>

This is not the only feature of Basil’s theology reflected in aspects of Zizioulas’ theology. Hanson points out that there are a number of instances in which Basil compares “the relation of ‘substance’ to ‘Persons’ in the Trinity with the relation of the general to the particular.”<sup>502</sup> The attachment of *hypostasis* to the concept of particularity is central to Zizioulas’ concept of personhood, as will be seen in Chapter 3. Zizioulas, like Basil, understands *ousia* or substance as the general property of all the particular *hypostases* or persons, but both theologians insist that the *ousia* is not the source or the

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<sup>497</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 690.

<sup>498</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 690.

<sup>499</sup> Toom, *Trinitarian Theology*, 130-1. Interestingly, this distinction is regularly attributed to “the Cappadocians” as a grouping rather than Basil in particular. The assumption seems to be that Basil came up with the idea and the two Gregories joined him in propagating it. Cf. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice*, 158. O’Collins, *Tripersonal God*, 131. Rusch, *Trinitarian Controversy*, 23-4. LaCugna, *God for Us*, 57.

<sup>500</sup> Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 91.

<sup>501</sup> Although he consistently calls it a feature of Cappadocian theology, when speaking specifically of this clear definition of terms Zizioulas footnotes Basil. Cf. “Cappadocian Contribution,” 47; *BAC*, 37; *CAO*, 158.

<sup>502</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 692. See also, Dünzl, *Brief History*, 107; Fortman, *Triune God*, 79-80; Lienhard, “Cappadocian Settlement,” 106.

cause of the Godhead. Basil reserves this to the *hypostasis* of the Father.<sup>503</sup> Radde-Gallwitz offers this summary of Basil's trinitarian theology: "The divine nature and dignity proceed from the Father, through the Son, to the Spirit; human knowledge of God, which is rooted in love of the truth, proceeds in the opposite direction."<sup>504</sup> This summary bears some significant similarities to the Systematic Trinitarian Circle of Zizioulas that will be presented in the next chapter. It seems clear that aspects of Basil's theology can be found in Zizioulas' theological programme.<sup>505</sup>

### 2.3.2 Gregory of Nazianzus' Trinitarian legacy

Gregory's literary and theological legacy has been transmitted through a somewhat unusual body of work which he had ample time to edit and compile as he liked. His works consist of the usual letters (over 200) and numerous orations, but he also composed poetry,<sup>506</sup> including *De Vita Sua*, his poetic autobiography. He left no copy of an exegetical commentary, nor any notable doctrinal treatise. Instead his theological contribution was mostly contained in his orations which were also so noteworthy for their rhetorical brilliance as to become exemplary texts on that art for future generations. "In fact, so popular were Gregory's *Orationes* that they were the most copied of all Byzantine manuscripts after the Scriptures."<sup>507</sup>

Gregory's *Orationes* 27-31 have gained special prominence under the title *Five Theological Orationes*. They were originally preached in Constantinople in 380 or 381, and contain his most succinct and powerful summary of his own understanding of the theology of the Trinity. *Oration 27* is devoted to expounded Gregory's dearly held

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<sup>503</sup> Awad treats this reading of Basil at length in "Subordination and Koinonia," esp. pp 183-7.

<sup>504</sup> Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 117.

<sup>505</sup> See also Awad, "Subordination and Koinonia," 187-188.

<sup>506</sup> Behr describes "a large body of poetical works" consisting of "some seventeen thousand verses," *Nicene Faith*, 331.

<sup>507</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 331-2.

belief that theological conversation should be characterised by reference, purity and discretion - and reserved for those who know what they are talking about. *Oration 28, On the Doctrine of God*, emphasises the unknowable, indescribable nature of God, and makes a distinction between the knowledge that God exists and any knowledge of *what* that existence is.<sup>508</sup> However much reason might point us in the direction of God, the divine nature, the Trinity, the Godhead one in three, remains beyond human comprehension.<sup>509</sup>

The Third Theological Oration takes up the theme of the Son. Here Gregory spends less time praising the ineffable, unknowable God and builds more tangible arguments about the deity of the Son. He addresses the language of ‘begotten’, taking time to explore the idea of the Father’s ‘will’ in begetting the Son, and maintaining the Father’s freedom from necessity throughout. He differentiates the divine nature from various divine attributes.<sup>510</sup> He holds that through being begotten, the son must share fully in the divine nature and this is not diminished by inferiority in terms of causation. The Son is fully divine and fully human, a conclusion upheld by an entire section of scriptural allusions to the divine qualities of the Son.<sup>511</sup>

*Oration 30* continues Gregory’s reflections on the Son this time focusing on Christ’s humanity, submission and suffering in the flesh. Gregory makes distinctions between the transcendent divine relationship between Father and Son and the interactions between Jesus and the Father in economic terms, these point to his situation in the incarnation as human, but should not be read back into the eternal relationship of Father and Son.

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<sup>508</sup> *Oration 28.5.*

<sup>509</sup> *Oration 28.31.*

<sup>510</sup> *Oration 29.10*

<sup>511</sup> Or so Gregory interprets them. *Oration 29.20.*

In the final of the *Five Theological Orations*, Gregory turns his rhetorical power to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. He early makes it plain that the Spirit is, for him, an equal part of the Trinity.<sup>512</sup> The Spirit has always been with the Father and the Son. The Spirit is distinguished from the Son by procession (rather than being ‘begotten’). The Spirit is consubstantial, not subordinate, not a creature. God is Trinity - all three together as one - to deny this is to deny God. Illustrations and scriptural references are offered,<sup>513</sup> but in the end, Gregory returns to his favourite theme - it is all a mystery, the Trinity, the Godhead, is a mystery, ineffable, and infinitely worthy of worship.

Gregory of Nazianzus was well chosen as a preacher of orthodoxy. His Orations contain considerable doctrinal content, communicated in astonishing prose. His polished, educated understanding of rhetoric shines through in words drenched in wit and irony,<sup>514</sup> but, in spite of his own verbal brilliance, his commitment to the ultimate unspeakable mystery of God is unswerving.

Although his rhetorical abilities cannot be doubted, there are some scholars who do not think highly of the theological merit of Gregory of Nazianzus. In his assessment of Cappadocian theology, Hanson temperately says that as far as trinitarian doctrine is concerned “Gregory can be said to display no great originality.” Although he does affirm that Gregory’s “articulation of Trinitarian doctrine is clearer, rather more forceful and expressive than” Basil’s, Hanson considers that this is just the mark of “a great stylist.”<sup>515</sup> By this assessment, Gregory has a significantly accomplished rhetorical style, but is not substantially original in his thought. A similar evaluation of Gregory’s

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<sup>512</sup> *Oration* 31.3

<sup>513</sup> more on this below

<sup>514</sup> McGuckin comments that reading his works literally and at face value leads to “a fatal way of underestimating the subtlety of an ancient rhetor, who freighted every phrase with precisely loaded nuance suitable for the occasion.” When little care is given to the wider context of his argument the actual point substance of his work can be missed. *Gregory*, xxi.

<sup>515</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 714.

contribution is made by Denis Meehan who, although he emphasises Gregory's brilliance as a wordsmith of his time, claims that, with the exception of the famous *Five Theological Orations*, his work is "actually much less theological in content than his great contemporary Basil."<sup>516</sup>

There are those who would disagree with this assessment of Gregory as more style than substance. Johannes Quasten, while acknowledging what he terms Gregory's theological "obligation" to Basil, also states that "he shows definite progress" beyond Basil.<sup>517</sup> Even stronger support for the importance and originality of Gregory's contribution is found in McGuckin. In reference to the *Five Theological Orations*, he says, "these five Orations were never surpassed for their trinitarian doctrine."<sup>518</sup> He even credits Gregory with re-casting Basil in a light more consistent with what became orthodoxy than perhaps he had been in himself. This re-cast is also identified by McGuckin who suspects that this is an important cause of the "major supposition that the thought of the 'Cappadocian Fathers' is of a piece" which persisted "for centuries afterwards."<sup>519</sup> From whichever angle we choose to view the character of Gregory of Nazianzus, it appears to be undeniable that his Orations are triumphs of rhetoric used as vehicles to deliver a decisive version of what came to be known as orthodox trinitarian doctrine.

One of Gregory's more unusual contributions to the trinitarian conversation can be found in his *Oration* 31 "On the Holy Spirit." In the course of this extended explanation of the Spirit's equal deity with the Father and the Son, Gregory offers a reason for the lack of scriptural evidence for the inclusion of the Holy Spirit in the

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<sup>516</sup> Meehan, "Introduction," 16.

<sup>517</sup> Quasten, *Patrology*, 248.

<sup>518</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, 277.

<sup>519</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, 374. This has already been noted above, cf. footnote (18).

Godhead. He appeals to the history of the Jews recorded in scripture. As long as the one God (the Father) was understood as one among many regional or ethnic gods it was necessary to maintain that God was One; the revelation of the Son would have caused too much confusion. Once the Son is revealed in the New Testament, the further introduction of the Spirit would be too much for believers to take in. It is left to those in the church to articulate the revelation of the Spirit, logically implied in scripture when we had reached the maturity allowing us to do so.<sup>520</sup> McGuckin calls this explanation “an extraordinary culmination to the *Theological Orations*,” and further claims that “there is nothing comparable to it as a theory of revelatory process in the whole of patristic literature.”<sup>521</sup>

This original theory of revelatory process is also significant as it is associated with Gregory’s concern to establish the Holy Spirit as co-equal with the Father and the Son in trinitarian life. Gregory even applies the controversial term *homoousious* to the Spirit’s relationship with the Father,<sup>522</sup> something Basil never did. Gregory’s uncompromising stance on his understanding may have been one of the chief sources of his failure and resignation during the Council of Constantinople as it is likely he would have antagonised delegates who accepted *homoousious* as a description of the relationship of the Father and the Son but excluded the Spirit from this category.

In regard to the issue of the monarchy of the Father, Gregory’s position is similar to that of Basil. Gregory maintained that the Father is the “only source” and “sole principle” of the Godhead, a belief that Christopher Beeley describes as “the most fundamental element of his theological system.”<sup>523</sup> Beeley also emphasises that this

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<sup>520</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 782.

<sup>521</sup> McGuckin, *Gregory*, 309.

<sup>522</sup> *Oration* 31.7, 10.

<sup>523</sup> Beeley, “Divine Causality,” 206-7. It could be argued that the same is true of Zizioulas.



centrality of the monarchy of the Father in Gregory's theology is not exclusive of full equality within the Trinity.<sup>524</sup> While Gregory reserves the role of "source" for the Father, he is careful to narrow the field of possible meanings. "The name 'Father' denotes neither essence nor activity but relationship."<sup>525</sup> Beeley suggests that "Gregory's achievement is precisely to preserve the Origenist, 'relational' structure of the divine life and the soteriological force of Trinitarian doctrine by clarifying its theological meaning more forcefully than Origen, Athanasius or Basil did."

From this summary it is possible to discern direct connections between the theology of Gregory and that of Zizioulas. Again we see the centrality of the monarchy of the Father, but here it is qualified to exclude inequality between the trinitarian persons. The concern about inequality in regard to Zizioulas' understanding of the monarchy of the Father and his clear exclusion of inequality in trinitarian relationships has already been addressed in the first Chapter. Gregory's use of the concept of 'relation' or 'mode of existence' to describe this equality also appears to have an echo in Zizioulas' theology. This concept, from the Greek word *schesis*, seems to offer a starting point for Zizioulas' conviction that "the notion of person is inconceivable outside a relationship."<sup>526</sup>

### 2.3.3 *Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian legacy*

In some ways Gregory of Nyssa appears to be the invisible member of the traditional Cappadocian trio. Behr describes him as "enigmatic"<sup>527</sup> and Morwenna Ludlow as "this most elusive of writers."<sup>528</sup> He seems to have had neither the dominant

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<sup>524</sup> Beeley, *Gregory*, 225.

<sup>525</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 712. See also Beeley, "Divine Causality," 208.

<sup>526</sup> "Cappadocian Contribution," 50; *CAO*, 160.

<sup>527</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 409.

<sup>528</sup> Ludlow, *Gregory*, vii.

personality of his older brother, nor the rhetorical flare and brilliance of his namesake from Nazianzus, yet Gregory of Nyssa was no intellectual or theological lightweight. To the contrary, John Behr states that “the scope, depth, and rigour of” his written works “surpasses that of both Basil and the Nazianzen.”<sup>529</sup> In spite of this, he “only rarely commits any personal details to writing and is largely absent from contemporary historical accounts.”<sup>530</sup> Perhaps, then, his seeming invisibility is due rather to his lack of concern with the politics and plans that occupied his brother or the introspection and self-justification that characterised their common friend.

Although his career may at first glance lack the prominence and brilliance of his fellow Cappadocians, Gregory of Nyssa left a body of work so considerable as to amount to something quite different from the legacies of Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus. His interests, and thus his subjects, ranged beyond politics and trinitarian theology. Although he composed several works relative to the trinitarian debates including several volumes *Against Eunomius*, such treatises as *On the Holy Spirit* and *On the Trinity*, and the well-known letter to Ablabius on *Why there are not three Gods*, he also produced the mystical *Life of Moses*, the devoted *Life of Macrina*, the treatise *On Virginity*, and the philosophical dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*. These and other works are supplemented by scriptural commentaries, including his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, and a relatively small collection of about thirty letters.

From the above it can be inferred that Gregory of Nyssa’s theological interests and pursuits differed in marked ways from that of his brother and his namesake. Of the three, he is the only one who has been credited with devising a system of thought, a

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<sup>529</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 413.

<sup>530</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 409.

system all the more impressive because it contained doctrinal, philosophical and spiritual aspects.<sup>531</sup> The depth and breadth of his literary legacy has led to Gregory being frequently consulted, quoted and studied by widely differing individuals with widely different theological agendas.<sup>532</sup> His more parochial education and his time living and working “in the world” seem to have grounded his personality in a way totally unlike his brother and his friend. He was not “political” like Basil. He offered only his theology to debate, not politics, nor was he “self-absorbed” like Gregory of Nazianzus.<sup>533</sup> When compared to these two, his apparent lack of ego is quite striking.

In the arena of trinitarian theology, Gregory’s contribution appears to be very much in keeping with his two Cappadocian fellows. He continued to develop the terminological distinction made by Basil between the one divine *ousia* and the three *hypostases*. Toom credits him with refining the meaning of *hypostasis* to the point that it became virtually identical with the term *prosopon*. According to Toom, this realignment “accentuated the fact that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were relational beings” and opened the way for the development of trinitarian theology toward ideals of “communion-relation (*koinonia*, later to be called *perichoresis*) between the three distinct persons.”<sup>534</sup> This development on the personal side of Gregory's trinitarian theology was balanced by his sustained and absolute insistence on the impossibility of knowing, comprehending or defining the divine *ousia*.<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>531</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 719. Silvas describes it in terms of “a substantive mystical theology” which includes spiritual life, faith and dogma in an “unswerving desire for the supremely and infinitely beautiful that is God alone.” Silvas, *Gregory*, 56.

<sup>532</sup> Ludlow, *Gregory*, 3-4.

<sup>533</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 413.

<sup>534</sup> Toom, *Classical Trinitarian Theology*, 139.

<sup>535</sup> Toom, *Classical Trinitarian Theology*, 137. “With this conviction of God's infinity goes an even stronger asseveration than that of the other two Cappadocians of God's incomprehensibility,” Hanson, *Search*, 720.

In a distinction that echoes the categories of apophatic and cataphatic theological conversation, Hanson describes two ways of “knowing God” in the theology of Gregory: through God’s attributes or through mysticism. The first way, broadly cataphatic in approach, uses observation, logic and philosophy. In this way, looking for the evidence of divine activity in the world around us, including God’s self-revelation in scripture, leads us into knowledge of the divine attributes. The second, more apophatic, approach is an inner way, devoid of reasoning or sensory perception. Gregory’s deep mystical theology describes the plunge “into divine darkness” where it is possible to know God “only by or in faith.” This mystical, apophatic aspect to Gregory’s theology acts as a corrective to an over-obsession with doctrinal theology. Although the trinitarian formula of one *ousia* and three *hypostases* can tell us “what God is like” it cannot tell us “what he is.”<sup>536</sup>

Another area in which Gregory affirms a similar view to his Cappadocian fellows is in regard to the origin of the Son. Like them, Gregory affirms that the Son was begotten by the Father, but outside time. Although the Son was caused, he never began. Like Gregory of Nazianzus, he is careful to keep any sense of “rank” or “status” out of the trinitarian equation. Although it is important to maintain that the Father is cause of the Son and the Spirit, this only gives the Father priority in terms of “order.” This causal priority of the Father does not in anyway detract from the equality of the trinitarian persons.<sup>537</sup>

It seems then that theology of Gregory of Nyssa, like that of his two Cappadocian fellows, is also reflected in the work of Zizioulas, if somewhat less directly. Gregory’s development of the concept of *hypostasis* in close relationship to

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<sup>536</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 721. A duality which is echoed in Zizioulas’ distinction between the possibility of discussing the ‘how’ and the ‘what’ of God, as we will see in the next chapter.

<sup>537</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 729.

*prosopon* seems to foreshadow Zizioulas' terminology of hypostatic personhood.

Gregory's mystical theology and his distinctions in the two ways of knowing God are reminiscent of Zizioulas' position that it is not possible to discuss "what God is," but it is possible to discuss "how God is what God is." In addition to these specific connections, Gregory's theology also connects to Zizioulas through similar trinitarian ideas to those we have already seen in Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus.

Although unique among the Cappadocians in his theological system, philosophical approach and mystical leanings, Gregory shares many of the same concerns and emphases in relation to trinitarian theology. He elaborates the relationship between *ousia* and *hypostasis*, develops the personal aspects of *hypostasis*, values an apophatic approach to the *ousia* of the Godhead, and affirms the Father's causal priority over the other two trinitarian persons without introducing hierarchy in intratrinitarian relationships. These shared trinitarian ideas of the Cappadocians are quite similar to those themes held to be important and "Cappadocian" by Zizioulas: the *ousia/hypostasis* distinction, the Father as source or cause of the Son (and Spirit), the importance of the relational aspect of *hypostasis*, and the insistence that the essence of God is unknown.

#### *2.3.4 Influences on the Cappadocians*

Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa unquestionably occupied positions of central importance in the theological debates of the late fourth century, and thus contributed significantly to the doctrinal formulas that were agreed in that period. They arrived on the theological scene toward the close of nearly a century of debate surrounding the nature of God, and they were to play a crucial role in the debates that would eventually lead to the adoption of an imperially sanctioned understanding of trinitarian orthodoxy at the Council of Constantinople in 381. In many ways they came in toward the end of the debate because of this they may, in retrospect,

seem to have had the last word.<sup>538</sup> However, it is important to remember that they were themselves “standing on the shoulders of giants,” building on the many decades of theology and debate that had come before them.

This can be chiefly seen in the important debt that all three owe to Origen. Already as young men, Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus were studying his works, collecting them into a *Philokalia*.<sup>539</sup> Ilaria Ramelli describes Origen as “the first positive anti-subordinationist in Christian thought”<sup>540</sup> who was “the main inspirer of the Cappadocians, and especially Nyssen, in what became Trinitarian orthodoxy.”<sup>541</sup> He also introduced the “conceptual and linguistic novelty” that the Father and the Son are each endowed with a different “hypostasis or individual substance.”<sup>542</sup> She argues that the central Cappadocian formula of one *ousia* and three *hypostases* was already present in Origen.<sup>543</sup> For Origen each of the three trinitarian persons have “their own properties, but they all share the same nature or substance.”<sup>544</sup>

As grandchildren of Macrina the Elder, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa stood to inherit the influence of Gregory Thaumaturgus, of whom their grandmother had been a disciple. This is another route through which the influence of Origen would have

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<sup>538</sup> In making this claim I am referencing only 'the last word' inasmuch as it applies to what came to be the accepted Orthodox doctrine of the trinity. There were many more words to be passed about in succeeding centuries, not least surrounding the Christological controversies. This claim suggests that it was in no small part the work of the three Cappadocians that settled the trinitarian controversy sufficiently for the next church debate to rise to the surface of theological conversation.

<sup>539</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 263.

<sup>540</sup> Ramelli, “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism,” 49.

<sup>541</sup> Ramelli, “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism,” 25.

<sup>542</sup> Ramelli, “Origen, Greek Philosophy,” 304.

<sup>543</sup> Ramelli, “Origen, Greek Philosophy,” 302-3. “Origen’s thought represented a novel and fundamental theorisation with respect to the communality of [*ousia*] and the individuality of [*hypostasis*], conceived as individual substances, in the Trinity.” See also “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism,” 25.

<sup>544</sup> Ramelli, “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism,” 26.

reached them.<sup>545</sup> Their sister, Macrina the Younger, also exercised influence in the life and theological development of her brothers. As we have seen, this is especially true of Gregory whose devotion to her is evident in his *Life of Macrina* and *On the Soul and Resurrection*, which laud her piety and show her great respect.<sup>546</sup>

Our exploration of the life and theology of Basil above has also highlighted his early association with Eustathius of Sebaste. This relationship seems to have been formative for his theological understanding, accounting for an early homoiousian slant in his trinitarian theology.<sup>547</sup> Although Basil sought to distance himself from this early influence, especially after Eustathius joined the pneumatomachian cause, “it is not at all clear that Basil cleansed himself of Eustathian influence as fully as he alleges and scholars have accepted.”<sup>548</sup>

Without quite describing him as an influence on the Cappadocians, some authors significantly place them after Athanasius of Alexandria, and portray them as developing his theological legacy. J.N.D. Kelly describes them as “cautiously and circumspectly” following the lead of Athanasius in completing the defence of the “homoiouison of the Spirit.”<sup>549</sup> For Gerald O’Collins much of the theology of the Cappadocians, especially in the area of the Holy Spirit, was “like Athanasius,” but they “went beyond” him “in developing their language of three coequal and coeternal” persons “sharing the one

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<sup>545</sup> This Gregory, himself a disciple of Origen, also applied the adjective *homoiouios* “both to the Son vis-à-vis the Father and to the three Persons of the Trinity.” Ramelli, “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism,” 31. See also, Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 263.

<sup>546</sup> As seen above in the discussion of who are the Cappadocian Fathers. Cf. Van Dam, *Families*, 184-7; Pelikan, *Christianity*, 8-9.

<sup>547</sup> Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 20-1. Rousseau, *Basil*, 99. Both also mention Basil of Ancrya as part of the Eustathian group and, therefore, having some possible influence on the young Basil. See also Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 263. Behr adds George of Laodicea to this group.

<sup>548</sup> Beeley, “The Holy Spirit,” 91.

<sup>549</sup> Kelly, *Doctrines*, 258.

divine” substance.<sup>550</sup> Behr resists the temptation to cast Basil as “taking over the baton of orthodoxy from Athanasius,” but he does note that “Basil’s work does in fact complement that of Athanasius remarkably well.”<sup>551</sup> Behr does not appear to comment on Athanasius influence on the other two Cappadocians.

This reading of the Cappadocians as successors and continuers of Athanasius’ work is not universally agreed. There is debate on the extent of Athanasius’ direct influence on the Cappadocians. According to Hanson, although there is evidence that Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus had considerable respect for Athanasius, “none of the Cappadocian theologians derived their theological tradition directly from him.”<sup>552</sup> Beeley, in his study of Cappadocian pneumatology, dismisses any direct influence of Athanasius on the Cappadocians. Basil does not share his “homousian ontology.”<sup>553</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus “had little if any contact with the work of Athanasius.”<sup>554</sup> Of the three, Gregory of Nyssa shows the greatest similarity to Athanasius, a connection Beeley suggests was made through “the Antiochene network of Melitius” with which he was associated.<sup>555</sup>

### 2.3.5 *The “Cappadocian Contribution”*

Hanson’s now iconic title describes this pivotal period of debate and doctrinal formation in the fourth century as “the search for the Christian doctrine of God.” Hanson characterises the search as taking place by the method of trial and error,<sup>556</sup> as the ancient Christians and leaders of the church sought to “reconcile two factors which

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<sup>550</sup> O’Collins, *Tri-Personal*, 131.

<sup>551</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 264.

<sup>552</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 678.

<sup>553</sup> Beeley, “The Holy Spirit,” 93.

<sup>554</sup> Beeley, “The Holy Spirit,” 101.

<sup>555</sup> Beeley, “The Holy Spirit,” 105.

<sup>556</sup> Hanson, *Search*, xx.



were part of the very fabric of Christianity: monotheism, and the worship of Jesus Christ as divine.”<sup>557</sup> It was still these extremes of monotheism and tri-theism that the Cappadocians were seeking to deal with in their attempts to describe how Jesus could be God, divine, eternal, yet not add numerically to the one God.

