

DOCTORAL THESIS

A critical study on Zizioulas' ontology of personhood

Jiang, Tingcui

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**A Critical Study on Zizioulas’
Ontology of Personhood**

JIANG Tingcui

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Principal Supervisor: Prof. Kwan Kai Man

Hong Kong Baptist University

October 2014

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work which has been done after registration for the degree of PhD at Hong Kong Baptist University, and has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation submitted to this or other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

Signature: _____

Date: October 2014

ABSTRACT

This research is about a theological ontology which is based on Zizioulas' ontology of personhood. His ontological thought is manifested by a renewed view of God and the human person. Therefore, this thesis includes three parts. The first part examines the being of God as personhood. The second part examines the being of the human person as personhood. The third part analyzes and criticizes Zizioulas' ontology of personhood.

In Part I, I explore the background and source of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood in the Cappadocian Trinitarian theology. Zizioulas claims that there has been an ontological revolution against Greek substantialism: based on the identification of hypostasis with personhood rather than *ousia*; the ontological principle of God is traced back to the person (hypostasis). It means that God first is God the Father rather than his substance or nature. This is a reversal of a view which has prevailed in Western theology. The Father is the personal cause of the generation of the Son and of the procession of the Spirit. One of the significances of the Father as personal cause is that the personal Father generates personal otherness in the divine being. Zizioulas' ontology of personhood is based on the concepts of communion and otherness. He excludes essence or *ousia* from his ontological categories.

In Part II, I will explore the being of man as personhood. The Father as personal cause bequeaths us an ontology of personhood which also provides the metaphysical ground for the being of human persons. Personhood rather than human nature is the centre of anthropology. The mode of existence of the Trinity is the foundation for the transformation of human existence from a biological hypostasis to an ecclesial hypostasis. Personal otherness is constitutive of human person. Otherness as an ontological existence transforms the relationship between human beings in communion. The coexistence of otherness and communion in a Trinitarian model provides a foundation for the criticisms of Levinas' concept of otherness without communion.

In Part III, I will criticize the Western views of God and person, but also analyze and criticize Zizioulas' ontology of personhood. The significance of the ontology of personhood is shown by its providing an insightful and radical critique of the substantialist Trinitarian theology which understands One God as substance foremost. At the same time, it provides strong criticisms of individualist understanding of the concept of personhood.

I conclude that Zizioulas has reconstructed a new theological ontology and a new systematic theology which are significantly different from our customary thinking of theology. But because of his overlooking of the views of sin and justice in the ontological sense, I also criticize Zizioulas' ontology of personhood for its lack of a critical reflection on the society.

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Introduction

John Zizioulas (1931-) is a famous contemporary theologian from the Eastern Orthodox tradition. He adopts a theological approach which is markedly different from the traditional Western substantialist approach. I will call this approach in this thesis “the ontology of personhood.” It provides a new understanding of the concept of personhood in terms of the Cappadocian Trinitarian theology. Zizioulas also constructs an anthropology based on the ontology of personhood. Before going into the details, I will first introduce the overall shape of my research in the following sections.

1. A personalist approach to theological study¹

Christianity is based on an account of events that happened in the first century of our era. The Christian gospel consists of an account of how God saved man, and before that gospel can be understood something must be known about God and about man. What kind of God would the Christian God be? How can we understand the being of God and the being of His creature man or the individual human person?² Before the gospel can be received, certain presuppositions must be accepted. These presuppositions are ontological.

Each research also has its presuppositions, its basic concepts and its direction. It means that there can be different preliminary understandings of the being of the entities into which the inquiry is being made. Therefore, there is a necessity for an inquiry into the ontological presuppositions of theology. For example, John

¹ Zizioulas calls his theology a personalist approach which is contrasted with a substantialist approach: “this may explain why theology in the West, with the help of St Augustine’s decisive influence, has developed a substantialist rather than a personalist approach to Trinitarian theology.” See John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 124.

² In this thesis, I often use “man” to denote the human species for convenience’s sake. It, of course, does not mean that I accept the superiority of males over females.