As they engaged with these fundamental issues of faith, each of the three Cappadocian Fathers brought a unique personality, education and point of view to the trinitarian debates of the latter fourth century. The writing style of each is distinctive. Their works demonstrate the different concerns and issues that were close to their hearts and the unique life stories that shaped their approach to theology, to church, to pastoral life, to personal relationships and to God. They entered the theological scene at a crisis in the history of the early church, and each one characteristically responded to that crisis as he encountered and perceived it.

Given their very real differences, it can easily seem remarkable that these three men, connected though they were, advocated such similar theology. As we have seen, they were manifestly different in character and disposition and spent a considerable amount of their adult lives at a distance from each other. In spite of these differences, they were also on the same side of the developing polarisation between “Arians” and “Nicenes.” The debate between these two extremes was coming to a crisis point in their time and approaching its eventual end. This shared cause may explain their similarities, especially in trinitarian theology, the central concern of that debate. As we have seen, it is also possible that their similarities were, to some extent, intentional. There appears to be sufficient evidence to speculate that each of the Gregories sought, in his own way, to continue or reshape the legacy of Basil after his death.<sup>558</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> Hanson, *Search*, xx.

<sup>558</sup> We will consider this possibility further in the fourth chapter below.

All three Cappadocians were products of the same culture – the intellectual, Greek, middle and upper classes of the Eastern Roman Empire. They were raised in Christian families growing up in the faith rather than converting to it later in life. As well-educated sons of well-to-do families, they brought an extensive knowledge of Greek philosophy, culture and literature to the international ecclesial debates about the nature of God. Combining the fruits of a good education with their theological knowledge and influences, they freely used secular as well as sacred tools, vocabulary, and concepts as they gathered the building blocks with which to form their trinitarian understanding of God. Like every other theologian in history, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa were a product of their time. They used the tools of the Greeks, but with those tools they constructed a theology that was uniquely Christian.

As we move forward to explore the theology of Zizioulas, and his reading of the Cappadocians, this chapter remains in the background as an affirmation that there is more to the story of these three influential theologians than a single “Cappadocian Contribution.” Through this exploration of the situations and events in which the Cappadocians lived, ministered, and wrote we can see how truly messy and complicated the real life events surrounding the emergence of the doctrine of the Trinity were. Such knowledge highlights the importance of context in any discussion of theology. However aware we are of their weaknesses and frailties, it cannot be ignored that Basil, his brother and his friend made a fundamental contribution to the formation of a what came to be accepted as the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, a doctrine which subsequent Christianity may not always embrace, but cannot ever ignore.

### 2.3.6 Use of the Cappadocian Category in the current project

Because he refers to the Cappadocian Fathers without critically engaging with the Cappadocian category, Zizioulas has been accused of adopting a “mistaken interpretation that avoids taking into consideration the variety and difference” in the writings of these particular theologians.<sup>559</sup> For Awad and others who are skeptical or dismissive of the Cappadocian Category there is a feeling that such simplification runs the risk of ignoring the variety of thought and experience among the three. These men covered much ground, literally and metaphorically, over at least three decades of church history, and not all of that ground was covered together. For such academics, the idea of treating each as a separate entity in this theological conversation seems to be a more responsible approach.

In illustration of this more recent attitude to the use (or nonuse) of the Cappadocian category, there have been a significant number of monographs and studies dedicated to the lives and legacies of each of the three Cappadocians in recent years. Most of these books highlight the significant differences among them as well as their similarities or neglect to mention the Cappadocian group at all. Gregory of Nyssa in particular seems to be gaining a reputation distinct from that of his two fellows,<sup>560</sup> but all three have had studies and monographs produced in recent decades that treat them as individuals both in biography and theology.<sup>561</sup> This upsurge of individual treatments

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<sup>559</sup> Awad, “Subordination and Koinonia,” 182. Awad also includes T. F. Torrance in this criticism, his particular concern centres around what he sees as Basil's and Gregory of Nazianzus' very different understandings of the Father's position within the Godhead. Milbank also shies away from the use of the “Cappadocian” for a single theology. In his case this is because “much recent treatment by systematic theologians of the Cappadocian position on the Trinity accords ill with the best and especially the most recent scholarship on Gregory of Nyssa,” “Gregory of Nyssa,” 94.

<sup>560</sup> See the number of individuals contributing to Sarah Coakley's collection *Rethinking Gregory of Nyssa*. See also, Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa*; Maspero, *Trinity and Man*; Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa*.

<sup>561</sup> Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*; Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*; McGuckin, *Gregory of Nazianzus*; Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*; to name a few.

suggests a reaction against an older tradition of treating the three figures as a representation of one doctrine.<sup>562</sup>

In light of the trend towards the questioning if not the outright rejection of the Cappadocian category, it is important to explain the reasons behind the continued use of this category in this project. There are three primary reasons for this choice. Firstly, the fact remains that this theological grouping is established and traditionally used in reference to Basil and the two Gregories. It is true that this use is increasingly challenged, but the category itself cannot be ignored.<sup>563</sup> Following and joining in a theological tradition, it is necessary to adopt or adapt the terminology of that tradition as best we can. Secondly, and more particularly related to this project, we use the Cappadocian category because Zizioulas does so. Our intention is to engage specifically with his theology and seek a dialogue with it. Adoption of his use of the Cappadocian category facilitates our dialogue, though we do so critically. Lastly, given the amount of the secondary literature available on each figure not to say the vastness of the primary literature, it would be manifestly beyond the scope of this project to treat each theologian separately in any comprehensive way.

In our understanding Basil is presented as the underpinning architect of Cappadocian theology. Gregory of Nazianzus expands and modifies Cappadocian theology with his own strong allegiance to the meaning and use of the term *homoousios*

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<sup>562</sup> A construction which ironically sounds oddly trinitarian in itself. It is relatively rare to find authors who use the Cappadocian designation for a common theology without any critical differentiation or critical engagement. Cf. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice*, 156; Wilks, "Trinitarian Ontology." Similarly, McGrath, who acknowledges their individual importance, assumes a singular "Cappadocian" understanding of the Trinity, *Christian Theology*, 11. Similarly Zachhuber freely refers to Cappadocian theology or doctrine based on what he perceives as a "broad consensus" in their trinitarian doctrine, *Human Nature*, 19. Others use the Cappadocian designation to head a section in which the three are treated separately; Cf. Hanson, *Search*, 676; LaCugna, *God for Us*, 39; Louth, "The Cappadocians," 291; O'Collins, *Tripersonal God*, 131; Toom, *Classical Trinitarian Theology*, 128; Wickham, "Gregory of Nazianzus," 9. In a slightly different approach, Rusch begins by treating the two Gregories separately, but assumes there is a common "Cappadocian Theology," *Trinitarian Controversy*, 23-24.

<sup>563</sup> This is demonstrated by Ayres's brief reference in a footnote to the title he chose not to use, *Nicaea*, 187; also by Coakley's brief dismissal of the "so-called 'Cappadocian Fathers,'" *Rethinking*, 1.

for intratrinitarian relationships, especially as it applies to the Holy Spirit. Gregory of Nyssa, in concert with the general influence of Gregory of Nazianzus' trinitarian understanding after the Council of Constantinople in 381, carries Basil's work forward, continuing the ongoing argument with Eunomius and reflecting on the ultimate goal of faith and relationship with God: union with the trinitarian life.

More specifically, Basil was a theological pioneer. His theology was fluid, influenced and shaped over the course of his life by his mentors, friends and conversational partners. In his hands theology was dynamic, responsive and practical, the tool of a bishop, philanthropist, and politician seeking to bring about unity and the peaceful practice of theological orthodoxy. His most influential contribution to what would later be known as the Cappadocian theology of the Trinity was the introduction of a conceptual distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* together with his association of these terms with substance and person respectively. Although not universally agreed, his emphasis on the *hypostasis* of the Father as the source of the Trinity could be considered another significant contribution of Basil.

The role of Gregory of Nazianzus in this understanding of Cappadocian theology was relatively brief, but no less influential. He was the orator, championing his interpretation of 'Nicene' orthodoxy in the 'Arian' capital city of Constantinople. His orations were both powerful and subtle and his personality, apparently, equally attractive and repellent. Within the paradigm of a Cappadocian theology he can specifically be said to have emphasised the use of the term *homoousios* about the *hypostases* of the Trinity, particularly applying this to the Holy Spirit at a time when such an understanding was still causing controversy and division among theologians. He also maintained that the Father is the source of the Godhead but only in terms of relations, not essence or activity. A similarity between his thought and that of Basil is

evident, but he is much less fluid and diplomatic and much more forthright and unapologetic. Rather than seeing it as a tool, Gregory loved theology for its own sake and wished others would offer the same pure respect and reverence to God and God-talk that he himself considered indispensable. Theologically he proceeds ‘beyond’ Basil.

Being both the youngest and the last of the three to be active in the theological life and conversation of the fourth century, Gregory of Nyssa, in a sense, got the final word on Cappadocian theology. Like Basil, his trinitarian theology was chiefly carried on in conversation and debate, particularly with Eunomius. Unlike his brother, Gregory appears to be much more fixed in his theology. Perhaps this is because most of his important doctrinal works were concurrent with or written after the 381 Council of Constantinople. He continued to clarify the distinction between the one divine *ousia* and the three *hypostases*. He developed the redefinition of *hypostasis* to the point that it became virtually identical with the term *prosopon*, opening the door for later more ‘personal’ understandings of the theology of Trinity.<sup>564</sup> Although Basil and Nazianzus had both maintained the importance of an apophatic correction to all theological practice, Nyssa also went farther along the road of developing a mystical, apophatic theology, maintaining a sustained and absolute insistence on the impossibility of knowing, comprehending or defining the divine *ousia*.<sup>565</sup> He both loved theology and used it as a tool to support orthodox belief and to advance his quest for greater communion with God.

Going forward, therefore, we will continue to use the Cappadocian Category to refer to these three men having already explored and qualified its meaning and

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<sup>564</sup> Toom, *Classical Trinitarian Theology*, 139.

<sup>565</sup> Toom, *Classical Trinitarian Theology*, 137. Hanson also draws this aspect of Gregory of Nyssa: “With this conviction of God’s infinity goes an even stronger asseveration than that of the other two Cappadocians of God’s incomprehensibility,” *Search*, 720.

commented on its arguable inaccuracy. When speaking of “Cappadocian theology” the reference will be to a common denominator of thought, a few core understandings held in common, those things on which they were, or seemed to be, essentially in agreement.<sup>566</sup> The existence of such a consensus seems logically to be true in some measure, or this grouping could not have been made to begin with or maintained for so long. It may also be, in some part, attributable to the men themselves, who sought to create a continuation of doctrine.

### *2.3.7 Summary and Conclusions*

Regardless of the varied uses of the Cappadocian category and the uncertainty of its origins, it is apparent that it has grown in popularity and use over the last century. This has especially been the case as the revival of interest in trinitarian theology over the last few decades has highlighted the central contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers to this doctrine. Indeed, it is likely that the prominence of Cappadocian theology in the mid-twentieth century search for the neopatristic synthesis as well as the trinitarian revival at the turn of the 21st century are the core causes of the variety in understandings and uses of the Cappadocian category.

As seen above it seems that English speaking theologians picked up the practice of referencing these three as Cappadocians from continental, possibly German, theologians. In the first chapter of this project it was pointed out that the modern, neopatristic, Orthodox revival in theology had its roots in Paris and the modern Orthodox universities were modelled after German institutions of learning. As has already been mentioned, it seems reasonable to suppose, then, that the Cappadocian terminology that Zizioulas uses, and in which he appears to be steeped, entered his theology not strictly through his own tradition, but rather, again, through similar continental channels which

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<sup>566</sup> Cf. Zachhurber, *Human Nature*, 17-9.

brought the terminology to theological conversation in Britain (and beyond) at the turn of the 20th century.

Those from the third group above who prefer to ignore or downplay the Cappadocian category, such as Coakley and Ayres, are those who study history ‘forwards,’ following the growth of ideas and debates in something as close to ‘real time’ as is possible for historians. From this point of view, there is clearly no coherent Cappadocian theology, there is only the theology of the individuals who took part in the debates as they developed. The Cappadocians may have been so-called, perhaps derogatorily, based on their place or origin, but not as a closed theological group, or a defined trio of men.

Referencing the Cappadocians as a group, however, may not be as anachronistic as it appears from this view of history. Others, perhaps more interested in a doctrinal than an historical approach to history, read the fourth century in reverse, from the point of view of the future. From this angle one sees that these men were closely related, contemporary in time and similar in their understanding of trinitarian theology.<sup>567</sup> The terms of the debate in Cappadocia at the time, ongoing debates with Eunomius and his followers, the ‘Arian’ versus ‘Nicene’ conflict in Constantinople, all these things would have encouraged these three, and any other ‘pro-nicene’ thinkers, to group together in some form of doctrinal similarity. It is the natural trajectory in any debate for the opposite sides to grow more uniform in response to their common enemy. Also, as we have seen, there seems to be some reason to speculate that Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, each in his own way, adjusted and developed Basil's legacy so as to ensure maximum orthodoxy and uniformity in the ‘Nicene’ winning camp.

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<sup>567</sup> It is even possible that they had at times discussed the ideas that they later developed individually. For example, Silvas places the three together at Annisa in Pontus Silvas around 358. *Gregory*, 9. When speaking of Gregory of Nazianzus visiting Basil about this time, McGuckin does not mention Gregory of Nyssa. *Gregory*, 88.



If the applicability of the Cappadocian category is dependent on the historical direction of our approach to fourth century theology, one is forced to conclude that no absolute decision can be made on whether or not it is correct or appropriate to use this category. As Kallistos Ware has helpfully summarised, “while it may be instructive to divide theological writers into ‘schools’, such distinctions are frequently inexact, and possess no more than a relative value. Each creative thinker possesses his own identity.”<sup>568</sup> It is this question of individual identity and creativity that provides a more helpful approach to the use of the Cappadocian category. Asking how and why an author uses the Cappadocian category and noting whether or not that use is explained can provide an important insight into the values and purposes of a particular author.

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<sup>568</sup> Ware, “Orthodox Theology Today,” 115.

## **Chapter 3 - The Systematic Trinitarian Circle of Zizioulas**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter we turn our attention again to John Zizioulas,<sup>569</sup> focusing on his theological output and how it is often read. Our earlier exploration of his historical background has identified him as an heir to Florovsky's neopatristic synthesis and described how he was educated across three continents, entering the world of theological debate and discussion at a time of great change in the Orthodox Church both globally and in his native Greece. It was also noted that reception of and reaction to his theology comes from a variety of theological disciplines and addresses a correspondingly wide area of concern.

In exploring the theological background of Zizioulas, it also became clear that his theology occupied an influential place in the trinitarian theological revival which began in the 1980's and continues to play an important part in trinitarian theological debate to this day. Further comment will be made in this chapter on certain specific readings of Zizioulas' theology of Trinity. In preparation for the main body of the chapter a summary of some more detailed or holistic readings of his theological programme will also be offered here. Such background information will provide context for the description of Zizioulas' theological system that follows.

The title of this chapter highlights the great interior cohesion of Zizioulas' theology which I intend to communicate, and presents the central image of the project - the Systematic Trinitarian Circle of Zizioulas. This image, and its explanation in the chapter below, is my own unique invention. It is offered in the context of critiques of Zizioulas already explored in the first chapter, and presented in the first half of this

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<sup>569</sup> "one of the best known theologians of the contemporary Orthodox Church, a central figure in the ecumenical scene and one of the most cited theologians at work today." Knight, *Theology*, 1.

chapter, but the purpose of the illustration is to present this image as, I believe, it comes from Zizioulas. It is not irreproachable, but it is beautiful. The circle describes a direct logical continuation from the monarchy of the Father (as derived from the Cappadocian doctrine of the Trinity by Zizioulas), through personhood, otherness, salvation, ecclesiology, creation, and the ultimate return to participation in the divine life of the Trinity in the eschatological event of the Eucharist.

This chapter will begin with an attempt to locate this reading in the context of current scholarship by highlighting some specific, typical readings of Zizioulas' trinitarian theology and his theological system as a whole. This will be followed by a brief identification of two controlling theological ideas which precede and inform Zizioulas' theological practice. Having established this background, the main body of this chapter will begin with Zizioulas' reading of the doctrine of the Trinity and its philosophical and Cappadocian roots. This will be followed by an exploration of the immediate consequences of this understanding of Trinity, personhood and otherness. These consequences have their own implications for Zizioulas' understanding of salvation, ecclesiology and the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation. The chapter will end with Zizioulas' "eucharistic theology," an ending that brings us back to the starting point: the divine life of the Trinity.

### *3.1.1 Reading Zizioulas*

As a previous chapter has already shown, it is not necessary to look far or dig deep in trinitarian discussion and its associated doctrine, exploration, and application over the last three decades in order to find the name or the influence of John Zizioulas. From Grenz's proposal of "the Zizioulas dictum"<sup>570</sup> to Holmes' dismayed observation that "Zizioulas' analysis [of the Cappadocian Contribution] has been accepted and built

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<sup>570</sup> Grenz, *Rediscovering*, 134-135.

upon by many of the contributors to the recent revival of Trinitarian theology.”<sup>571</sup> While Zizioulas may not be at the root of the ‘trinitarian revival’ of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century,<sup>572</sup> he has inescapably become a part of it.<sup>573</sup> His influence, as evidenced by references to persons and personhood, appears to be widespread. The use of the terminology of Other, describing God as relational, and the importance of freedom and love in God are almost universally acknowledged.<sup>574</sup>

Given the intention of this chapter to describe Zizioulas’ theological system, we begin by questioning if any contemporary uses of his theology have taken into account the weight and subtlety of the system within which Zizioulas works. His theology, although it may not appear to be written systematically on first glance, creates a complete system. There is a very real danger, when making use of his insights, of missing the important ways in which his particular understandings of the Christian doctrines are connected to his overall theological system. Each doctrine and theological idea can only be fully understood in the context of the others. All are connected, integrated parts of a single whole: the theology of John Zizioulas.

The review of the academic reception of his work in Chapter 1 uncovered critiques and criticisms of certain aspects of Zizioulas’ theology, method or philosophy. However, it is much more difficult to discover works that study or describe his theological programme as a self-contained or complete system. This would indicate that those who reference Zizioulas and/or his theological thought are more often interested in selecting a concept or topic, sometimes taken out of context, in order to build their

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<sup>571</sup> Holmes, *Holy Trinity*, 15.

<sup>572</sup> This was addressed in Chapter 1, tracing the root of the trinitarian renaissance back through Zizioulas and Moltmann at least as far as Barth and Rahner.

<sup>573</sup> Holmes observes that “it is now common to note” the “surprising revival of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity since the second half of the twentieth century,” *Holy Trinity*, 1-3.

<sup>574</sup> Knight, *Theology*, 1.

argument or inform their own theological system rather than developing Zizioulas own thought with reference to its roots and assumptions.

Perhaps a reaction against Zizioulas is especially natural in Nicholas Loudovikos and other young, especially Greek, Orthodox thinkers who are trying to “interrogate” his legacy in depth and make their own contribution to the future of Orthodoxy. In such a context Zizioulas is perhaps so huge within his own tradition as to overshadow newly creative theological ideas and theologians who may wish to take a different approach.<sup>575</sup>

In the context of the trinitarian revival, it seems that some writers select specific ideas or insights of Zizioulas which they connect with or are inspired by and recycle these ideas into their own theological constructions. This has the unfortunate result that some of Zizioulas’ conclusions or terminology end up being used in ways that are decidedly out of the context in which they were introduced. His thought is so tightly woven that his ideas and conclusions, when taken out of their systematic context, can easily become incomprehensible or irrelevant. Too often, these thinkers end up ascribing certain ideas or conclusions to Zizioulas that actually bear little resemblance to what he, arguably, meant to begin with. The use of the ideas and insights of others is, of course, common practice in the doing of theology, but it is irresponsible to ascribe anachronistic ideas to well-known theologian merely to support one’s own conclusion.

One writer that seeks to ‘resource’ Zizioulas in this way is Patricia Fox. In seeking to synthesise certain aspects of Zizioulas’ understanding of trinitarian theology with that of Elizabeth Johnson, Fox speaks of “retrieving the doctrine of the Trinity.” She uses these two theologians as examples of the way in which such a retrieval can and should be balanced between the understandings of East and West, Catholic and Orthodox,

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<sup>575</sup> Cf. Loudovikos, “Person instead of Grace,” 684.

Feminist and Patristic, etc.<sup>576</sup> Fox deals with Zizioulas' work respectfully. She rightly highlights the importance of the "Other" within his understanding of personhood in the context of trinitarian theology.<sup>577</sup> However, in using him as a starting point to "retrieve" the "triune symbol," she would appear to have missed the fact that Zizioulas would likely object that through his study of the Fathers, particularly the Cappadocians, he has *already* done so.<sup>578</sup> It would certainly be possible to use Zizioulas' theology as a starting point for finding common ground, but without acknowledgement of the self-conscious completeness of Zizioulas' system, Fox's suggestion seems to miss something vital to the success of her endeavour.

Those who seek to critically engage with the work of Zizioulas, tend to take one of two approaches: either the writer introduces Zizioulas' work only in order to discount, discredit, or deconstruct his programme, or, more sympathetically, an author may seek to be constructive and helpful, explaining or correcting his statements or conclusions. Often such negative treatments and rejections or even the friendly corrections miss a vital detail in their explanations, condemnations or suggestions for improvement.

One such friendly critique has been presented by Thomas Weinandy. While exploring Zizioulas' doctrine of the Trinity, Weinandy shows great respect and sensitivity, but when he discovers an aspect of Zizioulas' understanding of the Trinity that he cannot accept, he assumes that Zizioulas has forgotten or failed to grasp that "the

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<sup>576</sup> Fox, *God as Communion*, 239.

<sup>577</sup> Fox, *God as Communion*, 45-52.

<sup>578</sup> Although Zizioulas does introduce *BAC* as a "contribution to a 'neopatristic synthesis' capable of leading the West and the East nearer to their common roots," (26) his descriptions of the Cappadocian doctrine of the Trinity are used as a starting point for discussion about other aspects of theology. (Cf. *BAC* 15-19, *Lectures* 47-69 "Cappadocian Contribution," *CAO* 155-177) Zizioulas does not appear to regard the doctrine as such to be in any further need of retrieval.

three persons *are* the one nature of God.”<sup>579</sup> He goes on to suggest that Zizioulas, in apparently suggesting that the Father could have chosen *not* to cause the Son and the Spirit to exist, is conveying a “clearly false” impression.<sup>580</sup> Over against this reading Zizioulas has clearly stated that God neither “exists” nor is a “communion of persons” by necessity. Rather “God owes His existence to the Father. . . who freely affirms his being, his identity, by means of an event of communion with other persons.”<sup>581</sup> There would be no freedom in God's affirmation of God's existence as a “communion of persons” if the Father was not free to choose another way of being. Accepting Weinandy's corrective, would break down Zizioulas' theological programme at its starting point.

In contrast to Weinandy, Stephen Holmes, offers a much less sympathetic treatment of Zizioulas' theology. Including Zizioulas alongside Rahner, Barth and others, Holmes assumes that when these theologians use the terminology of “personality” to refer to the trinitarian theology of the Fathers, they mean “the possession of self-determination, and so volition, and of self-awareness, and so cognition.” Holmes does note that Zizioulas “protests over a similar construction of his doctrine” and goes on to ask, if this is not the case, “what do we mean?”<sup>582</sup> One can only assume that Holmes has not made a close study of Zizioulas, who devotes a seven page appendix in *Communion and Otherness* to combat just such an understanding of “divine personhood.”<sup>583</sup> He calls any understanding of the Trinity as three “axes of consciousness” an “anthropomorphic monstrosity, unworthy of the name of God, and, in

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<sup>579</sup> Weinandy, “Zizioulas,” 411.

<sup>580</sup> Weinandy, “Zizioulas,” 412.

<sup>581</sup> *BAC*, 18.

<sup>582</sup> Holmes, *Holy Trinity*, 144.

<sup>583</sup> *CAO*, 171-177.

the eyes of the Fathers, a sheer blasphemy.”<sup>584</sup> Later he elaborates that “natural and moral qualities, such as energy, goodness, will (or consciousness in the modern sense), and so on, are qualities commonly possessed by the divine persons and *they have nothing to do with the concept of divine personhood.*”<sup>585</sup> Zizioulas clearly communicates what it is that *he* means by divine personhood, and it bears little or no resemblance to Holmes' suggestion.

In contrast to these incorrect or insufficient critiques of Zizioulas theology, there are some whose work shows deeper, more thorough engagement with Zizioulas' theology, seeking to interact with positively with Zizioulas and his legacy. These authors show a fuller understanding of the inner consistency of his theology, allowing them to bring him into fruitful conversation with other theologians and theological ideas. The detail and dialogue that characterise such approaches enables them to offer enlightening critical engagement, contributing to healthy growth in theological conversation.

One notable example of this is Aristotle Papanikolaou's *Being With God* which explores the theology of Zizioulas alongside that of Vladimir Lossky. Papanikolaou, of some of whose work Zizioulas is aware,<sup>586</sup> stands in the same Orthodox tradition as his two main subjects. Perhaps this makes it easier for him to rearrange, critique and explain Zizioulas with both clarity and sensitivity. Unlike most, if not all, other authors, Papanikolaou is able to deal sensitively with Zizioulas while communicating his theology in a different format and order and for different purposes than Zizioulas does

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<sup>584</sup> *CAO*, 171. This is ironic, as the thrust of Holmes' book is to argue that just such a view of God is not patristic and therefore to debunk the “trinitarian revival” of its patristic content. Cf. Holmes, *Holy Trinity*, 200.

<sup>585</sup> *CAO*, 173, emphasis added.

<sup>586</sup> Zizioulas refers directly to Papanikolaou as offering an “excellent reply” to one of his own critics. *CAO*, 171, n.16.



himself. Papanikolaou chooses to arrange his comparison of these two great Orthodox theologians into three main categories of his own choosing: Trinity, Eucharist and Divine-human communion. These themes are present within the theologies of both, and Papanikolaou draws them out explicitly, successfully questioning these two different manifestations of twentieth century Orthodox theology and communicating their content to others.

Morwenna Ludlow approaches Zizioulas' work with specific questions about context and reading of Gregory of Nyssa. She treats him and his system with respect, offering a well-informed description of his thought, especially in relation to the Cappadocians, emphasising Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>587</sup> She also gives due thought to Zizioulas' presuppositions and conclusions. Within her own framework she suggests some particularly pointed questions for Zizioulas, especially his "claim to be accurately representing the theology of the Cappadocians as a whole."<sup>588</sup> Ludlow also spends some time exploring the terms used by both Zizioulas and the Cappadocians, describing the "fluidity of Cappadocian terminology" and the resultant difficulty of accepting Zizioulas' highly nuanced definition of those terms as "Cappadocian."<sup>589</sup>

Like others there are moments when the seeming contradictions of the system which Zizioulas holds in tension causes confusion. Ludlow questions Zizioulas' emphasis on the primacy of person as an ontological category over against nature,<sup>590</sup> asking why he does not seem to take the (arguably more Cappadocian) solution of holding the two as equal, but Zizioulas gives the priority to person *because* it is in the relationship of the three persons that the *ousia*, the Godhead is constituted. 'Person' is

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<sup>587</sup> Ludlow, *Gregory*, 52-68.

<sup>588</sup> Ludlow, *Gregory*, 54, footnote 10.

<sup>589</sup> Ludlow, *Gregory*, 61.

<sup>590</sup> Ludlow, *Gregory*, 59.

the ultimate ontological category to Zizioulas because ‘person’ is the source, just as the Father is the source of Son and Spirit without being temporally primary or ontologically superior. If this were not the case, his programme would break down at its starting point. Ludlow concludes that Zizioulas’ reading does not completely match the Cappadocians, but he “is not absolutely clear about his method,” thus it is not clear if he is reading Cappadocian theology as an absolute “authority” to which he must be true or more generally as a “model for the social doctrine of the Trinity.”<sup>591</sup> It would appear that the answer to this question about Zizioulas’ method in reading the Fathers will determine whether his patristic resourcing is successful.

Another who takes the time to read Zizioulas on his own terms is Miroslav Volf. In his well-known volume on ecclesiology, *After Our Likeness*, Volf uses Zizioulas and Ratzinger as conversation partners in his discussion on the doctrine of the church. He devotes a considerable amount of thought and space to interacting with Zizioulas’ thoughts on the Church, and this includes acknowledgement of his Trinitarian doctrine and consequent understanding of personhood. Volf is not uncritical of Zizioulas, but he has taken the time to fully grasp Zizioulas’ project, and thus offers an effective critique of his ecclesiology before moving on to develop his own ideas.<sup>592</sup>

Before Volf set Zizioulas beside Ratzinger or Papanikolaou set him beside Lossky, Paul McPartlan published his own creation of a dialogue between Zizioulas and Henri de Lubac. Like Volf, McPartlan is principally concerned with ecclesiology, but the title of his book, *The Eucharist Makes the Church*, highlights a significantly different emphasis from Volf. McPartlan is exploring eucharist ecclesiology. He draws on

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<sup>591</sup> Ludlow, *Gregory*, 68. It is interesting to contrast this with Zizioulas’ statement that it is “possible to misrepresent the persons as three independent consciousnesses (‘gods’) in order to promote ‘communion’ (which is itself an abstraction) over them. This is sometimes known as the ‘social’ doctrine of the Trinity,” *Lectures*, xii, emphasis added.

<sup>592</sup> CF. Volf, *Likeness*, 97, 101 etc.

personal conversations with Zizioulas<sup>593</sup> as well as an extensive bibliography of his published writings in several languages.<sup>594</sup> In the second section of the book McPartlan offers a thorough presentation of Zizioulas' theology including a look at the context in which his theology was formed, especially the neopatristic synthesis<sup>595</sup> and Russian Orthodox theology.<sup>596</sup> His reading is especially helpful for the light he sheds on the philosophical aspects of Zizioulas' theology both ancient and modern.

Perhaps most notable and unique, as a work devoted entirely to the theology of Zizioulas, is the volume edited by Douglas Knight, drawing together a dozen different contributions on the "issues of theology, ontology and anthropology in order to assess his view of the relationship of community and freedom."<sup>597</sup> Knight's introduction includes a summary of Zizioulas' life and work, a handful of questions regularly posed to Zizioulas' work, and a presentation of "Zizioulas' thought on its own terms" letting "his responses appear in their own order."<sup>598</sup> Closing this presentation Knight describes how Zizioulas "has demonstrated the intrinsic unity of the Christian doctrine of God, man and the world."<sup>599</sup> While the short section in which Knight summarises Zizioulas' theology is helpful and informative, the book itself is more devoted to responses to and interaction with Zizioulas' theology than to explanation or exploration of it. It is to be hoped that this volume is the first of many to explore the complexity, richness and possibility within Zizioulas' thought.

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<sup>593</sup> McPartlan, *Eucharist*, xiv, footnote 4.

<sup>594</sup> Most notably Greek, French and English, but also listing works published in German, Italian, Serbian Czech, Dutch and Spanish. McPartlan, *Eucharist*, 316-321.

<sup>595</sup> McPartlan, *Eucharist*, 127-30.

<sup>596</sup> McPartlan, *Eucharist*, Chapter 10, 212ff

<sup>597</sup> Knight, *Theology*, 1.

<sup>598</sup> Knight, *Theology*, 5.

<sup>599</sup> "... and with it brought the substantial new insight that the confession of the Christian community is uniquely directed towards freedom." Knight, *Theology*, 14.

### 3.1.2 Systematic Zizioulas

Although he has never written a *Summa* as such, Zizioulas' theological programme is still systematically thought through, logically argued and painstakingly explained.<sup>600</sup> According to Knight he is "a peerless teacher and communicator" who is better at what he does "than his own interpreters."<sup>601</sup> The collection of essays published as *Being as Communion* in 1986 offer a helpful window into his thought, but the more recent publication of *Communion and Otherness*<sup>602</sup> in 2006 is a much tighter and more user-friendly explanation and exploration of Zizioulas' theological understanding of the world, personhood, otherness, soteriology, pneumatology, Christology, anthropology and the central doctrine of the Trinity. In fact, Rowan Williams, in his introduction to the book describes *Communion and Otherness* as "in effect, a systematic theology, though it is not structured like one."<sup>603</sup> The subtlety and intricacy with which he draws all these areas of theology together into one coherent whole demands both respect and admiration.

As a responsible presentation and explanation of Zizioulas' theology, this chapter will focus primarily on presenting the image of the Systematic Trinitarian Circle. Some small critiques may be made or specific questions asked, but the primary intention of this presentation is to give Zizioulas' theology a chance to speak for itself. Indeed, the more time spent seeking to understand the intricacies and implications of this system, the more difficult it becomes to offer criticism. This is undoubtedly one of the great

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<sup>600</sup> Knight has pointed out the "unity of Zizioulas' work," encompassing connections between "theology, philosophy and the Church," *Theology*, 1.

<sup>601</sup> Knight, *Theology*, 3.

<sup>602</sup> It should be noted that there are a number of essays included in *CAO* as well. These include "Human capacity and incapacity" (1975), "On Being a Person. Towards an Ontology of Personhood" (1991), and "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution" (1995). For this reason these essays will not be referenced in the discussion of Zizioulas' theology that follows. Reference will be given to the appropriate page or section in *CAO*.

<sup>603</sup> *CAO*, xi.

strengths of Zizioulas as a theologian, and one of the chief reasons his work receives so much praise. Perhaps this intricate inner logic may also be one of the weaknesses of Zizioulas' theology – if any one aspect of the system is could be discredited, the knock-on effects could be catastrophic to the rest of the system. For now the focus will be on understanding the system; some thought will be given in the next chapter to reflect on potential weaknesses.

Before we proceed to explore Zizioulas' theological system, it remains to note two important foundations or pre-suppositions of this system. This done, we will move into the presentation of his system starting with an exploration of his doctrine of the Trinity. As this subject is central to this project, it will provide our entry point into Zizioulas' theology. We will revisit the story of the "Cappadocian Contribution" in the context of his trinitarian understanding. This exploration will lead into the discussion of the meaning of 'person' within the Zizioulan project, beginning with the person of the Father, as the cause of trinitarian existence and moving on to persons in communion, persons constituted by the Other, hypostatic personhood and ekstasis. With these core understandings in place we will be able to move forward into an exploration of some of the applications of this understanding of personhood in the areas of anthropology, soteriology, ecclesiology and creation. Finally, the chapter will return to the Trinity, exploring the place of the divine persons as the source and the goal of all creation and salvation history.

### *3.1.3 Theological pre-suppositions*

It has already been made clear in a previous chapter that Zizioulas sits firmly within the theological traditions of Eastern Orthodoxy. The influence and identity of this tradition can be seen throughout his work, especially in his references to and frequent use of the Fathers and his reliance on them as authoritative voices with which to

dialogue in building his theological system. Those who are familiar with Orthodox theology will no doubt recognise many subtle indicators of Zizioulas' place within that family, but it seems important to specifically comment on two. Firstly, the relationship between theology and liturgy in Orthodoxy, as a lack of understanding of this principle can make it difficult to understand some of the chief concerns and assumptions of Orthodox theology. Secondly, Zizioulas' understanding of his own relationship to the tradition of apophatic theology within Orthodoxy as this was brought up in a previous chapter, but will not be specifically addressed in the summary of his theology that follows.<sup>604</sup>

### 3.1.3.1 Theology and Liturgy

Firstly, in keeping with his tradition, Zizioulas grounds the source of all theology in the experience of the liturgy. The genesis of theology in which believers encounter and come to know God is always participation with the worshipping community in the liturgy. The importance of liturgy and the worshipping community as the source for and testing ground of theology is central to Zizioulas' theology.<sup>605</sup> Theology begins in worship, the liturgical experience of eucharistic communion and relationship with God.<sup>606</sup> It follows that the basis of human knowledge of God is not primarily in speculation, logic or even the scriptures or the writings of the Fathers.<sup>607</sup> Rather worship, the simple "acknowledgment that God is God and that we are not," is "the basis of all further knowledge" we may gain about God.<sup>608</sup> Like most other areas of

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<sup>604</sup> It should also be noted that several of the sections below such as "Monarchy of the Father" and "The Unique Person" reflect sections in the first chapter devoted to critiques of Zizioulas.β

<sup>605</sup> Cf. "The community of the Church and its worship is the context that gives doctrine its authority,." *Lectures*, 6.

<sup>606</sup> *Lectures*, 1.

<sup>607</sup> "The safest theology is that which draws . . . mainly, from the vision of God as he appears in worship," *CAO*, 190.

<sup>608</sup> *Lectures*, xii, 3.

his theology, Zizioulas sees this pattern in the Church Fathers, especially Ignatius, Irenaeus, Athanasius and Maximus.<sup>609</sup> For these men and others like them, theological understanding springs directly from their experience of and participation with the worshipping community in the liturgy. “The experience of the ecclesial community, of *ecclesial being*” was their starting point for approaching “the being of God.”<sup>610</sup>

In this insistence on the relationship between theology and liturgy, Zizioulas is very much at one with his tradition. Andrew Louth describes the idea that the context of worship provides a place for the emergence and testing of theological ideas as “a thoroughly Orthodox insight.”<sup>611</sup> For Kallistos Ware liturgy or worship is an “action,”<sup>612</sup> a “decisive moment” of “creativity and fresh beginnings.”<sup>613</sup> Ecclesial community as the context out of which theology springs ensures that “doctrine and spirituality go hand in hand,” allowing theology “to be linked with prayer” and keeping it “liturgical, mystical and apophatic” in character.<sup>614</sup>

According to Zizioulas, the failure to take this relationship between the worship and doctrine of the church seriously has had unfortunate consequences for some Western theology. Ware suggests this separation has even found a way into the Orthodox church,<sup>615</sup> describing the divide in terms of “cataphatic and apophatic.”<sup>616</sup> Zizioulas feels that Pneumatology and Christology have been “liturgically and theologically” separated. The question about priority between the Son and Spirit

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<sup>609</sup> *Lectures*, 2.

<sup>610</sup> *BAC*, 16, emphasis original see also, *CAO*, 113.

<sup>611</sup> Louth, “Development of Doctrine,” 59.

<sup>612</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 105.

<sup>613</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 106.

<sup>614</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 108.

<sup>615</sup> Ware, “Orthodox Theology,” 106.

<sup>616</sup> Ware, “Orthodox Theology,” 108.

(*filioque*) would not have arisen if they had been allowed to maintain their liturgical and theological “synthesis.”<sup>617</sup> Similarly, “the unfortunate separation between academic theology and the ordinary liturgical and devotional life of the Church” gave rise to a situation in which trinitarian doctrine became irrelevant to the worshipping church.<sup>618</sup>

### 3.1.3.2 The ‘how’ and the ‘what’ of God

Alongside this insistence that knowledge of God is gained primarily through the ‘ecclesial experience,’ there is also a strong tradition of apophaticism within Orthodoxy. Ware emphasises the importance of “mystery” in theology.<sup>619</sup> This apophatic or “mystical” approach has also been stressed by Vladimir Lossky, to whom it is so central as to be central to both the title and the first chapter of his most famous book.<sup>620</sup> Many scholars trace this emphasis on apophaticism back to the Fathers, including the Cappadocians.<sup>621</sup>

Although this central concern to maintain apophaticism in theological language is shared among Orthodox theologians, it is expressed in different ways.<sup>622</sup> Zizioulas has a distinct philosophical basis for the language he employs when talking of God which he uses to define the type of knowledge that human beings can have of God and thus the areas in which theology can function positively. He does this while preserving divine transcendence by clearly distinguishing between the ‘how’ and the ‘what’ of God.

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<sup>617</sup> *BAC*, 128.

<sup>618</sup> “Doctrine,” 20.

<sup>619</sup> Ware, “Orthodox Theology,” 108.

<sup>620</sup> Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 7ff.

<sup>621</sup> Ware, “Orthodox Theology,” 108.

<sup>622</sup> Papanikolaou provides an example of this as he describes the differences between Lossky and Zizioulas on this issue as a “central debate. . . over the use of apophaticism in theology. . . especially the relationship of apophaticism to the doctrine of the Trinity.” *Being with God*, 3.



To explain his position, and to maintain apophatic credibility, Zizioulas describes three ways we might speak of God's 'being': "*that* God exists, *what* God is, and *how* God is who he is."<sup>623</sup> The question of God's existence he dismisses quite quickly by pointing out that he is working within a context which presupposes the existence of God, i.e. theology rather than philosophy or apologetics. In such a context it is not necessary to debate "that" God exists.

The second possible "being" of God is in the category of "*what* God is." This is where Zizioulas grounds his apophatic credentials. He describes this question of "what God is" as a question about God's essence, substance or *ousia*.<sup>624</sup> This being the case, the "what" of God is not open for speculation or debate. Referencing Gregory of Nazianzus, Zizioulas says it is not possible to give an answer to the "what" question.<sup>625</sup> Knowledge of God's being is available only to God himself,<sup>626</sup> and must always remain so. Indeed, if this were not the case and humans could know "'what' God is," we would "have mastery of God" and God would no longer "be God."<sup>627</sup>

If God's existence is assumed and God's being is unknowable, this leaves the third and final category, "*how* God is who he is." For Zizioulas all theological discussion and language about God is and can only be in this category. "How God is who he is" has been made manifest through the persons: "God is God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit – these persons indicate *how* God is."<sup>628</sup> Theological speculation on trinitarian life, according to Zizioulas' understanding of the Cappadocians, must be

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<sup>623</sup> *Lectures*, 54, emphasis original. In another place Zizioulas dispenses altogether with the 'that God is question' and only deals with 'how' and 'what', *CAO*, 125.

<sup>624</sup> *CAO*, 125.

<sup>625</sup> *Lectures*, 56.

<sup>626</sup> *Lectures*, 57. For Zizioulas God is always referenced by the male pronoun.

<sup>627</sup> *Lectures*, 56.

<sup>628</sup> *Lectures*, 57, emphasis original.

limited to this “how” question. It is in exploring this manifestation of God through three persons that Zizioulas concludes that the “how” of God is about *hypostasis*, personhood, particularity.<sup>629</sup> To this subject we now turn.

### 3.2 Zizioulas’ Doctrine of the Trinity

#### 3.2.1 Greek Persons

The background to Zizioulas’ presentation of the Cappadocian Contribution to trinitarian theology is in the philosophy of ancient Greece. This is necessary because the Cappadocians worked within that context. Zizioulas’ appeals to Greek philosophy for the history of key trinitarian words such as *prosopon*, *ousia* and *hypostasis*. He also uses Greek philosophy as a starting point to expand on the basic ontological questions of life and to develop his understanding of personal ontology.

The first chapter of *Being as Communion* begins with a sizeable section exploring and describing the meaning of *prosopon* in ancient times.<sup>630</sup> In ancient Greek thought, according to Zizioulas, substance or *ousia* precedes and takes precedence over the individual or particular manifestations of that substance. Thus the soul is absolute and eternal, but can be reincarnated into a different individual each time it returns to earth.<sup>631</sup> Because of this priority of substance “particularity is not ontologically absolute; the many are always ontologically derivative, not causative.”<sup>632</sup>

Zizioulas illustrates the second class status of particularity/individuals with semantics. Using ancient Greek tragedy as an example, he explains that the Greek word *prosopon*<sup>633</sup> was used to refer both to a specific part of the head and to the masks worn

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<sup>629</sup> CAO, 125.

<sup>630</sup> BAC, 27ff. Cf. CAO, 102-103.

<sup>631</sup> BAC, 28.

<sup>632</sup> CAO, 102.

<sup>633</sup> Latin, *persona*, from which we receive the word ‘person.’

by different characters that an actor would assume when playing in an tragedy.<sup>634</sup> In this context a player may switch characters with the change of a mask, *prosopon*. This easily changeable *prosopon* represents a particular manifestation of the general human nature. For Zizioulas, its use as a mask in a play illustrates how particularity is changeable, lacking in ontological content, finite and at the mercy of outside forces.

In another place Zizioulas approaches this same issue from a different starting point. He postulates that there are three basic ontological questions with which human beings approach life/the world. “Who am I? Who are you? Who is he/she?” Each of these questions contain the three categories of what Zizioulas calls “personal ontology.”<sup>635</sup> The first element of the questions, “who,” is a self-assertion of consciousness, desiring articulation and understanding. The second element, “to be,” is an assertion of existence in reaction to the observation that people and things disappear. The third element, “I/you/he/she,” is an expression of particularity. In particularity we seek can apply both the first two elements of the question, consciousness and being, to others in addition to self. In doing so we recognise each representative of “particularity” as unique. “The fact that being continues after” the particular expression of it disappears is no consolation for loss, for we have not been in relationship with the being. “If we answer the question, ‘Who am I?’, by simply saying ‘I am a mortal being’, we have removed the absoluteness from the ingredient ‘I’ and thus reduced it to something replaceable.” Like *prosopon*, this illustrates again the priority of general human being or nature over particular representatives of it. In both instances we see Zizioulas’ description of “the problem of personal ontology.”<sup>636</sup>

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<sup>634</sup> *BAC*, 31.

<sup>635</sup> *CAO*, 100-1.

<sup>636</sup> *CAO*, 101.

Zizioulas defines “personal ontology” as “an assertion of the metaphysics of particularity.” He describes ontology<sup>637</sup> as “the primary preoccupation of ancient Greek thought.” The first two categories of personal ontology, “who” and “to be,” were addressed in ontology of the Greeks, including Aristotle and Plato, but for them “particularity is not ontologically absolute; the many are always ontologically derivative, not causative.”<sup>638</sup> Thus they did not address the third category: particularity or otherness. Zizioulas concludes that, in the ancient Greek mindset, “man exists for the world, not the world for man.”<sup>639</sup> Humanity is at the mercy of the determinations of the *cosmos*. There is no true particularity, no uniqueness, and thus, no freedom for humans.

This basis of Greek philosophy is where Zizioulas makes the case for the need in the ancient world for a new and “consistent ontology of personhood.”<sup>640</sup> He contrasts this philosophy with a look into the biblical record and observes that “Hebrew thought has no ontology to offer.” The lack of ontological content in the Hebrew scriptures is described by Zizioulas as a result of the refusal of the Hebrew scriptures to describe “someone” in terms of being. Again, he is using the logic of particularity in opposition to being. The Bible refrains from describing “someone” in terms of being because if “someone” were to be so described, he or she would no longer be free from the world. In order to maintain “freedom from the world” a “someone” must be caused by something other than the *cosmos*.<sup>641</sup> When it describes humanity as being descended from “*the person of Adam*,”<sup>642</sup> scripture avoids this cosmological trap by making a

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<sup>637</sup> The meaning of ontology here is described thus: “Ontology in the metaphysical sense of the transcendence of beings by being, that is, in the sense of going beyond what passes away into what always and truly *is*,” *CAO*, 101.

<sup>638</sup> *CAO*, 102.

<sup>639</sup> *CAO*, 103.

<sup>640</sup> *CAO*, 103.

<sup>641</sup> *CAO*, 104.

<sup>642</sup> *CAO*, 106, emphasis original; see also *Lectures*, 52.

‘person’ the source of humanity. In the same way the Godhead, rather than being tied to any *cosmos* or necessity of being, finds its source in the *person* of the Father.<sup>643</sup>

*Prosopon*, in its original use in Greek philosophy, had direct links to an ontological understanding of being in which God, humanity and the world were all bound together by ‘substance’ (*ousia*) and none of these had either freedom or particularity. The use of *prosopon* in the trinitarian debates of the fourth century, one infers, would therefore have been problematic, because it would have brought with it a cosmology foreign to the Hebrew scriptures and thus to the Christian faith.<sup>644</sup> This appears to be Zizioulas’ foundation for understanding and communicating the background of and need for the philosophical revolution that was the ‘Cappadocian contribution’ to trinitarian theology.

### 3.2.2 *Cappadocian Contribution*

It is hardly possible to exaggerate the emphasis that Zizioulas puts on the importance of the Cappadocian contribution. Its implications “affect the entire culture of late antiquity to such an extent that the whole of Byzantine and European thought would remain incomprehensible without a knowledge of this contribution.”<sup>645</sup> As we shall see, his programme devotes a significant amount of time and thought to this contribution, but he also maintains that there is yet to be a “comprehensive and exhaustive treatment [of the Cappadocian contribution] in theological – and philosophical – research.”<sup>646</sup>

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<sup>643</sup> *CAO*, 106, more on this issue below.

<sup>644</sup> Further discussion of cosmology in relation to God and Christian faith below.

<sup>645</sup> *CAO*, 156.

<sup>646</sup> *CAO*, 156.

Zizioulas believes the contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers “involves a radical reorientation of classical Greek humanism.”<sup>647</sup> In addition to the background in Greek philosophy already mentioned, he introduces the trinitarian theological debate with which the Cappadocians were interacting as they formed their own trinitarian thought. He summarises this debate in two extremes of theological thought against which the Cappadocians were reacting: Sabellianism and Eunomianism. The first collapsed Father, Son and Spirit into ‘one person,’ each being a role played or a hat worn by God, much like the *prosopon*/mask, in a tragedy. The second argued philosophically about the being of God, claiming that the substance of God must be “being unbegotten.” In this case the Son, clearly described as only-begotten must be unlike the being or substance of God. Against these two extremes the Cappadocians sought to navigate a way between the loss of the three into one or the loss of the one into three separate beings or substances.

Contrary to Sabellian ideas, it was necessary to stress “the fullness and ontological integrity of each person of the Trinity.”<sup>648</sup> To this end, the Cappadocians rejected the use of *prosopon* in trinitarian conversation; with its non-ontological implications it could too easily leave room for Sabellian interpretation. Instead they used the Greek word *hypostasis* in reference to the three ‘persons’ of the Trinity. *Hypostasis* had previously been a synonym of *ousia*, substance. “The Cappadocians changed this by dissociating *hypostasis* from *ousia* and attaching it to *prosopon*,”<sup>649</sup> thus providing language in which to communicate “the fullness and ontological integrity” of the Father, Son and Spirit. As a parallel to this, and to emphasise their notional

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<sup>647</sup> CAO, 155.

<sup>648</sup> CAO, 157; see also, BAC, 37.

<sup>649</sup> CAO, 158; see also, BAC, 87; Lectures, 50.

difference between *hypostasis* and *ousia*, they associated *ousia* with *physis* (nature).

Thus *ousia/physis* described what was general or shared among the three (divine nature), while *hypostasis*, connected with *prosopon*, became associated with what was particular, not shared, unique in the trinitarian persons.<sup>650</sup> Here again we see the importance to Zizioulas of particularity and its philosophical basis.

To counter Eunomius and his followers it was necessary to conceive of the “being” of God as something other than “unbegottenness.” According to Zizioulas, this can be accomplished by making “a sharp distinction between substance and person in God,”<sup>651</sup> separating the property of “unbegottenness” from the substance or being of God and attaching it instead to a particular *hypostasis*, that of the Father. As “unbegottenness” must necessarily proceed all other beings or *hypostases*, particularity, in the person of the Father, then becomes the ultimate ontological category.

Using the modified meaning of *hypostasis*, the Cappadocians differentiated between the three *hypostases* of the Godhead by their “personal or hypostatic properties.” These properties, unlike the divine being or substance, are not shared among the persons. Instead, there are three distinct properties, one for each divine *hypostasis*: unbegottenness (Father), begottenness (Son), and spiration (Spirit). These three unique, hypostatic properties reveal the relationship (*skesis*) of each trinitarian person to the others. From this, Zizioulas concludes that “none of the three persons can be conceived without reference to the other two, both logically and ontologically.”<sup>652</sup>

While the semantic history of *hypostasis* brought the ontological content to particularity that was necessary for this philosophical shift in philosophical

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<sup>650</sup> CAO, 158.

<sup>651</sup> CAO, 160.

<sup>652</sup> CAO, 161.

understanding, the association with *prosopon* provided a relational aspect to *hypostatic* personhood. The trinitarian names, particularly ‘father’ and ‘son’ presuppose relationship and the particular properties which define the *hypostases* are indicative of their relatedness. In this way relationship is tied to particularity or otherness, the trinitarian persons are in relation to one another in as much as their *hypostatic* properties define both their difference from each other and their interrelatedness. Relationship, thus defined, is a vitally necessary component of hypostatic personhood, “and if any relationship did not imply such and ontologically meaningful identity, then it would be no relationship.”<sup>653</sup>

### 3.2.3 Monarchy of the Father

In attaching *prosopon* to *hypostasis*, the Cappadocians created a new ultimate ontological category, or, to put it another way, they reversed the ontological priority of Greek philosophy. No longer was person/particularity subject to or secondary to being/nature (as had been the case in the world of the Greek tragedy). Instead person/*hypostasis* became “*the constitutive element* (the ‘principle’ or ‘cause’) of beings.”<sup>654</sup> Particularity is the source of the general. The One precedes the Many. The *hypostasis* of the Father becomes the cause of trinitarian life and, by extension, all life.

If particularity has ontological priority, “*there is no bare essence*, no nature-as-such,”<sup>655</sup> no being, in fact, apart from particularity, without persons. Describing particularity, expressed as personhood, as the cause of “being,” is the content of Zizioulas’ emphasis on the monarchy of the Father. Arguably this is a, if not *the*, vital foundation of Zizioulas’ theological system: the Father, a particular person, as ‘cause,’

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<sup>653</sup> *BAC*, 87-8. See also, *Lectures*, 25. More on ‘otherness’ and the ontological content of relationships below.

<sup>654</sup> *BAC*, 39; see also *CAO*, 128.

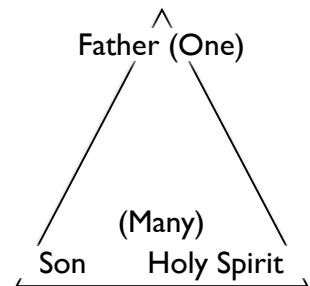
<sup>655</sup> *Lectures*, 52.



the One who gives rise to the Many. This is where we first encounter the concept of “corporate personality” in our study of Zizioulas’ theology.

Zizioulas describes “corporate personality” as originating with “British biblical scholar, H. Wheeler Robinson.”<sup>656</sup> The phrase represents a biblical paradox that is “quite unknown” to either Greek or Western thinking. Corporate personality originates from “semitic thought” which “could move naturally from the ‘one’ to the ‘many’ and *vice versa*, by including in a particular being a unity of many, and by referring to a group of beings as one particular being.”<sup>657</sup> This theme of the one and the many will become somewhat of a refrain as we continue to study Zizioulas’ theology.

This illustration uses a triangle to visualise “corporate personality.” At the apex is the “one.” In Zizioulas’ scheme the one is the source of the many, and the ultimate “One” is the Father. In this image the Father, who gives rise to, is the source of, the Many, is also part of the Many and is constituted by them in return. The Father (One) and the Son and Holy Spirit (Many) together are the Trinity, all parts are necessary to compose the whole. This is illustrated by placing all three within the same triangle.



Approaching the importance and implications of the monarchy of the Father from a differing starting point, Zizioulas presents two sources from which the Trinity may gain its unity: either the patristic, Greek understanding of the monarchy of the Father, or the shared nature, divine *ousia*, an alternative view that he associates with

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<sup>656</sup> CAO, 105. Zizioulas references Robinson’s 1936 book *The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality*. More recently, Robinson’s concept of corporate personality seems productive of multiple opinions among biblical scholars. Cf. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 16-20; Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation*, 10-15.

<sup>657</sup> CAO, 105.

Augustine.<sup>658</sup> By now it should be no surprise to learn that Zizioulas prefers the first option. In fact, he goes so far as to say that when we speak of the unity of God using the phrase ‘one God,’ we are speaking specifically of God the Father.<sup>659</sup>

Grounding divine unity in the particular, *hypostatic* person of the Father is not only the grounds of the unity of the Godhead, it is also the only way to guarantee the freedom of God.<sup>660</sup> The Father chooses to make God exist, thus God does not exist by the necessity of the divine ‘nature.’ Instead, divine nature is the result of the choice of the Father to cause and enter into relationship with the Son and the Spirit and their free response.<sup>661</sup> The ‘being’ of God is subject primarily to the particularity of the Father, but also to that of the Son and Spirit whose particularity is both caused and defined in their relationship to the Father and each other.

The co-emergence of divine nature with the Trinitarian existence initiated by the Father implies that the Father, too, ‘acquires’, so to speak, deity only ‘as’ the Son and the Spirit are in existence (he is inconceivable as Father without them), that is, only ‘when’ divine nature is ‘possessed’ by all three.<sup>662</sup>

Divine nature is embodied in the free relationships of the Trinitarian persons.<sup>663</sup> In fact, this element of freedom is fundamental to Zizioulas’ programme. The person, a term which must *always* bear the specific definition that is described as the ‘Cappadocian contribution,’ must be free. Without freedom from pre-existent being, there is no personhood.

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<sup>658</sup> “Doctrine,” 24.

<sup>659</sup> *CAO*, 119, 150.

<sup>660</sup> *Lectures*, 74.

<sup>661</sup> *CAO*, 130.

<sup>662</sup> *CAO*, 140.

<sup>663</sup> “Personal communion lies at the very heart of divine being,” *Lectures*, 53. See also, *BAC*, 41; *CAO*, 162.

The trinitarian persons use their freedom to enter into relationship with one another, constituting themselves and each other, through relationship. “A person is always *a gift from someone*.”<sup>664</sup> This relationship can also be called communion, and love is understood as neither an attribute of substance nor an act of an “already existing person, but as constitutive of personal identities.”<sup>665</sup> In forming relationships and entering into communion with others persons are themselves constituted by love. It is this that allows Zizioulas to claim that “a radically transcendent God either constitutes his existence in love or he does not exist at all!”<sup>666</sup> Love and freedom together appear to be the defining qualities of Zizioulas’ understanding of *hypostatic* personhood.<sup>667</sup> Both are ultimately and perfectly embodied in and demonstrated by the Father of the Trinity.<sup>668</sup>

### 3.3 Personhood and Otherness

#### 3.3.1 *God and the world*

While *Being as Communion* starts with the exploration of *prosopon* and the implications of concept of the mask in ancient Greek philosophy, *Communion and Otherness* opens with an exploration of the relationship between God and creation. He uses this relationship to illustrate the concept of “otherness” which is necessary to qualify the “idea of communion.”<sup>669</sup> Again, Zizioulas chooses to use ancient Greek thought as a starting point, and, again, the issue under consideration is that of the

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<sup>664</sup> *CAO*, 141, emphasis original.

<sup>665</sup> *CAO*, 153.

<sup>666</sup> *CAO*, 153.

<sup>667</sup> “Personal identity can emerge only from love as freedom and from freedom as love,” *CAO*, 167.

<sup>668</sup> “Freedom is combined with love (relationship) and the two together are identified with the Father – a relational notion in its very nature,” *CAO*, 187; see also *BAC*, 46-7.

<sup>669</sup> *CAO*, 14. The premise of the book is summarised here: “In all these aspects, the ‘other’ will be shown to be ontologically constitutive for the being of God, both in his immanent and in his ‘economic’ existence.”

priority of being/nature or person/particularity.<sup>670</sup> It is this need to define the ‘other’ that lies at the heart of Zizioulas understanding of the importance of the doctrine of *creatio ex-nihilo*.<sup>671</sup>

Later on in the book, Zizioulas expands on the theme of ‘created’ versus ‘uncreated’ using the concept of monism and the Greek word *kosmos*.<sup>672</sup> The ancient Greeks held a monistic understanding of reality in which god/the Good was inescapably linked to the world.<sup>673</sup> There was no distinction. In such a context, to say that God created the world carried with it the implication that the materials used in the creation were already existent, for it was impossible for something to be made from nothing.<sup>674</sup> In this monistic view of reality, the word *kosmos*, which is often used today in reference to the created world, was actually a reference to this ontological ‘linking’ of “god and being.” Linked together, god/the Good and being/the world formed “a harmonious and divine whole: the *kosmos*.”<sup>675</sup>

This understanding of creation was unacceptable to the Fathers “precisely because the doctrine of creation from pre-existing matter limited divine freedom.”<sup>676</sup> It was necessary to detach the Christian God from this monistic worldview or suffer “the loss of ontological otherness, for both the Creator and his creation.”<sup>677</sup> This dilemma was the

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<sup>670</sup> CAO, 15.

<sup>671</sup> CAO, 14-9.

<sup>672</sup> Zizioulas uses both spellings of *k/cosmos*. The use here reflects the particular passage concerned in the explanation of the term.

<sup>673</sup> CAO, 252.

<sup>674</sup> CAO, 250.

<sup>675</sup> Thus “in Christian theology, it is not proper to use the word ‘cosmology’ with reference to creation,” CAO, 253.

<sup>676</sup> BAC, 16. See also, 39.

<sup>677</sup> CAO, 16. Original italics removed.

catalyst for the first “drastic revision of Greek ontology by Christian theology,”<sup>678</sup> a revision which gave rise to the “biblical doctrine”<sup>679</sup> of *creatio ex-nihilo*. This doctrine preserved divine freedom by asserting “that God existed *before* and *regardless* of the world.”<sup>680</sup> Vitally, it also preserved the ontological otherness of creator and creation.

Cutting the monistic tie allows a distinction between “ontology and epistemology. . . or between *being* and *revelation*.”<sup>681</sup> If God is ontologically other to creation then our knowledge of God is limited to the sphere of creation in which we exist. For Zizioulas this allows theology to operate apophatically. Our knowledge of God through revelation need not and cannot directly correlate to the unique otherness of the ontological reality of the immanent trinity. This allows for the reality of theological conversation and debate without a necessary correlation of projecting our knowledge of or speculation about God in the economy back into God’s transcendent, trinitarian life.<sup>682</sup>

This distinction between God and the world, creator and creation, also returns us to Zizioulas’ concern for the Father as ‘cause,’ but this time the trinitarian pyramid is extended. The Trinity (caused by the person of the Father) creates, causes the world, *ex nihilo*.<sup>683</sup> The personal God has once again *personally* given rise to existence.<sup>684</sup> Thus

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<sup>678</sup> CAO, 15. The second revision of Greek philosophy in Zizioulas’ system is the Cappadocian contribution discussed above.

<sup>679</sup> BAC, 39, in this version an already existing doctrine of creation “obliged the Fathers to introduce a radical difference into ontology.” See also, *Lectures*, 40-41.

<sup>680</sup> “Doctrine,” 23.

<sup>681</sup> “Doctrine,” 24, emphasis original.

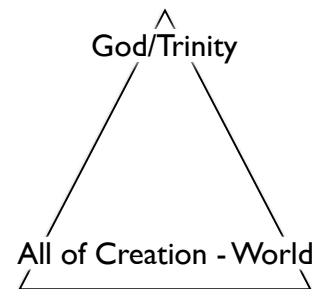
<sup>682</sup> In reference to Rahner’s famous rule, Zizioulas writes, “With the help of apophatic theology we may say that, although the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity, the Immanent Trinity is not exhausted in the Economic Trinity,” “Doctrine,” 23-24.

<sup>683</sup> BAC, 40.

<sup>684</sup> “This supposition is compelling for anyone who assumes that a personal being ontologically precedes the world, that is, of anyone with a *biblical view* of creation in mind,” CAO, 220, emphasis added.

creation is no more dependent on *ousia* than is the Godhead.<sup>685</sup> Creation, including human beings, is and continues “to be” because of relationship, the free choice and love of the Trinity.<sup>686</sup>

This second triangle reprises Zizioulas’ theme of the one and the many in the context of the relationship between God and the World. Now the Trinity is at the apex, together extending life-giving, ontologically constituting relationship to creation, the many. The relationship here is slightly different, the Trinity offers relationship to creation, but is itself already wholly



constituted through the relationships of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The distinction of divine and created being must be preserved, but the particularity of each is affirmed by the relationship in which they stand. The differences in nature are bridged by Christ, as discussed below.

### 3.3.2 Otherness and Ekstasis

Using the ontological distinction between creator and creation, Zizioulas has introduced the concept of otherness. As we have seen, the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* enshrines total ontological otherness in the relationship between God and the world.<sup>687</sup> The necessary and unavoidable correlation of this ontological otherness is the confirmation of the priority of particularity. The source of the being of creation is not a nature or substance pre-existent to creation itself. Instead creation gains being through particularity, personhood, the freedom and love of God.<sup>688</sup> Particularity expressed as

<sup>685</sup> *BAC*, 40; *CAO*, 19.

<sup>686</sup> *CAO*, 252. Zizioulas also points out that throughout the stories of the Hebrew Scriptures, God is revealed in relational terms with reference to “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,” etc. “God reveals himself and is recognised through his involvement in history,” *Lectures*, 42.

<sup>687</sup> *CAO*, 17.

<sup>688</sup> *CAO*, 19.

otherness, freely loving the Other, gives rise to being. “By freely granting being to something naturally other than himself, God sanctified otherness and raised it to full ontological status.”<sup>689</sup> Otherness, given through relationship, constitutes being.

Opening his chapter “On Being Other” in *Communion and Otherness*, Zizioulas introduces “the theme of otherness” as “a fundamental aspect of theology. Being ‘other’ is part of what it means to be oneself, and therefore to be at all.”<sup>690</sup> Otherness, he says, is connected as well to “the subject of freedom” because “being other and being free in an ontological sense, that is, in the sense of being free to be yourself, and not someone or something else, are *two aspects of one and the same reality*.”<sup>691</sup>

He describes “the problem of the Other” as central to philosophical discussion in “our time.” He mentions existentialism, Buber and Levinas before noting that philosophical speculation about otherness is “a subject as old as Greek philosophy itself.” He concludes that this problem must feature, “directly or indirectly” in “any philosophy worth of the name.”<sup>692</sup> Theology, therefore, must also take this subject seriously. This has historically been the case: Otherness “penetrates” both patristic theology and Christian doctrine in general.<sup>693</sup> It qualifies communion and challenges to modern ideals of individualism.<sup>694</sup>

Otherness, being free to be oneself, does not exclude the possibility of relationship. As we have seen above, the particular person of the Father initiates otherness among the trinitarian persons. Inter-trinitarian life is made possible by

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<sup>689</sup> CAO, 19. As seen in the illustration above.

<sup>690</sup> CAO, 13.

<sup>691</sup> CAO, 13, emphasis added.

<sup>692</sup> CAO, 13. See pg 50 above for Papanikolaou’s comment on Zizioulas reading contemporary philosophers.

<sup>693</sup> CAO, 13-4.

<sup>694</sup> CAO, 14.

otherness. Otherness provides the necessary context within which relationship takes place. Similarly, the otherness between God and the world is also the prerequisite for relationship. The parallel is not exact - the trinitarian persons are only 'other' in terms of their unique modes of origin. There is, however, an ontological gap between God and the world enshrined in the doctrine of *creatio ex-nihilo*. This ontological gap must be bridged to allow creator and creation to be "united without losing their otherness." Here we have Zizioulas' grounding for the need of the person and work of Christ.<sup>695</sup>

Christology is rarely, if ever, a dominant theme in Zizioulas' theology. It appears alongside ecclesiology, pneumatology and soteriology, conditioning, illuminating or completing other aspects of his system. Christology seems to gain its significance, if not its content, from its relationship to the other doctrines. In the trinitarian doctrine described above, the person of the Son has already been introduced. The Son, distinguished by 'begottenness,' is constituted by relationship with Father and Spirit within the Trinity. It is possible to get so far in the description of Christology with trinitarian theology. There is, however, a special uniqueness in the person of the Son. Christology conditions the doctrine of *creatio ex-nihilo*, by presenting Christ as possessing at once both full divinity and full humanity. This unique coexistence of two natures in the person of Christ bridges the created-uncreated dialectic "without division" and "without confusion," and "the created from now on lives eternally."<sup>696</sup>

In the person of Christ the two natures - divine and human - are joined, bridging the ontological gap between them. In Christ, human nature lives eternally in perfect communion with divine nature, two natures in one hypostatic person.<sup>697</sup> Through this

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<sup>695</sup> CAO, 29.

<sup>696</sup> CAO, 259.

<sup>697</sup> CAO, 37.



hypostatic communion of natures, Christ opens to created humanity a relationship through which they can reverse the “perversion of personhood” that leads to inward, selfish individualism, and return to orientation towards the other. For Zizioulas this perversion of personhood is the way in which “sin reveals itself.”<sup>698</sup> Personhood healed and rightly aligned towards the other is the realisation of “God’s purpose in creating man: communion.”<sup>699</sup> Communion is possible between God and the world through the person of the Son in whom both are joined *hypostatically*.<sup>700</sup>

This explanation of Christology enshrines Otherness in the fabric of the relationship between God and humanity. The Trinity is brought about through the love and freedom shared between the particular persons of Father, Son and Spirit. The three exist together as one God through their free choice to do so in love. Together God creates the world from nothing. The creation is, by necessity, ontologically totally Other from the creator, but the otherness itself is an opportunity for relationship. That opportunity is incarnated in the person of Christ, the Son, who bridges the gap, *hypostatically* joining human and divine nature in a single person. In this way all of creation, including human beings and even the physical world, have the opportunity to be ‘constituted’ by the (divine) Other, joined to trinitarian life, through Christ. Since the source of all being is from the divine persons in communion, the only way to truly ‘be’ always involves relationship with the divine Other.

Otherness is always properly expressed in relationship, which Zizioulas also calls communion or love. When persons are oriented towards the Other (if they were not, they would not be persons) their relationships are characterised by the movement out of

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<sup>698</sup> CAO, 237.

<sup>699</sup> CAO, 238.

<sup>700</sup> Zizioulas claims this is a problem with speaking of communion with God through the divine energies, precisely because such energies would include “*all three persons* simultaneously” and would therefore not be “a *hypostatic* union,” CAO, 29, emphasis original.

self and toward the Other. Love (*eros*) is “a movement, an *ekstasis*, from one being to another.”<sup>701</sup>

Love . . . is again a matter of emptying oneself from one’s own self-centredness, an *ek-static* movement which has nothing to do with human self-consciousness but with communion and relationship.<sup>702</sup>

Through this outward movement and the resulting communion “a person affirms his own identity and his particularity,”<sup>703</sup> choosing to live proactively in relation to and for others, rather than selfishly, oriented inwardly. Personhood is constituted in outward movement towards the Other. This is not to be understood, however, through some notional understanding of individuality or self-consciousness. Persons are *constituted* by this outward orientation and the resulting communion. Persons find their uniqueness in relationship to others. They do not find it within themselves and then give it to others.

### 3.3.3 *The Unique Person*

Without a constitutive relationship with the Other, there is no “person,” no “being.” There is only an “individual.” This word Zizioulas resolutely separates from his idea of person. We have established that persons, in the pattern of trinitarian relationship, are constituted by freedom, love and constant *ekstatic* movement toward the ‘Other.’ Individuality, on the other hand, is a state of being that does not include *ekstatic* relationship with the Other. Instead, individuals are oriented inwardly, understanding themselves in opposition to or distinction from other individuals around them. They possess consciousness and an understanding of “self.”<sup>704</sup>

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<sup>701</sup> CAO, 70.

<sup>702</sup> CAO, 306.

<sup>703</sup> Such movement can be between human beings or towards creation, but if it is not also towards God in Christ, it leads only to death, BAC, 106-7.

<sup>704</sup> CAO, 211.

An individual, in Western thought, is described by Zizioulas as a “unit endowed with intellectual, psychological and moral qualities centred on the axis of consciousness.”<sup>705</sup> As a collection of properties (tall, fair, smart, blue-eyed, only-child, etc.) any one of which may be shared with any other individual, an individual is not fully unique. As a member of the human race, which is constantly dying and being reborn, a human individual will in time be replaced. An individual has no ultimate ontological content, no permanent being, because an individual is replaceable.<sup>706</sup> An individual is, effectively, an object to be counted, combined, and used for the purposes of society.<sup>707</sup>

Individualism is a manifestation of “fragmented existence” in which being and relationship are no longer connected. Instead, it is necessary to “know” the Other as an object before it is possible to love him or her as a person.<sup>708</sup> This is another example of the conflict between a general being/nature on the one hand and particularity on the other. Individuals perceive other individuals firstly as representatives of the general human nature, not particular persons with intrinsic, irreplaceable value. This poverty of relationship among particularities has led to a world in which society and the individual are in constant conflict. “Society must control the individual to prevent him destroying society, and the individual has to assert himself against society to establish his freedom.”<sup>709</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> *CAO*, 211. Cf. above disagreement between Holmes and Zizioulas on the meaning of ‘person,’ 124.

<sup>706</sup> *CAO*, 101.

<sup>707</sup> *BAC*, 47.

<sup>708</sup> *BAC*, 103-4.

<sup>709</sup> *Lectures*, xv.

An individual becomes a person and gains permanent ontological existence only through relationship.<sup>710</sup> Within relationship a person is constituted by knowledge and love. The individual-turned-person is no longer an object, a cog in society's mechanism; instead he or she is constituted as and recognised to be utterly unique, one of a kind, unrepeatable.<sup>711</sup> No list or description can capture the meaning of a given person; the 'who' of a person is a mystery, much like the 'what' of God. It is enough that "someone simply *is* and *is himself* or *herself* and not someone else."<sup>712</sup> In fact, a person is so completely constituted by relationships with other persons that the loss of one of these other persons diminishes the one who remains.<sup>713</sup>

For Zizioulas, "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."<sup>714</sup> Thus our exploration of Zizioulas' understanding of personhood leads into his understanding of the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*. This word, loosely translated as *deification*, is a blanket term for the Orthodox understanding of salvation. We will deal further with Zizioulas' understanding of this doctrine in the next section.

### 3.4 Doctrinal Applications

Getting a grasp on Zizioulas' understanding of personhood with the related categories of otherness and ekstasis is vital to understanding his theological system. Most, if not all, of his reflections on other doctrinal subjects are ultimately related to the fundamental ontological priority of personal particularity over general being. This is

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<sup>710</sup> *BAC*, 105; *CAO*, 100, 213.

<sup>711</sup> *CAO*, 216.

<sup>712</sup> *CAO*, 111, emphasis original. See pp 48-9 above for alternative ideas of 'person' versus 'individual.'

<sup>713</sup> *Lectures*, 26.

<sup>714</sup> *BAC*, 49.

manifested in the recurrence of the motif of the One and the Many throughout his theological programme. The one gives true personhood to the many and the many return the gift of personhood, expressed as the gift of uniqueness to the Other. This process gives freedom and life to an otherwise predetermined world that would cease to exist apart from relationship.

With the background of his unique and specific understanding of personhood in place, this section will approach three other areas of Zizioulas' theological system in which his understanding of personhood and particularity are fundamentally important. Firstly, we will explore Zizioulas' narrative of the Fall and his interpretation of the soteriological role of Christ. Following this will be a summary explanation of his description of the Church,<sup>715</sup> which includes aspects of christology, pneumatology, eschatology. Thirdly and lastly, we will seek to understand to the place which all creation occupies in Zizioulas' system.

### 3.4.1 *Salvation*

Zizioulas' insights and opinions concerning the individual are expanded into his description of the meaning and content of the Fall, the brokenness of human nature, and the significance of death to the human condition. Drawing on the creation narratives, Zizioulas points out the "divine *call* to Adam" as the "constitutive event of humanity" when human beings were distinguished from animal life and the rest of creation and granted otherness and particularity through God's offer of a relationship.<sup>716</sup> This call "Adam in his freedom answered with a 'no'," <sup>717</sup> rejecting the offer to live in divine

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<sup>715</sup> There are many, more detailed, explorations of Zizioulas' ecclesiology. The summary included here is specifically in reference to the place ecclesiology takes in Zizioulas' system and its relationship to his central theme of personhood and his repeating motif of the One and the Many. For more on Zizioulas' ecclesiology see the bibliography, especially *Eucharist* by McPartlan; *After our Likeness* by Volk; sections of Knight's book on Zizioulas' theology; Papanikolaou "Integrating," etc.

<sup>716</sup> *CAO*, 41, emphasis original.

<sup>717</sup> *CAO*, 43.

communion as God had planned.<sup>718</sup> This is the true content of the Fall of man. Sin does not reveal itself as a “juridical relationship between God and man,” rather it is a rejection of personal, *ekstatic*, relationship with God.<sup>719</sup> Adam and, following him, humanity choose to pervert their personhood in “idolatrous introversion,” orienting themselves “towards created being alone.”<sup>720</sup> The ultimate consequence of this choice is death, a return to the nothingness out of which God called creation, because the sustaining relationship with the creator has been severed.<sup>721</sup>

Because of the tragedy of the Fall, human beings live in conflict with their own nature.<sup>722</sup> In God personhood and nature “coincide fully,”<sup>723</sup> but the Fall reversed this orientation in humans, subjecting the human *hypostasis*/particularity to the general human *ousia*/nature.<sup>724</sup> Two ontological consequences of this, according to Zizioulas, are birth and death.<sup>725</sup> Human lives, particularity, have a definite beginning and ending while the general human nature, shared by all, continues uninterrupted. This gives rise to the “deception that the otherness that emerges” from birth “is ultimate ontological otherness.”<sup>726</sup> This is not the case, however, for each individual that is born will one day be “swallowed up by death,” therefore the otherness provided by birth cannot be “ontologically absolute.”<sup>727</sup> Each unique, unrepeatable person is lost in death, as life

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<sup>718</sup> CAO, 238.

<sup>719</sup> The difference between this ‘personal relationship’ and the ‘personal relationship with Jesus’ that is often mentioned in certain circles of Protestant theology and church life can hardly be over-emphasised.

<sup>720</sup> CAO, 237. See also, BAC, 101-2.

<sup>721</sup> CAO, 228; *Lectures*, 94.

<sup>722</sup> CAO, 55.

<sup>723</sup> CAO, 56.

<sup>724</sup> CAO, 55-6. Again we see the themes of ancient Greek philosophy.

<sup>725</sup> CAO, 56.

<sup>726</sup> CAO, 57.

<sup>727</sup> CAO, 59.

moves on, and each new child is born with no free choice to live. In this tragic scenario, the body is both the vehicle through which we *ecstatically* relate to others, embodying personhood, and the “fortress of individualism, the vehicle of the final separation, death.”<sup>728</sup>

For Zizioulas, the body is an essential part of the human *hypostasis*. “We acquire our ontological identities through the relationship of our own bodies with the bodies of others, that is, through the part of our being which nature throws away as ‘unwanted’ after the survival of the species is secured.”<sup>729</sup> Through the perversion of human personhood away from God, the body has become the carrier of death. In order for human beings to regain their true particularity, the body must be cleansed from death. Death must be “conquered for all and forever.”<sup>730</sup>

In the midst of the tragic consequences of the Fall, the voice of Mary speaks, offering a freely given ‘yes’ to the call of God, in contrast to Adam’s “no.” In this way Mary facilitates the birth of Christ and the eventual re-birth of human personhood.<sup>731</sup> Christ, the second Adam, reorients humanity toward God in his own person.<sup>732</sup> The *hypostatic* union of the two natures in Christ gives “ontological priority to the person,” creating the unique, unrepeatable second person of the Trinity.<sup>733</sup> Christ does not accomplish this alone, however, for the Holy Spirit is constantly present throughout his life on earth: “Christ has broken through these boundaries for created mankind, not as one person alone, but in the Holy Spirit, for all.”<sup>734</sup> Through this *hypostatic* existence of

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<sup>728</sup> *BAC*, 52; see also *CAO*, 60-2.

<sup>729</sup> *CAO*, 61.

<sup>730</sup> *CAO*, 62.

<sup>731</sup> *Lectures*, 104.

<sup>732</sup> *CAO*, 238.

<sup>733</sup> *CAO*, 239; see also, *Lectures*, 111.

<sup>734</sup> *Lectures*, 108.

Christ, human beings have access to true *personal* life “by being constituted as a being in and through the same relationship which constitutes Christ’s being.”<sup>735</sup>

As humanity is drawn into the communal being of God through Christ, human nature is restored to what it was meant to be.<sup>736</sup> This is Zizioulas’ use of the ancient Orthodox salvation motif of *theosis*, often translated as deification. Meyendorff describes *theosis* as a New Testament doctrine of “union with God” that is the only way humans can be delivered “from death and sin.” This union is the “essence” of the work of Christ and was given the title *theosis* by the Greek Fathers.<sup>737</sup> Ware also describes deification in terms of a union, emphasising that human beings do not cease to be human, but instead share in the divine nature<sup>738</sup> through mutual love.<sup>739</sup> McGuckin connects *theosis* with a western theology of grace, the process in which human believers become like Christ and commune with God.<sup>740</sup>

Some of these understandings of *theosis* are reflected in Zizioulas. For him *theosis* is a form of union, or at least communion, between humans and God, but he also maintains that human beings do not become God or attain divine nature. This results in the ironic consequence that *theosis* is actually “the opposite of divinization in which human nature ceases to be what it really is.”<sup>741</sup> Instead, by participating in relationship with God through the person of Christ, human beings acquire full ontology, full personhood, without ceasing to be human. Through a free choice to enter into a

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<sup>735</sup> CAO, 240.

<sup>736</sup> “Humanity in Christ is the true, and ultimately the only humanity,” *Lectures*, 116.

<sup>737</sup> Meyendorff, *Gregory Palamas*, 35.

<sup>738</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Way*, 74-5.

<sup>739</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Way*, 125.

<sup>740</sup> McGuckin, *Orthodox Church*, 154.

<sup>741</sup> “*Theosis*. . . is, therefore, just the opposite of a divinization in which human nature ceases to be what it really is.” CAO, 243.



relationship of love with God (Father-Son-Spirit) in the waters of Baptism, and the sustaining of that relationship with regular participation in the Eucharist, a human being may be “saved” by entering a new form of life, sharing the freedom and ekstatic love of God within the Body of Christ.

### 3.4.2 *Church – Body of Christ*

The Church, then, is central to Zizioulas understanding of salvation. It is only within the ecclesial community that humans can choose to say ‘yes’ to the divine call, receive baptism and freely enter the life of God. The liturgy and life of the Church provides the earthly context of the continuing growth and realisation of the Body of Christ. The life-giving relationship between Christ and his Church is maintained and embodied through the ancient practice of the Eucharist. It is in the Church that the Holy Spirit embodies all believers as the Body of Christ, and it is as a member of this Body that believers become part of the divine life. Salvation is from, through and in the Church. The saving relationship with Christ in the Church begins with baptism. Thus, in Zizioulas’ programme, baptism is the doorway into communion with God, which assures “the eternal survival of the person as a unique, unrepeatable and free ‘hypostasis.’” This is “the quintessence of salvation.”<sup>742</sup>

As we have seen, Zizioulas contrasts this eternally surviving, hypostatically constituted person with the individual which is subject to its own nature and not constituted in ekstatic relationship to either God or others. The individual, thus understood, exemplifies the “hypostasis of biological existence.”<sup>743</sup> The biological hypostasis will not survive eternally, but this is not because of any “acquired fault of a moral kind (a transgression)” rather it is part of the “*constitutional make-up* of the

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<sup>742</sup> BAC, 49.

<sup>743</sup> BAC, 50-53.

hypostasis, that is, of the biological act of the perpetuation of the species.”<sup>744</sup> Birth subjects human individuals to the tragedy of the biological hypostasis: separation from divine life and failure of survival. Zizioulas is at pains here, as elsewhere, to distinguish this understanding of the consequences of the fall from any juridical or moral interpretation.

The tragedy of the biological hypostasis, typified in human procreation and birth, is contrasted by Zizioulas, with the “hypostasis of ecclesial existence.”<sup>745</sup> Baptism is a new birth, a birth by choice rather than necessity, a “regeneration” which constitutes a new *hypostatic* existence within the context of the Church.<sup>746</sup> Here, again, Zizioulas touches on the importance of Christology, the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ which allows the believer to “affirm his existence as personal not on the basis of the mutable laws of his nature, but on the basis of a relationship with God. . . . the identification of his hypostasis with the hypostasis of the Son of God, is the essence of baptism.”<sup>747</sup>

Baptism constitutes the ecclesial hypostasis, reorienting believers toward divine life through Christ, but this is always, inescapably, takes place in the Church. In the liturgy of baptism the presence of the ecclesial community is indispensable. The service includes the candidates’ respond to a question with the words ‘I believe.’ The community of faith must be there to both hear the question and affirm the response.<sup>748</sup>

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<sup>744</sup> *BAC*, 52, emphasis original.

<sup>745</sup> *BAC*, 53-65.

<sup>746</sup> *BAC*, 53.

<sup>747</sup> *BAC*, 56.

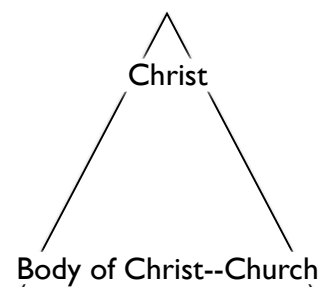
<sup>748</sup> *Lectures*, 34.

In this way “the individual dies as such and rises as a person,”<sup>749</sup> in the context of a community, sacraments, and rooted network of free relationships.<sup>750</sup>

The communal relationships within the Church and with God are sustained and enacted through the practice of the Eucharist. This sacrament takes place in a community that supersedes biological relationships, offering an experience of freedom from ontological necessity.<sup>751</sup> Eucharist is the “historical realization” of the “ecclesial identity.”<sup>752</sup> This is Zizioulas’ approach to the concept of the ‘now’ and the ‘not yet.’ Eucharist is “a historical realization and manifestation of the eschatological existence of man; it is at the same time also *movement*, a progress towards this realization.”<sup>753</sup> Ecclesial identity, all believers as one in communion with one another and with God in the Body of Christ, is the ultimate and final goal of all human life. In the context of the celebration of the Eucharist, this goal is achieved in the present for a finite length of time.

Zizioulas’ understanding of the Church begins and ends with Body of Christ:

“there is no Church without Christ and no Christ without his Church.”<sup>754</sup> Here we encounter again the theme of the One and the Many, but again it is slightly different. In trinitarian life there is fully ontological communion among the trinitarian persons, constituting the Trinity. When the theme of One and Many was applied to the relationship between creator and creation, it was



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<sup>749</sup> CAO, 245.

<sup>750</sup> CAO, 263.

<sup>751</sup> BAC, 60.

<sup>752</sup> BAC, 61.

<sup>753</sup> BAC, 61.

<sup>754</sup> Lectures, 116.

necessary to introduce the person of Christ as the one in which human and divine nature are joined *hypostatically*, thus enabling divine and human persons to commune. When applying the scheme of the One and the Many to the relationship between Christ and his Body the Church, Christ is “many,” having a “corporate personality” through the Spirit.<sup>755</sup>

The role of the Spirit in this unity of Christ’s Body is vital. Zizioulas insists that christology and pneumatology should at all times be held together, most especially in an ecclesiological context. While Christ entered history to enact the salvation of humankind, the role of the Spirit was to “liberate the Son *and the economy* from the bondage of history.”<sup>756</sup> It is also the Spirit that raises the Son from the dead.<sup>757</sup> The Spirit is “*beyond* history, and when he acts in history he does so in order to bring into history the last days, the *eschaton*.”<sup>758</sup> This is a reference to the constituting of the Church of all times at the eucharist, and since the Church is only fully constituted thus in the Eucharist by the Spirit, is only possible to describe the Church as the Body of Christ because of this function of pneumatology.<sup>759</sup>

All who have answered the call of God through the rebirth of baptism become part of the “many” that make up the Body of Christ. The Church is, literally, the embodiment of the reorientation of fallen humanity into relationship with God *in* Christ. This global and timeless corporate personality comes together in the act of the Eucharist, uniting all persons at once with the *hypostatic* existence of God in Trinity, through Christ.<sup>760</sup> In

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<sup>755</sup> BAC, 130.

<sup>756</sup> BAC, 130, emphasis added.

<sup>757</sup> BAC, 130.

<sup>758</sup> BAC, 130, emphasis original.

<sup>759</sup> BAC, 131.

<sup>760</sup> Lectures, 140.

effect, time ceases to function at that moment when all believers are embodied in one act of communion. The Eucharistic performance anticipates the day when all will be one, and all will be fully persons, received into the life of God.

Full personhood, membership in the Body, is freely chosen by the individual and committed to through the waters of baptism, but that is not the end. For Zizioulas, any “mystical experience” or union with God “*must necessarily pass through the communion of the ‘many’*.”<sup>761</sup> Although the reorientation towards the personal life of the Trinity is chosen in and through the waters of baptism and confirmed by the witness and responses of the Body of Christ, the manifestation of that reorientation must be embodied in the practice of the eucharist, a celebration that always and only takes place within the Body of Christ, the Church. It follows that there is no salvation, no confirmation of particular priority, no embodied personhood, outside the Body of Christ, the Church.

### 3.4.3 Creation

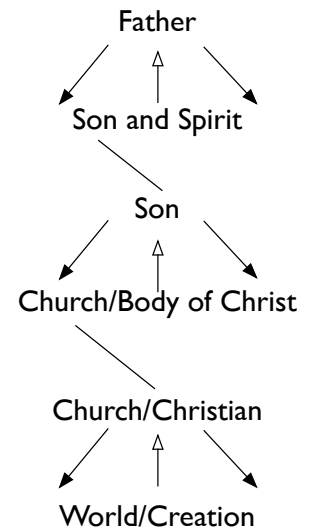
As we have seen, when human beings freely chose to join the Church through the sacrament of baptism, they then become a part of the Body of Christ. As members of the Body their relationships are correctly (re)oriented ekstatically, outward towards the Other. This reorientation is not only towards a hypostatic relationship with the Trinity or even towards fellow members of Christ’s Body, but also towards the whole of creation. The line of personhood running from the Father through the Son in the Spirit to the Christian through the Church continues from the Christian to the world, (re)connecting creation to the creator. In this way, members of the Body of Christ fulfil the call “to

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<sup>761</sup> CAO, 294.

bring creation into communion with God so that it may survive and participate in the life of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>762</sup>

This illustration links the series of triangles illustrating the one and the many into a systematic whole. Hypostatic personhood begins with the Father, proceeds through the Son into the Body of Christ, and through the Church, so described, constitutes creation by maintaining the personal/hypostatic link between God and the World. The vertical arrows demonstrate how all creation is thus drawn into relationship with God.



Without the continuation of the relationship between creator and creation, mediated through *hypostatically* constituted human beings, creation would cease to exist. God created *ex nihilo*, and, without the constitutive relationship, what comes from nothing is in danger of returning to nothing. “Nature relies on man directing himself to God, because it is only through man that nature can come into communion with God and so preserve its existence.”<sup>763</sup> Apart from hypostatic relationship, creation would eventually cease to exist.<sup>764</sup>

The unique role of humankind to “unite created materiality with the uncreated”<sup>765</sup> has already been referenced especially in relation to christology. According to Zizioulas, “God had given Adam the freedom to inaugurate the salvation of the world,” but Adam, exercising his freedom, turned away from relationship with God.<sup>766</sup> As true personhood

<sup>762</sup> CAO, 43.

<sup>763</sup> Lectures, 99.

<sup>764</sup> Lectures, 89.

<sup>765</sup> Lectures, 101.

<sup>766</sup> Lectures, 104.

and ontologically constituting relationship must come from love and *freedom*, God could not intervene and the relationship between God and humanity was broken. This is the content of the Fall, as seen above.

While Adam exercised his freedom to chose individuality over personhood, “the complete and proper expression of human freedom came at last in the unforced ‘yes’ given by the Virgin Mary to God’s call to carry through this mystery of Christ.”<sup>767</sup> Through the assent of Mary, is born Christ, the new Adam. It was necessary for salvation to come this way because “logic demanded that God become one of us;” no other being than a “man” can mediate between God and creation.<sup>768</sup> The content of this mediation between God and creation is the communication of being to the Other, and “there is not a single particular being whose otherness and identity does not depend” on its relationship with the entirety of creation.

When it comes to creating a logic for our relationship to the rest of the world, Zizioulas rejects the ideals of justice, ethics and morality, and other such concepts enshrined in governments and the concept of law and order.<sup>769</sup> Rather, Zizioulas sees this system as opposite to true Christianity. He goes so far as to state that “the idea of justice is absent from Christ’s teaching in a way that is provocative to all ethics since Aristotle.”<sup>770</sup> The logic of Otherness is totally opposed to ethics and morality, law and order. These societal systems rely on the identification of the evil-doer with the evil done. Once evil-doers are identified, they can be excluded along with their evil. Evil-doers are thus set apart, shunned and punished. Because law and order relies on this

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<sup>767</sup> *Lectures*, 104.

<sup>768</sup> *Lectures*, 103.

<sup>769</sup> *CAO*, 85-88.

<sup>770</sup> *CAO*, 86.

process “no morality can be totally free from the fear of the Other,”<sup>771</sup> for the other is evil, and must be excluded from society.

In contrast to this system of morality, ethics and law, the ethos of the Otherness is to be completely open to the other. In the case of an evil-doer, this openness extends to taking the evil of the other into myself.<sup>772</sup> Zizioulas calls this approach to the other “the eucharistic ethos” which “involves an attitude of acceptance and confirmation of the Other” including the created world.<sup>773</sup> The involvement of the Church in ecological issues comes not from any moral or ethical paradigm. It comes rather from this “eucharistic ethos.” We do not care for creation out of a sense of duty or moral obligation, but rather out of the overflow of the *ekstatic* nature of our personhood, naturally and freely reaching out in love to all that surrounds us, divine, human or otherwise.

### **3.5 Conclusion: Church, Trinity and the *Eschaton***

#### *3.5.1 The goal of the Eucharist, joining trinitarian life*

This exploration of the theological system of Zizioulas has shown how divine personhood, originates with the Father who shares it with the Son and the Spirit. The Son, in the person of Christ, joins human and divine life through the Spirit in the Church, Christ’s Body on earth. The members of Christ’s Body on earth enter this relationship freely, so manifesting their own human personhood in free relationship to the divine personhood joined to humanity in the Person of Christ. Those who discover their own unique personhood in the Church offer it in turn to creation. Creation is

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<sup>771</sup> CAO, 87.

<sup>772</sup> The logic of this approach to ethical questions is described in CAO, 81-8.

<sup>773</sup> CAO, 92.



maintained in its relationship with the Creator, and thus is existence, through this pyramidal progression of personhood from the Father to Creation.

Perhaps this can help us to understand the vehemence of Zizioulas emphasis on what he sees as a correct understanding of trinitarian theology.<sup>774</sup> A particular understanding of the ‘how’ of Trinitarian life would appear to be central to his entire theological programme. Personhood, freely given and freely received, is Zizioulas’ narrative of salvation. *Theosis* is not attaining divinity, it is attaining full, personally constituted, humanity. This can happen only in and through the Church, Christ’s Body, where human beings are drawn into the personal life of the Son and through him into the life of the Trinity. The participation of believers in the relationships of the Trinity is realised in the act of Eucharist in which the Spirit and the Son collaborate across time to bring eternal, *hypostatic* life into a finite moment of communion. So understood, the Eucharist is the physical location of the ultimate end of faith, Church, theology, and even life itself, and this end brings us back to our starting point: the Trinity.

The Trinity is not only the source of all true personhood and divine life, it is also the goal. In freely choosing to participate in that life we join the living Body of Christ, and in joining that Body we draw creation into a saving relationship with the Trinity as well. It seems then, that we have described a circle. For Zizioulas the triune God, who exists in an ecstatic community of divine personhood, is both the source of all and the goal of all.

### 3.5.2 *Excursus: Eucharist, Bishop, Church*

Although we have explored Zizioulas’ ecclesiology above in reference to personhood, salvation, christology and pneumatology, there is one further aspect his understanding of the Church, especially in reference to the celebration of the Eucharist,

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<sup>774</sup> “Doctrine,” 28.

that should be touched on. While the eucharistic aspect to the Church is fundamental, so far we have only explored Zizioulas' eucharistic ecclesiology as we approached it from the point of view of trinitarian personhood realised in the Church through the celebration of the Eucharist. There is, however, more to this story.

Zizioulas applies his motif of the One and the Many to Church structure in his vision of the ideal structure of the local Church. This can be seen early in his vision, in his doctoral dissertation, later published in English as *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*. The bishop, in Zizioulas' understanding, represents Christ for the local church. Presiding at the Eucharist, the bishop provides the visible sign of Christ among his people, and a single focus for the Church community to turn their attention towards Christ. The one, particular bishop connects the many persons in the Eucharistic celebrations with the person of Christ. He plays a central role in constituting the Body of Christ.

Describing Zizioulas as the one who has provided the most “dominant model of ecclesiology. . . in contemporary Orthodox thinking,”<sup>775</sup> Kallistos Ware is clearly not fully satisfied with Zizioulas' model. He refers to “serious” concerns about Zizioulas' emphasis on “the authority of the bishop within the Church.”<sup>776</sup> Ware is concerned that Zizioulas offers no place for the “correlative authority” of other forms of spiritual leadership including holy men and women. Zizioulas, according to Ware, neglects confession and spiritual guidance, and has little to say about the Church's traditions of prayer and hesychasm.<sup>777</sup> Nevertheless, it seems Zizioulas' brand of eucharistic ecclesiology has yet to be seriously challenged within the Orthodox world.<sup>778</sup>

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<sup>775</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 116.

<sup>776</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 116.

<sup>777</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 116.

<sup>778</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology,” 116.

According to Papanikolaou, Zizioulas grounds his identification of the Church with the eucharistic assembly historically “both in New Testament texts and early Christian writings.”<sup>779</sup> He identifies the eucharistic synthesis of christology and pneumatology in the constituting of the Body of Christ as the grounds of “his ontology of personhood and his trinitarian theology.”<sup>780</sup> Because he describes Zizioulas’ eucharistic ecclesiology as previous to and constitutive of his theology of personhood, Papanikolaou feels that the former need not be detracted from by the debates over the sources and content of Zizioulas’ trinitarian theology.

Like Ware, Papanikolaou identifies a poverty in Zizioulas ecclesiological construction, in the lack of a clear role for presbyters, priests and deacons relative to the central role of the bishop.<sup>781</sup> This becomes especially problematic in the case of the local church. “According to Zizioulas, the notion of the local church is inherently tied to the bishop,” yet in the current structures in the Orthodox church “the bishop is responsible for a diocese.”<sup>782</sup> In this Papanikolaou sees a conflict between the eucharistic role of the bishop and the identity of the local church as the eucharistic assembly. He wonders “why Zizioulas could not simply identify the parish as the local church and the diocese as that which is constituted by the many local churches.”<sup>783</sup> It seems Zizioulas ideal of eucharistic ecclesiology centred around the bishop at the Eucharist does not fit with the realities of contemporary Orthodox life.

Writing a chapter on “Christian Life and the Institutional Church,” Loudovikos expresses concern about Zizioulas’ use of “abstract structural models, such as the ‘one

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<sup>779</sup> Papanikolaou, “Integrating,” 174.

<sup>780</sup> Papanikolaou, “Integrating,” 174.

<sup>781</sup> Papanikolaou, “Integrating,” 176.

<sup>782</sup> Papanikolaou, “Integrating,” 176.

<sup>783</sup> Papanikolaou, “Integrating,” 177.

and the many’.”<sup>784</sup> He is clearly concerned about the very basic differences between, for example, intratrinitarian relationships and the relationship between Christ and the Church. In the Trinity there is “full ontological mutuality of will,” something that cannot be said of the relationship “between Christ and his members.”<sup>785</sup> When this motif is applied again to the bishop and the eucharistic assembly, Loudovikos shows concern that the bishop cannot take the place of Christ in relationship to the Church because Christ is not “effectively absent.”<sup>786</sup> Rather the bishop “carries out in his name the distribution” of the gifts Christ gives.<sup>787</sup> This mediatory role of the bishop identifies him, according to Loudovikos, primarily as a “pastor” rather than president of the Eucharist.<sup>788</sup>

For all three of these Orthodox thinkers, practical as well as theological concerns influence their approach to and critiques of Zizioulas’ application of the concept of corporate personality to the relationship between the bishop and the Church in the Eucharist. As we have seen, Papanikolaou points out that this ecclesiological aspect of Zizioulas’ theology is one of the earliest aspects of his theological development,<sup>789</sup> being already embodied in his doctoral thesis.<sup>790</sup> Zizioulas draws this understanding of church structure from his study of early church texts,<sup>791</sup> and practical concerns do not seem to figure greatly in this or any other aspect of his system. The logic of *hypostatic* personhood and *ekstatic* love, which embody the heart of his system, is contrary to the

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<sup>784</sup> Loudovikos, “Christian Life,” 129.

<sup>785</sup> Loudovikos, “Christian Life,” 130.

<sup>786</sup> Loudovikos, “Christian Life,” 130.

<sup>787</sup> Loudovikos, “Christian Life,” 130.

<sup>788</sup> Loudovikos, “Christian Life,” 130.

<sup>789</sup> Papanikolaou, “Integrating,” 174.

<sup>790</sup> Later published in English as *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*.

<sup>791</sup> Yannaras, *Orthodoxy*, 284. See also Bathrellos, “Early Church,” 133-145.

logic of the world in which we live.<sup>792</sup> The structural motif of one and many is central to his programme, but he does not draw his conclusions from, or possibly even consider, practical considerations of Church life. This leaves his theology vulnerable to accusations of idealism.

### 3.5.3 Recap

This chapter has presented the image of Zizioulas theological system as a circle, issuing from and returning to the Trinity. Using the themes of *hypostatic* personhood, otherness, ekstasis and corporate personality, Zizioulas describes how all things have the origin in and are drawn into relationship with the trinitarian God. This relationship constitutes all things, drawing humanity and all of creation into the life of the Trinity; without it the world would cease to exist.

After a brief look at other representations of Zizioulas' theology by scholars in recent years, we began our study of Zizioulas by noting two important theological presuppositions in his work: the constitutive tie between theology and liturgy and the necessary limits of talk about God to questions about "how" not "what" God is. Both of these concerns are strong markers of his identity as an Orthodox theologian and a student of the Fathers.

To introduce Zizioulas' theology we began at the starting point chosen in *Being as Communion*, namely with philosophical revolution of the Cappadocian Fathers and the resultant understanding of *hypostatic* personhood. Central to this understanding of the Trinity was the concept of the monarchy of the Father, for the Father must have absolute freedom in order for Zizioulas' logical system to work.

From the freedom and personhood of God, the circle moves into relationship with the humanity through the person of the Son, in whom divine and human nature are

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<sup>792</sup> CAO, 86-7.

joined in a single *person*. This junction opens the way for human beings acquire personal existence and thus own the fullness of human nature. Once constituted in their own uniqueness by relationship with trinitarian life through the Son, human persons are free to love God and one another. This love, freely given and received, draws creation into that constitutive relationship.

There is a beautiful, symmetrical, interior logic to this programme that is both stunning and inspiring. Within that logic, all things are connected, all the world flows from and is drawn into trinitarian life, the breath of God breathing in and out in endless cycle, giving and receiving life and love through relationship.

This image plainly demonstrates how interconnected, logical and finely-tuned is Zizioulas' system. It is this interconnectedness that causes problems when people attempt to engage with his system by taking an idea such as "personhood" or "being as communion" and developing these independently of their specific meaning and place in Zizioulas' system into something like a "social doctrine" of the trinity. 'Personhood' in Zizioulas' definition could hardly be less like individual will or consciousness and 'loving relationship' has virtually nothing to do with feelings or emotions. Understanding this is vital for effectively using or challenging his insights as his legacy lingers in trinitarian theology through the twenty-first century.

In the next chapter we will draw together Zizioulas and the Cappadocians in order to discover what we can learn from Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocians. As we have seen, Zizioulas' theological programme is both logical and systematic. As has been seen in Chapter 2, the same cannot be said of the Cappadocian theology on which he purports to draw, but there are perhaps some themes common among the Cappadocians. This chapter has indicated that Zizioulas shows clear signs of his loyalty to Orthodoxy. In the next more effort will be made to understand what is constituted by the tradition of

the Orthodox Church and how comfortably Zizioulas sits in relation to this tradition. In doing so, we will also seek to understand how this has effected his reading of the Fathers, specifically the Cappadocians.

## **Chapter 4 Zizioulas and Orthodoxy**

In this chapter a new image emerges from the connection between Zizioulas' systematic trinitarian circle and his summary of the Cappadocian contribution to trinitarian theology. It has been identified in the second chapter that there is some correlation between that summary and the summary of Cappadocian theology identified in the second chapter above, but it seems to function within Zizioulas' theological system in a way that is foreign to that summary.

The final image of the project will attempt to understand this difference in function, exploring the Orthodox theological world in which Zizioulas operates, drawing out some of the assumptions prevalent in that world about how and why theology is done, and contrasting them with the assumptions latent in the summary of anglophone scholarship on the Cappadocians in the second chapter.

In so doing it will be necessary to resort to the contrast between Western/post-Enlightenment thinking and Eastern/Orthodox thinking. As stated in the introduction, these terms within the current project are used as descriptive terms primarily in reference to an inheritance of thought that either has or has not been affected by the religious reformations of the 1500s and the philosophical enlightenment of the 1700s. This contrast is particularly important to the content of this chapter and the conclusions of this project.

### **4.1 Zizioulas reads the Cappadocians**

In our summary of the reception and of Zizioulas' theology in the first chapter, it was made plain that there is a significant amount of comment and debate surrounding Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocian Fathers. When, in the third chapter, we explored and described Zizioulas' theological system through a trinitarian lens, his reading of the Cappadocians appeared to be a crucial part of his theological system. As the first



chapter was primarily devoted to the concerns and critiques of others and the third chapter to a presentation of Zizioulas' theology on its own merits, no attempt has yet been made in this project to clarify the validity of the claims made by Zizioulas in the context of his reading of the Cappadocians. So far the intention of the project has been rather to understand his theology.

As we come now to a deeper inquiry into the reception and use of Cappadocian trinitarian theology by Zizioulas, we begin by looking back to our exploration of Zizioulas' background. In Chapter 1 we learned that Zizioulas came of age as a theologian in 1960's Greece, at a time of great change within both the Greek and Orthodox contexts. His undergraduate studies in theology were likely to be rigorous and broad. As he continued to study theology, he spent some time with Georges Florovsky and later sought, in the publication of *Being as Communion*, to contribute to the neopatristic project which Florovsky so passionately advocated.<sup>793</sup>

In the Chapter 3, before exploring Zizioulas' theological system in depth, it was noted that his work is undergirded by a central understanding of theology as emerging from the liturgy of the Church and the liturgical, worshiping experience. Throughout his programme, Zizioulas emphasises the connections between liturgy, worship and theological reflection. In this emphasis on the liturgical and devotional aspects of theological speculation, Zizioulas is again demonstrating the centrality of Orthodox understanding to his faith and his theological practice. It seems then that, in order to gain a deeper understanding of his use of the Fathers in general and the Cappadocian category in particular, it is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of his Orthodox identity, specifically, the values and traditions of Orthodox theology.

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<sup>793</sup> *BAC*, 26. For more on Florovsky's neopatristic synthesis see Gavriluk, "Florovsky's neopatristic synthesis," 102ff.

In this section some attempt will be made to construct a clearer understanding of the attitude and approach of the Orthodox to the discipline of theology. In the context of this project and some of the specific questions towards Zizioulas' patristic and doctrinal theology, this section will seek to outline an Orthodox concept of authority, especially in relation to the Church Fathers and an Orthodox approach to the study of the history of doctrine. As this project is specifically concerned with the reception of Zizioulas' work in the English-speaking, and therefore largely western, world, some attempt will also be made to understand the east-west relationship, especially with regard to ecumenical conversation and Orthodox attitudes towards the west. Finally, we will apply these insights to Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocian Fathers.

#### *4.1.1 Orthodoxy and Authority*

The question of authority seems to be central to the controversy surrounding Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocian Fathers. This has already been highlighted by Morwenna Ludlow who notes that Zizioulas seems to regard the Cappadocians as authoritative, but he fails to clearly communicate "the precise *nature* of that authority and the degree to which that authority can be complemented by other theological or philosophical norms."<sup>794</sup> Central to this concern about methodology and authority is an assumption that the Cappadocians either act as a primary or controlling authority that must be kept to or they function in a more fluid way as inspiration or illustration. Within a Western mindset of reason and logic, assuming exclusive categories and conclusions established by critical argument, this is an appropriate question to pose to Zizioulas' work.

In this case of Zizioulas, however, the authority of the Cappadocians (and indeed the other Fathers) is rather incalculable. They are neither to be held up as absolutes, nor

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<sup>794</sup> Ludlow, *Gregory*, 68.

dismissed as historical, irrelevant or subject to redaction. It seems likely that the apparent lack of clarity in Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocians springs from a fundamental difference in the theological assumptions and prerequisites of Orthodox and generalised western approaches to theology, assumptions about what theology is and how it is done.<sup>795</sup> The Enlightenment, so influential to the western mindset, took place while the Eastern Orthodox countries were still under the sway of the Ottoman empire, and only later came to indirectly influence Orthodox thought.<sup>796</sup>

In contrast to the modern western emphasis on logic, absolutes and historical criticism, Orthodox theology values liturgy, the acts of worship, and lived tradition. In Orthodox understanding, "liturgy is not merely words but an action"<sup>797</sup> which involves both God and the congregation, members of the Body of Christ. There is a "vital connection between theology and prayer."<sup>798</sup> The Orthodox attitude towards theology holds different core values, far removed from the centrality of the scientific, deductive method prevalent in the disciplines of western academia. Their identifying factors and controlling authorities are different both in content and execution, as McGuckin describes:

The fundamental bulwarks of the Orthodox faith are: the lives of the Spirit-filled elect, the Holy Scriptures, the ancient traditions manifested in the sacred liturgy and the church's ritual practices, the creeds and professions (*ektheseis*) of the ecumenical councils, the great patristic writings defending the faith against heretical positions, the church's ever-deepening collection of prayers that have had universal adoption and enduring spiritual efficacy and, by extension, the wider body of the spiritual and ascetically writings of the saints of times past and present, the important writings of hierarchs at various critical moments in the

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<sup>795</sup> As noted above, I use 'western' in this context to refer to theological approaches that owe their mindset and method to the legacies of Augustine and Aquinas, the Protestant reformations, Catholic counter-reformation and, most importantly, the philosophical Enlightenment in western Europe in the eighteenth century.

<sup>796</sup> According to Louth, "Enlightenment and Romanticism" were both "movements bypassed on 'the historical road of Eastern Orthodoxy.'" "Development of Doctrine," 48.

<sup>797</sup> Ware, "Orthodox theology today," 105.

<sup>798</sup> Ware, "Orthodox theology today," 112.

more recent past which have identified the correct response that ought to be undertaken against new conditions and movements prevailing after the patristic period.<sup>799</sup>

This listing of “bulwarks of the Orthodox faith” illustrates the considerable breadth of the Orthodox tradition, and the multitude aspects therein. McGuckin adds that “there are hierarchies of importance”<sup>800</sup> among these bulwarks. This list also makes it clear that scripture, for the Orthodox, is not a separate or primary source of information or revelation, it is a part of the entire tradition, although considered “one of the purest manifestations” of that tradition.<sup>801</sup> Alongside the scriptures are the Fathers, who wrote “under the inspiration of the same Spirit” that inspired the writers of scripture.<sup>802</sup>

Ludlow seeks clarification of the purpose of Zizioulas’ references to the Fathers. Is he citing an absolute authority or an inspirational illustration? This question introduces a dichotomy that is foreign to Orthodox theology, for the Orthodox do not approach the Fathers, or indeed the scriptures, in either of these ways. Neither of these core texts for liturgical devotion and theological reflection possesses absolute authority in the manner that seems to be assumed by Ludlow’s question, and also by the many scholars who criticise Zizioulas’ reading of the Fathers on the basis that he has not read them ‘correctly.’

While it is fairly easy to argue that, for the Orthodox, tradition is *not* an absolute authority that must be followed, it is less simple to define what it *is*. All aspects of tradition are held together in a single whole and cannot be separated from the rest of

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<sup>799</sup> McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 100. Louth provides a somewhat less technical and exhaustive list with brief explanations of the meanings and important contributions of the different aspects of tradition, *Introducing Eastern Orthodoxy*, 5-6.

<sup>800</sup> McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 101.

<sup>801</sup> McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 101.

<sup>802</sup> McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 102.

tradition. “No single sentence or argument of an individual Father of the Church carries with it an infallible authority.”<sup>803</sup> Perhaps this contributes to the way in which Zizioulas’ works are interspersed with the names and opinions of a number of Fathers alongside frequent scriptural references, he is mapping his work into the context of the entire Orthodox tradition. “It is the consensus of voice that matters: reading the Fathers within the Scripture; the Scripture within the horizon of the church; the liturgy within the context of prayer; all together forming a ‘seamless robe’. The seamless harmony of the whole tradition shores up all the different parts, self-correcting and self-regulating in its wholeness.”<sup>804</sup>

Such Orthodox scholars as have attempted to communicate their unique approach to theology and devotional life to western readers tend to use language that almost borders on the mystical to explain the relationship between the believer and Holy Tradition. For the Orthodox theologian “theology is always a mystery,”<sup>805</sup> “our worship is a response to an unfathomable mystery”<sup>806</sup> and “an introduction to Eastern Orthodoxy . . . is an introduction to a way of life.”<sup>807</sup> While theology must always use both the cataphatic, positive approach and the apophatic, negative approach, the latter is considered the “higher” of the two which “comes closer to the truth.”<sup>808</sup>

The Orthodox worship, live and theologise in the context of what they call “Holy Tradition,”<sup>809</sup> which treats the Fathers rather as conversation partners demanding

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<sup>803</sup> McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 102.

<sup>804</sup> McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 102.

<sup>805</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology today,” 108.

<sup>806</sup> Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodoxy*, 1.

<sup>807</sup> Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodoxy*, 3.

<sup>808</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology today,” 108.

<sup>809</sup> McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 90 ff.

respect, than as authorities demanding adherence.<sup>810</sup> Within this context, theology is not a discipline of absolutes. Patristics, embodied in the last century in the quest of the neopatristic synthesis, is a conversation rather than an archeological dig. A conversation which considers the individuality of the participants on both ends of the timeline. As Ware has noted, “just as there is variety within the patristic tradition itself, so there are divergent emphases among the ‘Neo-Patristicians’.”<sup>811</sup>

Zizioulas’ use of the Fathers is ambiguous to western eyes, precisely because of the, perhaps unspoken, western assumption that what the Cappadocians believed can be explained and codified if we put enough energy into discovering, studying or developing the sources of patristic or historical theology. When he speaks of the Cappadocians or their theology, his use of the category is not necessarily a sign of a lack of understanding of the three men separately. When he appeals to Irenaeus, Ignatius, Athanasius or Maximus he is grounding his theology within his own tradition and demonstrating that he has engaged deeply with that tradition.<sup>812</sup> That grounding does give him legitimacy, but through context rather than content. It seems he has ingested the theological ideas of these men together with many others in his tradition. These ideas are, at times, partially redacted through the lenses of other Fathers, and he uses them as a starting point to building and explain his own ideas and insights.

Also present in the neopatristic project, is an attitude of moving “forward with the Fathers,” rather than going “back to the Fathers.” This indicates that the goal of this project was not merely to “cite the Fathers” or insert “patristic texts” into theological ideas in order to validate them, but rather “to go beyond the letter of the patristic

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<sup>810</sup> Louth, “Development of Doctrine,” 55.

<sup>811</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology today,” 115.

<sup>812</sup> “The study of theology presupposes exact and rigorous scholarship, but this in itself is not enough.” Ware, “Orthodox theology today,” 107.

writings to their inner spirit.”<sup>813</sup> Described thus, it is clear that the neopatristic project is as much, or more, about a mindset and approach to theology as it is about what the Fathers actually said or, even more nebulously, what they meant. This is echoed by Alexis Torrance, for whom Zizioulas’ work demonstrates that “patristic precedents need to be measured conceptually rather than terminologically.” The important thing is the concept, the overall narrative and mindset of the Fathers, not the exact terminology.<sup>814</sup>

When Fathers across centuries of church and doctrinal history are equal partners in the theological conversation with the present, there is the constant possibility, even likelihood, that Orthodox theologians may combine and repurpose the theological legacy of those Fathers with an imprecision that appears irresponsible to the western mindset. Steeped in the legacy of Thomistic scholasticism and Enlightenment philosophy, western theology has a logical method of argument and, often, an assumption of absolute authority and truth that would seem to be totally absent in Orthodox theology. For the Orthodox the authority of the Fathers is contextual within tradition, not absolute.

In Orthodox tradition, scripture and the Fathers, are conversation partners whose opinions must be respected, like respected and learned old teachers. They are read in conversation with contemporary times and concerns. The theologian, steeped in prayer, is chiefly in search of the attitude of the Fathers towards faith and practice. It is not assumed that the Fathers of all the centuries of Church history are univocal; such a thing is not possible, but it is in conversation with these saints, alive now in the presence of God, that believers of today feel their way closer to the great mysteries of faith and the

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<sup>813</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology today,” 111. For Florovsky this inner spirit of the Fathers was typified by an ideal “Christian Hellenism.” Cf. Gavrielyuk, “Florovsky’s Neopatristic Synthesis,” 102, 110, 115, etc.

<sup>814</sup> Torrance, “Personhood and Patristics,” 701. She does also point out that “Zizioulas himself may place a little too much emphasis on the use and meaning of [particular] words in the patristic period.” This is also reflected in Gavrielyuk’s description of Florovsky’s concept of “Christian Hellenism” the re-discovery of which was a key aspect of his neopatristic project,” “Florovsky’s neopatristic synthesis,” 114-5.

greatest mystery of God.<sup>815</sup> Orthodox tradition is “not a systematician’s ‘reduction’ of Christian faith in millions of propositions, but rather the record of a whole people’s long pilgrimage towards God across the desert horizons of a long history, as well as a compass for keeping the right course for the future.”<sup>816</sup> The desire is not to return to past times, but rather to journey into the future alongside the wisdom, insight and piety of the past.

Constantly in dialogue with two thousand years of tradition, this Orthodox approach to authority in faith and theology, uses its own internal logic of how to do theology, how to be church and how to believe in God. The Orthodox tradition is both beautiful and compelling, but their traditions and patterns of thought are largely foreign and markedly difficult to categorise from a western point of view characterised by thought patterns inherited from the Enlightenment. As we have already noted, the divide between the Orthodox Church and the western world is increasingly disappearing. This has led to a fresh encounter between Orthodox and western Christian thought, particularly over the last century, of which Zizioulas is a prime example. Fortunately there are now increasing resources to help those from these two backgrounds to understand their different presumptions about theological approaches to authority and doctrine.

#### *4.1.2 Orthodoxy and the Development of Doctrine*

Having seen that tradition and authority within Orthodoxy are rather relational than dictatorial, we now turn to the consideration of doctrinal history or historical theology. Within the Orthodox tradition’s approach of treating the Fathers as living

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<sup>815</sup> Louth, “Development of Doctrine,” 55.

<sup>816</sup> McGuckin, *The Orthodox Way*, 102. This echoes McGuckin’s observation that Protestants and Catholics occupy a similar thought world and have “the same styles of theologising and closely related patterns of worship,” *The Orthodox Church*, 6.



conversation partners rather than objects of historical study there seems to be an inherent risk of missing or simply ignoring some of the substantial historical and contextual differences among the Fathers. From a Western viewpoint, the lack of a developmental or a historical-critical approach to doctrinal history within Orthodoxy seems to indicate that there is a danger of imprecision and oversimplification latent in the Orthodox approach to the Fathers.<sup>817</sup>

Considering the “question of development of doctrine” Louth identifies the subject as primarily a Catholic versus Protestant issue, that is a *western* issue.<sup>818</sup> Indeed, he suggests that “development” is not “perceived as an available category for Orthodox theology.”<sup>819</sup> This is echoed in McGuckin’s description of “the saint-theologians of Orthodoxy” who are “faithful to the apostolic tradition” and “Spirit-filled.”<sup>820</sup> One of the two necessary identifying factors of any highly respected Orthodox teacher is an identifiable link to the “apostolic tradition.” For Bouteneff “the continuity of the apostolic tradition” stretches “from the apostolic age through the Fathers, the councils, and the liturgy to the present day.”<sup>821</sup> There is not great room for any understanding of doctrinal development in such an idea, instead it is a constant. One almost begins to think of the “apostolic tradition” as a treasure to be protected and communicated rather than an idea to be developed.

The cultural events of the Enlightenment and “the Romantic reaction” gave rise in the west to the idea that “human societies . . . develop through time.”<sup>822</sup> As we have

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<sup>817</sup> An alternative view of this is offered by Bouteneff who notes that “a scientific approach (one based on history and fact) to literature of all kinds” as the potential to “do violence” to the “genuine spirit and meaning” of the text. *Sweeter than Honey*, 76-7.

<sup>818</sup> Louth, “Development of Doctrine,” 45.

<sup>819</sup> Louth, “Development of Doctrine,” 47.

<sup>820</sup> McGuckin, *Orthodox Church*, 17.

<sup>821</sup> Bouteneff, *Sweeter than Honey*, 193.

<sup>822</sup> Louth, “Development of Doctrine,” 47.

already noted, these cultural events were unique to the Western world. From an Orthodox point of view, this concept of development, when applied to doctrine, contributes to a considerable sense of distance from the patristic sources of theology in the Western churches. Many Protestants have barely heard of the Church Fathers, much less read their writings. McGuckin even suggests that Anglicans and Catholics while holding the Fathers “in high esteem, do not afford them more significance than as part of a range of muffled historical voices in the ongoing elaboration of theological discourse.”<sup>823</sup> This contrasts greatly with the Orthodox sense of the urgent immediacy of patristic thought.

Clearly regretting the “gradual development of a dogmatic edifice” in theology, John Behr observes that the fathers have “effectively been divorced” from the revelation of God in the scriptures.<sup>824</sup> The unfortunate separation between biblical and theological studies leads eventually to doctrinal formulations, such as trinitarian theology, that are without context and irrelevant to average believers.<sup>825</sup> Behr’s observation of the destructive tendencies of doctrinal development effectively offers a further critique on the Western critical distance from patristic thought.

A further Orthodox concern with the Western idea of doctrinal development relates back to our discussion of authority in the previous section. The Orthodox cannot accept a notion of progress which contributes to “making our understanding of the faith deeper or more profound than that of the Fathers.”<sup>826</sup> The Fathers are not “dead teachers from the past,” they are “living now in the life of the Resurrection,” closer to “the

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<sup>823</sup> McGuckin, *Orthodox Church*, 110.

<sup>824</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 5.

<sup>825</sup> Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 4-5.

<sup>826</sup> Louth, “Development of Doctrine,” 55.

Source of Life” than those who are still on earth.<sup>827</sup> They will always know more about what they said and what they meant by it than any student of their extant works could hope to discover. They can never be surpassed. The Fathers are the teachers of the faithful, helping them along the road of faith.

An understanding of the Fathers as conversational partners in contemporary theology has its dangers. Louth admits “there is a tendency in Orthodox theology to represent the teaching of the various Fathers of the Church in a rather flat way, as if they had all lived at the same time.” Without a controlling idea of development, or at least historical distance, “historical considerations are scarcely necessary.”<sup>828</sup> To escape from this effectively “unhistorical or ahistorical” approach to historical doctrine, Louth suggests that the Orthodox need to develop a “sense of critical distance” in order to maintain the understanding that each of the Fathers have “their own individuality and historical context.”<sup>829</sup>

There is no definite rule to define who the Fathers are (or are not). Bouteneff describes them as “those who faithfully convey the gospel, preserving what was entrusted to them . . . the apostolic faith.”<sup>830</sup> For Louth “the Fathers are *our* Fathers, because we are their children,”<sup>831</sup> an equivocal statement which in itself exemplifies the notional differences between Orthodox and Western styles of thinking. It assumes that the traditions and conciliar decisions handed down through the history of the Church have endured through the influence of the Holy Spirit’s guidance.<sup>832</sup> Those Father’s

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<sup>827</sup> Louth, “Development of Doctrine,” 55.

<sup>828</sup> Louth, “Development of Doctrine,” 54.

<sup>829</sup> Louth, “Development of Doctrine,” 55.

<sup>830</sup> Bouteneff, *Sweeter than Honey*, 171.

<sup>831</sup> Louth, “Development of Doctrine,” 57.

<sup>832</sup> McGuckin, *Orthodox Church*, 110. Bouteneff, *Sweeter than Honey*, 123.

whose teachings have been accepted and proved valuable to the life and liturgy of the Church, are, by virtue of the fact, Holy Fathers.<sup>833</sup> When connected with McGuckin's description of "the saint-theologians of Orthodoxy" this understanding of the Fathers can help us to realise that "patristic" theology, for the Orthodox, is not bounded by a "patristic era." Saint-theologians from any period of Orthodox history are candidates for patristic status.

All of this gives the impression of theology as a lived experience, a journey, in the liturgy and life of the Church, rather than a progressive or developmental search for truth.<sup>834</sup> This is highlighted by Alexander Schmemmann who emphasises that faith as "the total and living experience of the Church" is "the context of the theology of the East, of that theology at least which characterized the patristic age."<sup>835</sup> This lived experience, in the context of the Orthodox Church, is embodied in the practice of the liturgy, the experienced epiphany of the Church's faith.<sup>836</sup> Thus we return again to the centrality of the liturgy to Orthodox understandings of theology.

"Liturgical life is a vital component of the search for true theology."<sup>837</sup> It is in the context of worship that theological ideas "emerge and are tested." The communal life of the Church facilitates "a search for truth," as believers seek to articulate the experience of encountering God in worship and Christian community.<sup>838</sup> In the end "there is no development beyond seeking, again and again, to deepen our understanding of the

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<sup>833</sup> Louth, "Development of Doctrine," 57. See also, McGuckin, *Orthodox Church*, 110; Bouteneff, *Sweeter than Honey*, 124.

<sup>834</sup> Louth, "Development of Doctrine," 58. McGuckin describes the whole Orthodox Church as being on a journey, *Orthodox Church*, 399.

<sup>835</sup> Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*, 133.

<sup>836</sup> Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*, 135.

<sup>837</sup> Bouteneff, *Sweeter than Honey*, 157.

<sup>838</sup> Louth, "Development of Doctrine," 59. The theme of the central importance of the liturgy appears again.

Scriptures in the light of the mystery of Christ.”<sup>839</sup> As Schmemmann has pointed out “The Church is not an institution that keeps certain divinely revealed ‘doctrines’ and ‘teachings’ about this or that event of the past, but the very *epiphany* or these events themselves.”<sup>840</sup>

It seems then, that the Orthodox approach the history of theology in a similar way to their approach to the Fathers. Again, the approach is conversational, rather than cumulative or developmental. Doctrinal understanding does not develop in ever increasing complexity or correctness. Indeed, such a thing would not be possible, for much of the knowledge and understanding of the past has been lost. The Fathers are always greater than their children. Instead, doctrine continues to be engaged with, lived, and reimagined in each generation, a theme already seen above in reference to the Orthodox view of authority. This allows for a remarkable level of flexibility and the growth of a better self-understanding, deeper worship and a broader engagement with the world.

#### *4.1.3 Orthodoxy and the West*

As we have seen, the events of the twentieth century brought Orthodoxy into closer contact with the Western world than had been the case for at least a millennium. This encounter was both a source of and a contributor to a great movement of change within Orthodox theology. In many ways the impact of this change is still being felt as the Orthodox seek a structure and understanding of the Church that is separate from ‘empire’ for virtually the first time in their history. As Papanikolaou has put it, “the Orthodox now are finally living without emperors, Byzantine, Ottoman, Tsarist, or communist; but, they have not fully discussed how to exist as a Church without

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<sup>839</sup> Louth, “Development of Doctrine,” 61.

<sup>840</sup> Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*, 134.

emperors.”<sup>841</sup> In this meeting of the Orthodox with the Catholic and Protestant world, the Orthodox have more decidedly moved away from a ‘western captivity’ in their thinking, developed under the influence of the western, mediaeval scholastics.<sup>842</sup> The search for a neopatristic synthesis, which “predominated in the Orthodox world throughout the second half of the twentieth century,”<sup>843</sup> was a distinct example of this desire to rediscover and rekindle the ancient and distinct Orthodox tradition.

In more recent years, some Orthodox thinkers have attempted to bridge the gap in understanding between traditional Orthodox understandings of the authority of scripture, the Fathers and doctrine and the academic approaches of the West. They have sought to explain or at least communicate the core of their own tradition, including the key values, traditions and authorities of Orthodox theology. These attempts seem to have the dual purpose of self-definition, and so better self-understanding, and of self-explanation, not to say apologetics, to other Christian traditions. In so doing, these authors highlight certain aspects of the Orthodox mindset and approach to theology and the Christian life over against the approaches of the West.<sup>844</sup>

In a collection titled *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou have set out to explore and expose the inherent anti-western bias that has been present in Orthodox theology since the ninth century.<sup>845</sup> Florovsky’s neopatristic synthesis is perhaps one of the latest incarnations of the trend of Orthodox

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<sup>841</sup> Papanikolaou, “Integrating,” 178. Schmemann describes this captivity as “one of the main tragedies on the historical path of Eastern Orthodoxy,” *Church, World, Mission*, 133.

<sup>842</sup> According to Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou the Orthodox theological schools in Russia “replaced the traditional Orthodox canon with scholastic and enlightenment authors” and Latin had “replaced Old Slavonic and Greek as the intellectual languages of Russia” by 1700. *Orthodox Constructions*, 13.

<sup>843</sup> Ware, “Orthodox theology today,” 113.

<sup>844</sup> Some notable examples of this are Louth’s *Introducing Eastern Orthodoxy*, McGuckin’s *The Orthodox Church*, Bouteneff’s *Sweeter than Honey*. Ware’s *The Orthodox Church* and *The Orthodox Way* represent an earlier trend in this direction.

<sup>845</sup> Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, *Orthodox Constructions*, 5.

self-definition over against the Western ‘other.’ For Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, this concern with the “imagined” Western other has shaped Orthodoxy for centuries.<sup>846</sup> They clearly wish to encourage fellow members of their tradition to seek a better knowledge of the West in order to develop a positive and independent approach to Orthodox theology free from anti-Western rhetoric or bias.<sup>847</sup>

In addition to necessitating the confrontation of the historical Orthodox bias towards the West,<sup>848</sup> the closer encounters between these two mindsets also multiply the possibilities for miscommunication. In many parts of the world, where the Western mindset would be the historical norm<sup>849</sup> the Orthodox church now has significant communities.<sup>850</sup> Not only is it crucial that these two theological mindsets take the time to more fully understand one another, it is also important that each is self-aware when communicating with the other, sharing the assumptions behind their work as well as the goals and the method.<sup>851</sup> This emphasis on an ecumenical approach to theology has not always been a prominent feature of the Orthodox world, but the developments of the past century have made it virtually impossible to avoid ecumenical conversation. We

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<sup>846</sup> Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, *Orthodox Constructions*, 2.

<sup>847</sup> Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, *Orthodox Constructions*, 21.

<sup>848</sup> It is not my wish to be unbalanced in this, there has certainly also been anti-eastern sentiment in the west, although, I suspect it is markedly different in identity, assumptions and prejudices. It shows itself chiefly, I suspect in the simplistic western approach to eastern orthodox theology that too-often fails to recognise the different thought-world in which the Orthodox exist, as Schmemmann observes, “one of the most agonizing aspects of the ecumenical encounter lies very often precisely in this inability of the ‘West’ to grasp anything ‘Orthodox’ unless it is reduced to Western categories, expressed in Western terms and more often than not, altered in its true meaning.” *Church, World, Mission*, 25. Little more will be said about this aspect of the encounter between Orthodoxy and the West as it is not within the scope of this project.

<sup>849</sup> The USA, Australia, the UK, etc.

<sup>850</sup> This creates a unique problem for the global Orthodox Church as these ‘diaspora’ congregations tend to retain a specific ethnic identity (Russian, Greek, Slavic, etc.) and ties to their original parent see. Orthodox theological thought has yet to grapple with this problem of integration in exile to which converts cannot join. Cf. Papanikolaou, “Integrating,” 178; Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*, 13-4; McGuckin, *Orthodox Church*, 26-7.

<sup>851</sup> Cf. Behr, *Nicene Faith*, xvii; Bouteneff, *Sweeter than Honey*, 65. This also echoes again Ludlow’s call for methodological clarity in Zizioulas’ work.

have already seen how this is beginning to result in the Orthodox seeking self-expression in order to communicate more clearly with other faith traditions.

Inherent within all such communications is the Orthodox self-understanding of superiority as the heirs of ultimate truth.<sup>852</sup> For they directly claim that theirs is “the *true* Church,” and desire that Orthodoxy should be “known, understood and, with God’s help, accepted in the West.”<sup>853</sup> As Schmemmann states:

It has always been the consensus of Orthodox theologians that their participation in the ecumenical movement has as its goal to bring an Orthodox witness to the non-Orthodox, and there is no reason to deny that this implies the idea of conversion to Orthodoxy.<sup>854</sup>

Zizioulas introduces *Being as Communion*, his first major publication in English, with the explicit desire that his work should promote ecumenism and promote a neopatristic synthesis that could be shared among the church traditions of the world.<sup>855</sup> He clearly states the anticipated goal of this synthesis to lead “the West and the East nearer to their common roots, in the context of the existential quest of modern man.”<sup>856</sup> In keeping with his involvement in ecumenical conversations and the World Council of Churches, Zizioulas’ explanation of the ultimate goal of the neopatristic synthesis to which he seeks to contribute is ecumenical in context and intention.

This introduction is very open and generous, yet his theological identity is deeply and unashamedly Orthodox, and he does not explain the implicit assumptions associated

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<sup>852</sup> It is only fair to point out here that Schmemmann clearly states that the Orthodox self-understanding of the “Universal Truth of the Church” should not be confused “with a naive ‘superiority complex.’” *Church, World, Mission*, 124.

<sup>853</sup> Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*, 123.

<sup>854</sup> Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*, 123. It should be noted that Schmemmann’s work significantly pre-dates many of the other Orthodox authors cited here. More recent authors are much more circumspect about any desire to “convert” western Christians. However, Schmemmann’s work is significant in the terms of this project as he was a contemporary of Zizioulas, and I suspect that his frankness about the motives of the Orthodox in participating in the ecumenical conversation can shed some light on Zizioulas’ stated intention to lead the East and the West “nearer to their common roots.” Cf. *BAC*, 26.

<sup>855</sup> Zizioulas, *Being*, 26.

<sup>856</sup> *BAC*, 26.



with his tradition. His system, taken out of the context of an Orthodox understanding of authority and a non-developmental approach to doctrine, is open to critical responses that overlook its internal coherence, and compromise the integrity of his conclusions. It seems likely that it is chiefly this lack of contextual clarity that leaves Zizioulas's ideas open to theological mining and repurposing outside the context of his programme.

#### *4.1.4 Conclusions*

This brief exploration of Orthodox theological assumptions has highlighted the dedication to the centrality of the liturgy in theology, conversational and relational engagement of authorities, lack of a developmental understanding of doctrinal history, and inherent prejudice in East-West relations that characterise Orthodox doctrinal theology. It is reasonable to infer from this that Zizioulas reads the Fathers, including the Cappadocians, devotionally, conversationally and inspirationally, in keeping with his tradition. Thus the context for his theological system is spiritual, inspirational, and relational rather than logical or critical.

The interesting historical moment in which Zizioulas came to theological studies, his ecumenical interests, and his choice to both study and teach in a Western context have all given his work a broader influence in the English speaking world than, arguably, any other Orthodox theologian of his generation. This has led to a wider and more varied influence of his words and thoughts than could reasonably have been anticipated when *Being as Communion* was published nearly 30 years ago.

It is to be hoped that this exploration of the presumptions and intellectual climate of Orthodoxy in contrast to a Western mindset have helped to clarify the unique position occupied by Zizioulas' theological system. He, as all who seek to do theology, creates and interacts with ideas within his own specific context. His work stands on its own as a complete and self-contained system. It is possible to discern certain weaknesses or

questionable claims within that system, but to invest time and energy in seeking to discredit or dismantle it is, I think, to miss the point of its creation.

## **4.2 Reading Zizioulas**

Although it is plain that Zizioulas has constructed his theological system within the values and assumptions of an Orthodox worldview, his presentation of that system to Western eyes without context or explanation leaves it open to Western-style criticism of its content and assumptions. This section will take a brief look at some of the most obvious critiques I have noted while studying Zizioulas. There is some overlap here, of course, with critiques mentioned elsewhere in this project.

Central to the conclusions of this project is an unanswered question about the responsibility for clear communication. It is difficult to decide whether Zizioulas is primarily at fault for failing to communicate his assumptions or are his (mis)readers at fault for failing to grasp the hinterland of tradition and method which lies, almost invisibly, behind his system. The second subsection below will touch on some of the more simplistic misreadings of Zizioulas' theology, particularly in relation to 'social trinitarianism,' the area in which his theology seems to be most widely (mis)used.

Finally, in light of these two sides of the interpretive coin, some thought will be given to the necessity of clear communication in theological discourse. This is important not just in the outlining of the methods and assumptions of any given project, it is also critical in terms of values and worldview. It is, of course, possible to critique an Orthodox author with a Western philosophical framework. It is less certain what doing so might accomplish in terms of advancing dialogue. As a growing number of Orthodox scholars working in the West seek to develop and explain their unique tradition in a fundamentally alien context, perhaps it is time for some working from a

more Western mindset to take up the challenge of communicating effectively with the Orthodox and attempt to build bridges from the Western end.

#### *4.2.1 Critiquing Zizioulas*

In the previous chapter much time and space was devoted to a presentation of Zizioulas' theology as a complete system. It was the intent of that chapter to keep criticism of Zizioulas to a minimum in order to present a clear image of his systematic trinitarian circle. Zizioulas' theology, considered as a self-contained system, has a marked symmetry and even beauty, but also implicit in the close construction of Zizioulas' system is the danger, already indicated, that a single convincing argument against any single element of his system has the potential to discredit his entire body of work.<sup>857</sup> In this section, I will note a few criticisms that have risen to the fore of my mind while constructing this image.

For example, Zizioulas spends an appreciable amount of time grounding his work in "Greek Philosophy." He approaches the theology of the Fathers, specifically the Cappadocians, from this starting point. It is only against the background of Greek monism that the Cappadocian philosophical revolution described by Zizioulas is powerful and effective. In approaching the subject in *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas does spend significant time outlining the positions of Greek philosophy on this issue including references to Platonic thought and Aristotle and voluminous footnotes,<sup>858</sup> but there is relatively little reference to the variety to be found in ancient Greek philosophy, the differences between philosophical schools, etc. "Greek philosophy" appears again in *Communion and Otherness*, and again is represented by mention of "Platonic

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<sup>857</sup> This has been discounted by Papanikolaou in regard to his ecclesiology by claiming that it is very little dependant on his reading of the Cappadocians being chronologically second to that reading in Zizioulas' theological development, "Integrating," 175.

<sup>858</sup> *BAC*, 27-37.

dialogues,” Aristotle, and the “Pre-Socratics.”<sup>859</sup> For the purposes of his theological system, it is enough for Zizioulas to state that “ancient Greek thought in *all* its forms”<sup>860</sup> had one central thing in common: “particularity is not ontologically absolute; the many are always ontologically derivative, not causative.”<sup>861</sup> Although he does offer some references, both primary and secondary, in support of this claim, they are minimal when compared to the magnitude and variety of ancient Greek thought.

As has already been noted several time in this project, it is also possible to criticise Zizioulas’ reading of the Cappadocians. It seems his approach to them is similar, in fact, to the way he references Greek Philosophy. Perhaps he does so for similar reasons. Whatever other differences the Cappadocians may have, he understands them to share fully in the philosophical revolution he outlines and the trinitarian theology associated with it. Perhaps, as with the universal understanding of particularity as derivative within Greek philosophy, he is only interested in this specific aspect of the teachings of the Cappadocians, not the complete context and content of the works of each man. If this is the case, he does not seem to say as much.

Another effective critique of Zizioulas’ work has already been noted by Ludlow. He does not clarify the method or purposes of his theological project, especially in regard to his use of and references to the Cappadocians, or indeed the other Fathers. In the first chapter we noted many references to concerns about his lack of clarity regarding patristic sources, or even out-right misappropriation of them. These areas of ambiguity seem to provide an almost equal and opposite contrast to the remarkably clear and enclosed system of Zizioulas in the equally marked reactions and criticisms to

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<sup>859</sup> *CAO*, 13.

<sup>860</sup> *CAO*, 102, emphasis original.

<sup>861</sup> *CAO*, 102. He specifically mentions Parmenidean, Heraclitan, Platonic and Aristotelian.

it. His terms are painstakingly defined, but his method and values remain permanently clouded.

#### *4.2.2 Misreading Zizioulas*

By now it should be clear that is not the intention of this project either to unequivocally praise Zizioulas as perfect or to discredit his work. It is almost impossible to deny the profundity or, especially, influence of his theological programme. We have seen how his influence, mediated through the trinitarian revival, has extended far beyond the realm of specialists who have taken the time to study or to understand him as he is, on his own terms.<sup>862</sup> This widespread reception of Zizioulas' work is at times as much a problem as a blessing. As I have been at pains to communicate, without understanding the assumptions behind Zizioulas' work, it is easy to misunderstand and potentially misapply his theology.

The variety of responses to and uses of Zizioulas' theology illustrates how academic theologians approach other theological figures, both historical and contemporary, with certain assumptions or attitudes in place. Although this wide dissemination of Zizioulas' name, publications and influence has contributed to greater integration, or at least cooperation between Orthodox and western theologies, it has also had an undesirable side effect. When Zizioulas' theological system, deeply steeped in Orthodox tradition and a long conversation with the Holy Fathers, has come into contact with Western thought, it has too often been interpreted from a modern, scientific standpoint. The internal coherence of his work may seem to encourage this type of reading, until certain questions are asked about the 'truth' of his claims about the

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<sup>862</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter such readings as are found in Fox, *God as Communion*, Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*; and Turcescu, "'Person' versus 'Individual'," show some basic misunderstandings and oversimplifications of Zizioulas' theology.

Cappadocians, for example, or his, apparently simplistic, reading of the Greek philosophical mind as universally monistic in understanding.

The wide influence and subsequent popularity of Zizioulas' characteristically Orthodox thought in the Western world has led to a plethora of partial- and mis-understandings of his theological programme some of which this author has been at pains to contradict and expose. His ideas have been filtered down into a popularised category of 'social-trinitarianism' which is connected more to the name of Zizioulas and the phrase 'being as communion' than to the actual, nuanced structures of his detailed theological system. Zizioulas is categorically not a social-trinitarian in the popular meaning of that phrase. To read his work, or read others' summaries of his work and use the attractive ideas of love and communion without reference to or understanding of the philosophical context and ontological content of these words has unfortunate consequences. When he speaks of personal relationships and love between persons he is not speaking of emotion or feeling, consciousness or self-awareness, or a mathematical equation in which individuals add up to a whole. Being/existence/personhood - ontology - is found only in communion/love/relationship with the Other - before and outside this paradigm there is no life and no personhood.

The context of the neopatristic revival, to which Zizioulas has sought to contribute, is Western, but it seems that in undertaking the neopatristic project Orthodox theological thought has maintained the internal logic of its own tradition. It is this that, ultimately, makes Zizioulas' theology so hard to successfully challenge or to deconstruct. Fundamentally, it is not meant to be so, it is meant to be used, lived with, grown in, as a plant grows in soil. Much as Zizioulas himself has done both with the Fathers, including the Cappadocians, and his own tradition.

To approach Zizioulas' theology in order to deconstruct his patristic readings is to miss the point of his theology. Zizioulas' theological system grows organically out of his tradition. He is not constructing a theological structure built on a foundation of a "correct" reading of the Fathers. The assumption that such a reading could be established is foreign to his project. Assuming the possibility of an absolute understanding of patristic sources treats them in a modern/Western/scientific way rather than an organic/Eastern/devotional way.<sup>863</sup> The 'correct,' which is to say helpful, inspirational and devout reading of the Fathers in connection with the situations and concerns of the world today, reading today may not be correct in the next generation.

There is a fresh generation of young Greek/Orthodox theologians now seeking to come to terms with Zizioulas' legacy. As the lines between east and west have been blurred over the last century, the 'western' critical approach to his work can be discerned even among critics within his own tradition.<sup>864</sup> Among the Orthodox he universally commands respect, not least, perhaps, because of his recognised position as patriarch of Pergamon. However, this respect, as we have seen, does not preclude the next generation criticising Zizioulas' theology.<sup>865</sup>

#### *4.2.3 The Importance of Methodological Clarity*

Without doubt, Zizioulas presents his readings of the Fathers and Greek philosophy as correct without apology. Making such a claim, even implicitly, in

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<sup>863</sup> Ware suggests that the terminology of "synthesis" and Florovsky's reference to "'the Patristic mind', as if this were something single and homogeneous" is "in danger of merging the Fathers, with all their personal diversity, too closely into a unified whole," "Orthodox Theology today," 113.

<sup>864</sup> Nicholas Loudovikos stands out as an example here of a younger Orthodox theologian who has deeply criticises Zizioulas' readings of Maximus and Origen on the basis that he has misread their meaning. Cf. his "Eikon and mimesis" and his "Person instead of Grace." This trend of western criticism among Orthodox writers has also be noted by Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou who note that certain Orthodox authors "seemingly operate within the philosophical system and employ the academic tools of the Western intellectual tradition for the very purpose of narrating an Eastern Christianity that was inherently free of Western pollution," *Orthodox Constructions*, 20.

<sup>865</sup> Loudovikos, "Person instead of Grace," 684. He describes Zizioulas as "a theologian of great inspiration and a man of the church."

ecumenical conversation with the West invites the criticism he has received, but it is in keeping with his tradition. He can chiefly be blamed for omitting an explanation of his tradition and theological assumptions that would help non-Orthodox readers to grasp the wider context of his work rather than fixate on the (apparent) lack of critical and academic justification for some of his central claims.

If Zizioulas' purpose was to be a part of leading the East and the West nearer to one another by appealing to their common theological ancestors,<sup>866</sup> it is possible to say that he has achieved his aim. His work has been widely read and even more widely engaged with by many who have been inspired by the image of the Trinity as a communion of persons. Theological conversation reacting to and descending from his work has been a significant part of the conversations surrounding trinitarian theology that have taken place since the publication of *Being as Communion*. It is only disappointing that the true depth and subtlety of Zizioulas' work has been hampered by the lack of subtlety in much of the engagement with his concepts.

In this chapter we have sought a deeper understanding of the Orthodox tradition which Zizioulas inhabits, and how that has affected his theological system. A brief exploration of some of the identifying factors of Orthodoxy, especially in reference to historical and patristic studies and the neopatristic synthesis, uncovered distinctly Orthodox approaches to authority and doctrinal history that focus on a living conversation and the importance of liturgy and prayer in theological reflection. It was also noted that there is, within much Orthodox theology, a latent anti-western slant that can prejudice dialog between Orthodoxy and the West, even in specifically ecumenical situations.

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<sup>866</sup> *BAC*, 26.



Returning to the project of critiquing Zizioulas, it became clear that a western critique of Zizioulas' theology is possible, but such a critique risks missing the distinctive Orthodoxy of Zizioulas. As representative of Orthodox theology, he is contributing to the development of that tradition, not to an historical-critical approach to patristic studies. It is the opinion of this author that many of the criticisms and misreadings of Zizioulas' work result from this category mistake. In this instance, Zizioulas is chiefly to blame for failing to make his assumptions and methodology plain, especially when he began to publish his work in non-Orthodox countries and, specifically in the context of this project, in the English language. Such awareness and self-explanation may have avoided some of the confusion and unnecessary criticism that has resulted from his silence on this subject, a silence that is, arguably, much in keeping with the condescending approach to the West that springs from a latent anti-western mindset within Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>867</sup>

In conversation with the Fathers, a deep respect for the holiness of his own tradition, and a lifetime of theological education, research and writing in a multitude of language, Zizioulas has become a formidable force within the academic world of Christian theology of all traditions, at least in the Global North. His life has been devoted to the doing of theology. Returning to the image of a garden, he has digested untold amounts of information and developed from it his own approach, his own understanding, his own contribution to the theological world, and this has not happened in intellectual isolation. Zizioulas, like all Orthodox, has remained tied, not just to tradition and to the the fathers but also to the liturgy. His theology grows out of a life of worship and devotion. His search for a theology of God and his longing to communicate

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<sup>867</sup> Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, *Orthodox Constructions*, 1-22. Cf. Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*, 123-5.

that vision are part of his worship, his prayer, his discipleship. He does not just 'study' theology or even 'do theology,' he 'lives' theology, seeking to embrace and disperse, communicate and live the life of faith both in and beyond his written words.

## **Conclusion - The doing of Theology**

In this project we set out to find a better understanding of John Zizioulas' reading of the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers. From the beginning, it has been plain that there is considerable variety in readings and interpretations of Zizioulas as well as assessments of the validity of his reading of the Cappadocians. Such diversity within scholarly opinion pointed to a fertile area for exploration. The resulting project has raised questions about the reading and interpretation of theological texts and pointed to an apparent lack of awareness in some academic areas of the profound differences in the methods of patristic reading and conceptions of authority between the theological traditions of Western, post-enlightenment scholarship and Eastern Orthodoxy. A summary of this project is included here, followed by some thoughts on the implications and wider applications of the conclusions of this project.

### **5.1 Summary**

The first Chapter presented the historical and academic context of John Zizioulas. Historically, the mass emigration of a considerable number of the Russian Orthodox academic elite in the 1920s eventually resulted in the founding of the Institute St. Sergius in Paris. This disruption of the Orthodox world also brought Orthodox theology into direct contact with Western theological concerns and motifs for effectively the first time in several centuries. In seeking to develop an ecumenical dialogue as well as supply a uniquely Orthodox voice amongst the many approaches to faith and theology found in the West, some of these émigré theologians began to promote a return to the Fathers as the core to Orthodox theology. Foremost among these was Georges Florovsky and his call for a Neo-Patristic synthesis and the rediscovery of Christian Hellenism. The influence of these theologians reached Greece, Zizioulas' country of birth, at the first ever pan-Orthodox conferences held in Athens in 1936. This return to

the Fathers or the search for the neopatristic synthesis was, arguably, one of the most influential trends in the Orthodox theology of the later twentieth century.

John Zizioulas, who came of age as a theologian in 1960s Greece, became one of the notable participants in the search for a neopatristic synthesis. He also participated in the ecumenical conversations of the World Council of Churches in the later twentieth century. His first and, arguably, most influential book published in English, *Being as Communion*, appeared in 1986. Through both timing and content, this book provided an early contribution to what has come to be described as a “revival” or “renaissance” of trinitarian theology over the last few decades of the twentieth century. Because of his use of the terminology of love, communion, relationship and personhood, Zizioulas’ theology has come to be credited as one of the chief sources of “social trinitarianism.”

In our exploration of the academic reception of Zizioulas, we noted a number of different reactions to and uses of his theology. Orthodox authors often interact with his work in terms of the themes of eucharistic theology or personhood. More general reception of his work is more likely to question his reading of patristic sources, particularly the Cappadocian Fathers, or take exception to a particular aspect of his theological programme. Chief amongst these are a number of concerns about Zizioulas’ emphasis on the necessity of the Monarchy of the Father, his apparent emphasis on *hypostasis* to the expense of the unifying *ousia* in trinitarian theology, his description of personhood as a category of being and the apparently definitive language he uses to describe the transcendent Trinity. In addition to these concerns, it was noted that there are many who freely re-use and re-cycle various portions of Zizioulas’ theological system without offering any but the most basic critical interaction with that system and its implications.

As we have seen in the first chapter, the interpretation of the Cappadocians was highlighted as an important area of criticism directed at Zizioulas. The centrality of the Cappadocian contribution to the trinitarian aspects of Zizioulas' theology make such criticism potentially dangerous to his system. In order to form a clearer understanding of the potential validity, or otherwise, of Zizioulas' use of Cappadocian theology, the focus of the project then shifted onto the Cappadocian Fathers.

Seeking to better understand the Cappadocian category, the second chapter attempted to discover which individuals are included in the Cappadocian Fathers. Although Zizioulas includes Amphilochius among the Cappadocians, it was concluded that the Cappadocian category most practically and widely refers to Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, the three central Cappadocians who appear on every list. A summary of their lives and relationships was included as context for their theological ideas.

This was followed by an attempt to discover, if possible, the origin of the use of the Cappadocian category in anglophone scholarship and exploring some possible justifications for its creation and use. We also noted three discernible theories about or approaches to the use of this category and some of the chief proponents of these approaches, particularly to the idea of a common or shared Cappadocian Theology.

Some notice was then taken of the main trinitarian themes of each man's theology and the connections between them all and Zizioulas' summary of their pivotal contribution to the history and development of theology. The chapter closed with a brief look at their main influences and their place within the wider history of Christian faith and theology.

In the third chapter we turned our attention to the formation of a systematic reading of Zizioulas theology through a trinitarian lens. The chapter began with some

exploration into already existing scholarship on this topic, namely, the treatment of John Zizioulas' theology as a complete, coherent system. The contributions of other scholars to a clear reading of Zizioulas on his own terms were summarised. The reasons for this treatment of Zizioulas' theology as a complete system were also addressed, as he has never presented it as a *summa* or otherwise specifically named or described any of his own books as "systematic theology." The introduction to chapter 3 closed with a brief explanation of two basic assumptions underlining Zizioulas theology. The first of these is his deep, and deeply Orthodox, conviction that the theology of the Church is and must always be integrally linked to the liturgy of the worshipping community of believers. The second is a qualification of the language theology can use when talking of God. Simply put, Zizioulas believes that it is possible for theology to reflect on "how" God is what God is, but not purely on "what" God is.

With this background in place, we began our summary of Zizioulas' theological system with an exploration of his understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity in the historical context of Greek philosophy. Zizioulas' presentation of Trinitarian doctrine centres around Greek words, most notably *prosopon* and *hypostasis*. First, he traces the history of *prosopon* as associated with the mask worn by an actor in an ancient Greek tragedy. He carries this context of individuality as only a mask, having no ontological content, into the patristic era where he describes its modification by the Cappadocians. The fundamental Cappadocian contribution, then, is to take the idea of particularity provided by *prosopon* and link it to the concept of ontological content present in *hypostasis*. In so doing they created the trinitarian idea of personhood - fully free, ontological particularity. This is important because it breaks the monistic tie between creator and creation, allowing God to be prior to and utterly separate from the world,

giving rise to creation through the particular will of an ontologically independent person rather than through cosmological or ontological necessity.

The same importance of maintaining the ultimate and utter freedom of God, leads to Zizioulas' emphasis on the monarchy of the Father within the Trinity. The Father freely chooses to cause the Son and the Spirit, by the neatly distinguished means of begetting and spiration, and decidedly *not* through any overflow of divine *ousia*. This allows the essence or *ousia* of God to be secondary to the *hypostases* of the three trinitarian persons. The essential being of God is not the cause of trinitarian divinity, rather it is consequential to the personal/hypostatic relationships of the three trinitarian persons.

This centrality of personhood carries over into the rest of Zizioulas' theological programme. The reciprocal, free relationships of intratrinitarian life are both the source and the goal of all created life. The Trinity creates the world *ex-nihilo*, in this way relationship creates something from nothing, and the continuing relationship of God and God's creation maintains the existence of the world. There is still, however, a radical difference between divine being and created being. In this we see the central concept of the Other, for it is radical otherness that provides the context of the realisation of hypostatic personhood. When a single hypostasis reaches out to the other in recognition of that other's total uniqueness, the object of that recognition gains ontological status as a person, rather than a mere individual collection of qualities. In Zizioulas' understanding, this process of reaching out to the other and confirming individual, hypostatic uniqueness, must always have an unbroken line of relationship to trinitarian life, as the Father, in the Trinity, is the ultimate source of true personhood and relationship.

The relationship between God, the Father in eternal trinitarian relationship, and the created world is maintained through the link of the hypostatic personhood of Christ in which divine and human being/*ousia* are joined in a single person. Thus human persons, freely choosing hypostatic relationship with the Trinity, may enter this relationship through a relationship with the person of Christ. This relationship, constituted by the work of the Holy Spirit, allows human persons to share in the ontologically constituting trinitarian relationships, thus bringing them into eternal alignment with God. This bestowal of eternal personhood and ontological distinction is Zizioulas' version of *theosis*, the plan of salvation. Within the constitutive relationship of Christ with believers, we find the Church. For Zizioulas, the person of Christ is irrevocably linked to the communal, liturgical and eucharistic life of the Church, the Body of Christ. Neither can be understood apart from this common link. The Body of Christ, realised within the life of the Church, also maintains a relationship with the creative world, thus maintaining the link between the creator and the creation and facilitating the further existence and eventual cleansing of all of creation.

All of these relationships, among the Trinity, the Body of Christ and the created world are constituted eternally in the celebration of the Eucharist. When any portion of the Body of Christ celebrates the eucharist, all of that Body, from all of history, are joined in a timeless event that draws the past and the present into the future, the *eschaton*, the fulfilment of all history. This eucharistic event is the ultimate manifestation of personhood, joining all believers and, through them, all creation, into life-giving, eternal relationship with God. Through this we see that the joining of trinitarian life is the goal of all existence, just as the hypostatic relationships of trinitarian life are its source. This ended our exploration of Zizioulas' theology as a



systematic trinitarian circle beginning and ending with loving, ekstatic, ontologically-constituting relationship.

The fourth chapter focused on Zizioulas' identity as an Orthodox theologian, and how that has effected his reading of the Fathers in general and the Cappadocians in particular. We began by seeking a clearer understanding of what might be described as an Orthodox approach to theology. Because of the specific context and goals of this project, understanding Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocians, our inquiry into Orthodox approaches to theology focused particularly on the concepts of authority, the history or development of doctrine, Orthodox self-understanding in an ecumenical context and their approach to reading the Fathers. From this study, it was concluded that the Orthodox understanding of authority and purposes in reading and referencing the Fathers are considerably removed from a Western, post-Enlightenment, historical-critical approach.

As the first chapter showed, it is possible to criticise Zizioulas. In the fourth chapter we touched again on this, noting that his generalisations, his assumptions and, to some extent, his patristic reading, are open to Western-style criticism using post-enlightenment assumptions and categories. He opens himself up to this criticism by publishing his works in the west and the English language with no other explanation or introduction than a nod in the direction of ecumenism and neopatristic synthesis. This lack of clarity about his basic assumptions, particularly in relation to an Orthodox approach to theology in general and patristics in particular, leaves him open to just such attacks on his logic and lack of clarity as we have already noted in Chapter 1. Unfortunately, these scholars often fail to realise that they are criticising Zizioulas for failing to employ an approach or keep to scholarly values that he never intended to use or desired to keep.

As this summary shows, our exploration of the theological system of John Zizioulas and his interpretation and use of the “Cappadocians” has ranged over technical trinitarian terminology and historical accident. We have traced the history, interpretation and use of the Cappadocian category in English language scholarship, and offered a summary of Zizioulas’ theological system through the symbol of a trinitarian circle. We have concluded that the reception and use of Zizioulas’ theology and the reactions to his readings of the Cappadocians, provide a telling example of the intersection of Eastern Orthodox and Western Christian attitudes to theology and patristics in the shared central symbol of the Trinity.

The independence and internal integration of Zizioulas’ theological programme present a distinct challenge to the Western mindset. Similar to the complexity of the lists of Orthodox sources of authority and complex explanations of their interrelationships found in Chapter 4, Zizioulas’ system defies attempts to break it down into simplified categories and challenges those who would seek to separate out specific doctrines for examination apart from the whole. Within his system, each aspect of doctrine leads directly into the next, carrying through assumptions about theological experience and the use of traditional sources that are all the more powerful for being neither acknowledged nor explained.

As this project has demonstrated, mining for the background and context of Zizioulas’ theology can help us to understand his programme in the context from which it comes, traditional as well as historical. In turn, this contextual understanding of his contribution allows us to examine, explore and react to his theology for its content and intended purposes rather than its perceived methodological weaknesses. When this method of critical engagement is adopted, it is possible to avoid the twin dangers of attributing theological ideas to Zizioulas that he would not wish to claim (such as social

trinitarianism) or being sidetracked from interaction with his theological depths by a perceived incorrect reading or use of the Fathers in his programme.

Theological interaction in the academic marketplace too often fails to account for such context, drawing instead on simplified understandings of the thoughts of others or splintered abstractions from their works. This is illustrated by some mentioned above who have engaged with Zizioulas on their own terms, using him either as support for a point he would, arguably, not have supported or as a straw man or other representative of an approach or belief they wish to universally condemn. In both cases the reading, or at least the references to Zizioulas, are decidedly shallow and one-dimensional, fitting him into a pre-made argument rather than allowing him to speak on his own terms.

Such incomplete or simplistic readings of his theology contrast strongly with Zizioulas' own description and use of the Cappadocian contribution of which he demonstrates a deep and detailed knowledge within the context of the readings and history of his own tradition. Having gained an understanding of the theological context and content of the Cappadocians and identified in his own mind the importance of the Cappadocian Contribution, Zizioulas constructs his own theology, drawing on his reading of the Cappadocians and many other Fathers and what he has absorbed of their theological and liturgical mindset, as well as his education and context, to create his own theological understanding.

As was made clear in Chapter 1, it is possible to disagree with Zizioulas' claims about the Cappadocian Contribution, and some do. Others criticise more specific aspects of his reading of the Cappadocians. Readings of ancient texts are often arguable, and patristic scholarship is still opening fresh doors into worlds and works of the Cappadocians and many other Fathers of the Church. However much such scholarship may be able to question certain aspects of Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocians, it is

not possible to accuse him of misusing or failing to take seriously the legacy of the Cappadocians, or any other of the Fathers who are so important within his own liturgical and theological context.

## **5.2 Implications**

Having reached the end of the project, it is now time to look at the final conclusions and inferences that can be drawn from this work at its completion. The title of the this project points to this ending, asking specifically what Western theologians can learn from this study. To this end the project has focused specifically on English language sources, primarily written from or to a British or American context. As we have seen, it is out of this context that much of the criticism or questionable uses of Zizioulas originates (Coakely, Holmes, Fox, etc.).

Throughout this project, the emphasis and ethos of the research has been on understanding Zizioulas' work within his own context and history. This approach has been deliberate, seeking to understand rather than to criticise. This search for understanding has revealed a central point of apparent misunderstanding between Zizioulas and his critics (one thinks here of Holmes and Turcescu in particular), that point, already alluded to by Ludlow, centres on the understanding of the authority of the Church Fathers and the function of their use as either authority figures or helpful examples of any given reading or construction of theological ideas.

As we have taken this time to seek out Zizioulas' context and his own purposes, it has become clear that these two areas of exploration, used as guiding principles of theological reflection, have become central to a constructive and useful understanding of his work. Similarly, when reflecting on the personalities, lives and context of the Cappadocian Fathers, it became clear that their theology, within a fourth century context, had specific purposes whether to advance the 'Nicene' cause, promote civil

understanding, contradict Eunomius or seek out the luminous darkness found only in the height of divine human communion. Knowing all this, however, does not inspire Zizioulas to attempt to reconstruct what the Cappadocians meant by a certain thing, rather he uses their theological legacies together with Orthodox Tradition and the writings of other Fathers as an inspiration for a new reading of patristic theology: seeking Florovsky's neopatristic synthesis, trying to find in the Fathers a mindset and an attitude as much, or more than, a definitive interpretation of their theology.

As we travel further into the twenty-first century, some Orthodox theologians in the English speaking world are calling for fresh reflection on the place of Orthodoxy within a newly global context, in conversation and contrast with the plethora of Western theological approaches. Such diversity is, in itself, anathema to the Orthodox mind, not because of the wide differences of belief, but because of the fracturing of communion over such ideas. For the Orthodox, the Church is one, a value that is constantly challenged by the very existence of a multiplicity of small Protestant groups, not to mention their old and lamented brake with the Roman Catholics.

As this younger crop of Orthodox theologians wrestle with the legacy of the search for the neopatristic synthesis and, for many of them, exile from traditional Orthodox countries and cultures, Western theologians also find themselves with a fresh task within the context of theological study and reflection. While Zizioulas' legacy, and that of his generation, continues to filter through into Western theological reflection, on the Trinity as well as other areas, we owe it to ourselves, our siblings from another Church, and the future students of theology to make the effort to understand that the theological legacy, values and intentions of Orthodox theologians often differ from those held by the heirs of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations and the historical-critical mindset of the Enlightenment.

In short, in view of these significant differences between broadly Eastern and Western approaches to theological studies, it is a grave disservice to that discipline when we read only to criticise, write only to disprove and teach students only to argue. Engaging with scholars of different mindsets and traditions requires some subtlety of approach and understanding. The depth and breadth of Orthodox tradition is certainly as great as any in the West can boast, if not greater. When we engage with that tradition, we should at the least recognise and respect those differences. Zizioulas' theology may have weaknesses and apparent contradictions, particularly to Western eyes, but it is meticulous, detailed, faithful, reverent and, in places, inspiring.

One of the central themes of Zizioulas' theological programme is the idea of Otherness. The ultimate Other is, of course, found in the Godhead, and it is through relationship with this source of all particularity and personhood that each unique person has the opportunity to be ontologically constituted, to have their own particular otherness recognised and confirmed. Each person thus constituted is, for Zizioulas, utterly unique and irreplaceable. In referencing the idea of the "Other" in the title of this project, it is the intension of the author to highlight the unique contribution to theological reflection made, in this case by Zizioulas, but from a wider point of view, the unique contribution made by all who undertake theological reflection. Theological dialogue, then, is the opportunity to recognise the absolute uniqueness of the ideas of others even as we seek to articulate our own unique insights and points of view, whether through agreement or argument.

It is possible to object to such an idea, as it is to Zizioulas' entire theological system, that it is too idealistic, that it is not practical, that it is, in fact, an esoteric suggestion, with little or no practical applicability within the world of academic theology. Not everyone will be sympathetic to such an approach, and the categories of

‘right’ and ‘wrong’ interpretation, that already have such a strong footing, especially within patristics, will not easily be abandoned. Arguably, they need not be, but it is as important to maintain and communicate an awareness of my own approach to my work, as it is important to seek full understanding of the approach of another theologian before I criticise his work.

Some, especially Orthodox, theologians are beginning to use pieces of Zizioulas’ theological system, in respectful ways, seeking a new consensus as history continues to march forward. The neopatristic synthesis has, arguably, had its day, theologians such as Papanikolaou, Ware, and McGuckin, are looking forward to the next great developments in Orthodox theology, drawing on the contributions of Florovsky, Zizioulas and the other neopatristic writers as the latest additions to the ever-shifting catalogue of Orthodox Tradition. We in the West, who increasingly see these theologians as our conversation partners, can benefit from their insights into their own tradition and history, and, perhaps, they too can benefit from a judicious use of a historical-critical reading of their own ancient sources.

Interpretation of any ancient text is always relative to our point of view when reading it. It is incumbent upon every theologian to understand where the object of our interest or criticism is coming from, both methodologically and traditionally, as well as to communicate clearly the background from which we ourselves come. This is, in my opinion, one of the greatest omissions in Zizioulas’ work, he appears not to take seriously the vast difference between his own thought world, and that of the world with which he is attempting to communicate, although that, in itself, appears to be a recurring feature of the Orthodox mindset, especially in its 20th century engagement with the West.

So, what can Western theologians learn from John Zizioulas' reading of the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers? We can learn that authority can be relative, that understanding the Church Fathers can be relational rather than technical, that reading any one portion of theological or patristic history without reference to the rest of the history of the Church can itself be seen as inadequate, but mostly we can learn that reading and criticising Orthodox theological reflection with purely Western categories runs a huge risk of missing the point, and thus failing to constructively engage with Orthodox theology. Criticising a theologian for failing to do what he has not intended to do and does not wish to do is, arguably, a waste of time, and demonstrably misses an unique opportunity to engage with a new or unknown approach to the understanding and constructing of theological ideas. It seems that, for the Orthodox, theology, when done well, draws up nourishment from those before, seeking to communicate ancient truths more faithfully in our own time and context. If these insights could be taken forward in theological conversation, perhaps it would be possible to spend more time understanding and less time fruitlessly contradicting theologians of other traditions.

## **5.2 Changing the Question**

Setting out to confirm or discredit Zizioulas' reading of Cappadocian theology, this project has ranged far and wide over the lives and legacies of Zizioulas and the Cappadocian Fathers, at times digging deeper into their personal or professional lives in search of insights into their theological understandings and points of view. The scholarly and research aspects of the project have been intriguing, particularly the construction of the image of the Systematic Trinitarian Circle as a lens through which to view the theological system of Zizioulas, in the end, however, the conclusion is that Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocians fits loosely within the wider scholarship on



Cappadocian theology, particular as regards the hallmark of the redefinition of *hypostasis* with reference to *ousia* and *prosopon*. Virtually everything else appears to be arguable in one way or the other, and, having the argument takes attention away from the richness of Zizioulas' theology.

That is not to say, of course, that it is a waste of time to have the conversation. There is value in seeking to clarify both the reading put forward by Zizioulas and the context and content of the theologies of the Cappadocians, severally and together. The Cappadocians and their contemporaries will always be the particular property of the community of patristic scholars, and no one who lacks their specialist knowledge and experience is qualified to challenge their readings of primary texts or the conclusions they draw therefrom. Zizioulas, although known and cited by many throughout the world, will always be the especial property of his own Orthodox tradition, and they (as can be seen above in Loudovikos, Papanikolaou, Ware and many others) will continue to argue and debate his legacy, its accuracy and its efficacy in addressing the practical concerns now faced by the Orthodox church living in alien contexts around the world in the 21st century.

To scholars in each of these camps this thesis may seem inadequate in scope, depth or rigour. However, this brief exploration of the nub of debate surrounding Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocian Fathers has, I think, uncovered a vital point of view that appears to be lacking in much, not to say all, of the debate surrounding this issue. While the patristic scholars attempt to establish what ancient authors actually meant, and the Orthodox scholars attempt to decide if Zizioulas' work is sufficiently Orthodox or practically useful, there is a fundamental difference of method and purpose at the heart of the debate.

It may be possible, as some claim, to disprove Zizioulas' summary of the 'Cappadocian contribution' on the basis of the more nuanced and individual theological legacies of the two Gregories. It may also be true that, in using the Cappadocian Category at all, Zizioulas can be accused of oversimplification and the adoption of an originally Western generalisation about these three Fathers that has been proven inaccurate by more recent scholarship. It seems undeniable that the complexity of the debate in patristic scholarship on this topic is itself a serious challenge to Zizioulas' comparatively simplistic citation of the Cappadocian theologians.

However, nothing is so deceptive in this case as the appearance of simplicity. Zizioulas' simplistic use of the Cappadocian category and matter of fact references to Irenaeus, Maximus and other Fathers alongside the Cappadocians is not a symptom of ignorance, but of familiarity. He is not an academic patristic scholar working closely with texts to reconstruct original meanings or illuminate biographical details. He is an Orthodox theologian, who has lived virtually all of his life in a liturgical context in which these individuals were considered part of his own family, celebrated on feast days and in icons, studied to be sure, but not in a logical and deductive way, rather in a devotional and relational way. He knows his sources well, but he does not cite them exhaustively. He has digested their meaning, perhaps without always remembering the exact source.

The opportunity for Western theologians and scholars in all of this is an invitation to engage with Zizioulas' work on more than just an academic or accusatory level, to read it for content, beauty and symmetry, to understand that Zizioulas draws his inspiration from scripture, from the Fathers and from the philosophical sources available to him, just as early church Fathers did before him, and, like them, he uses all these sources to build something that is, hopefully, appropriate for the day and age

within which he lives and creates. Each theologian recreates theology for his or her own generation, using all these sources, and what we see looking back on the sources changes, as our point of view changes.

If we are to understand this, to engage with it, to profit by it, it is imperative that we break the academic hegemony that demands all academic contributions be presented as deductive and antagonistic, pitting one thought or thinker against another and judging which is correct. It is far too easy to accomplish or create nothing because we are too busy trying to get our basic assumptions 'right.' If, on the other hand, we are aware of those assumptions and make them known to our fellows, it is possible to create ideas, build theologies and offer critiques without the burden of proof being felt or enforced.

This is what Western theologians must learn from Zizioulas' reading of the Cappadocians. He reads their works, understands them within his own context and tradition, and uses them to build new ideas to offer the marketplace. Arguing over tiny details may be illuminating and useful in certain disciplines, but it is time to allow other areas of theology to develop along more inductive lines. Is it possible to critique Zizioulas' reading of the Fathers? Yes, I believe so, but I also believe, and have been at pains to prove, that to make such a critique is to miss the point of his work, to misunderstand his tradition, and to risk missing out on a powerful and compelling theological system that is no less 'correct' for being 'arguable.'

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