Macquarrie writes: “Is the being of man, for instance, already conceived as substance? Or is it conceived existentially? Or in some other way? Whatever the presupposition – and there must be some presupposition, even if it is not explicit – it will influence both the inquiry and its result.”³

Based on a theological approach we used to call substantialism or substantialist theology, traditional Western theology formed the knowledge of the being of God and human. For example, from Justin Martyr to Augustine, the early theologians drew freely on Greek sources, especially Plato, for their theological work.⁴ Thomas Aquinas made use of the philosophy of Aristotle in his exposition of the Christian faith. His scholastic theology took theological speculation to a whole new level. The knowledge of God and the knowledge of man he thus arrived at became the very basis of his scholastic theology.⁵

Influenced by Heidegger’s existentialism, Bultmann proceeds to interpret the being of man existentially in his exposition of the entire Pauline theology as a theological anthropology or doctrine of man.⁶ These presuppositions are clarified by a philosophy of being, and an inquiry into the idea of being becomes his theological assumption, from which his theology sets out to make inquiries. With a typical existential approach, Bultmann’s theology centers on the question of man’s existence. It is a fundamental presupposition for Bultmann’s views on demythologizing. It constitutes a new understanding of man and God. Bultmann

³ John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 6.

⁴ For example, Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with trypho*. See <http://earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-dialoguetrypho.html>. Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, O. P. (Brookly, N. Y.: New City Press, 1991).

⁵ Scholastic thought is known for rigorous conceptual analysis and the careful drawing of distinctions. Scholasticism was the movement based on Aristotle but developed beyond Aristotle. It is incorporated into Christianity and throughout Christendom. Scholasticism places a strong emphasis on dialectical reasoning to extend knowledge by inference, and to resolve contradictions. For example, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.

⁶ Rudolf K. Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. S. M. Ogden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

develops a theological hermeneutic on the basis of this new understanding.

Zizioulas' ontology of personhood is a different approach to theology. The being of God and the being of human are not conceived as substances but in an alternative way as persons-in-communion. Zizioulas rejects modern individualist and substantialist notions of personhood and emphasizes a relational understanding of the person. He uses the term 'person' in an uncustomary sense in accordance with the Greek Fathers' language. 'Personhood,' in contrast with the concept of 'substance,' is a concept which stresses the communion with God. However, although Zizioulas emphasizes the personal mode of existence of human being, it is different from Bultmann's existentialist theology which approaches the source of truth out of an existentialist understanding of the human situation. Centering on ontology, Zizioulas' human being mainly focuses on his personal mode of being in communion with God. The most important result is that the theological concept of person is drawn from the Person of the Father who is the cause of the personal divine existence. The concept is quite different from that of philosophy. I will distinguish them in chapter seven. The ontology of personhood provides a personalist perspective for Christian theology. In some sense, it overcomes the limitation of Western theology which is heavily confined to an individualist perspective.

2. The meaning of key terms in Zizioulas' works

Person mainly refers to the persons of Trinity. *Personhood* has been mainly applied to anthropology.⁷ But sometimes, *Person* and *personhood* are

⁷ Zizioulas writes: "It is a presence that seems to come to us from outside this world—which makes the notion of person, if properly understood, perhaps the only notion that can be applied to God without the danger of anthropomorphism...Personhood thus proves to be in this world—through man—but not of this world." See John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 141, footnote 84.

interchangeable in Zizioulas' Trinitarian theology.⁸ In my thesis, I distinguish person from personhood in Trinitarian theology and anthropology. The meaning of personhood is a relational and ontological category which does not mean an individualistic rational being understood in terms of a being-in-itself or being-by-itself. Zizioulas' concept of person in the doctrine of the Trinity stresses the relational character of personhood over and against the reduction of personhood to individual self-consciousness. Zizioulas describes the concept of personhood in terms of two terms: *ekstasis* and *hypostasis*. The term *ekstasis* means a movement towards communion. *Hypostasis* means the particular being. *Hypostasis* signifies that in and through his communion a personhood affirms his own identity and his particularity. *Hypostasis* 'supports his own nature' in a particular and unique way. The notion of *hypostasis* is identical with personhood rather than substance since it is conceived in a non-substantialist relational way. It brings about an ontological revolution which is the foundation of Zizioulas' theology.

Communion and *otherness* are two aspects of the concept of person. The Father as personal cause generates personal otherness and communion. Zizioulas explains *communion* by a liturgical or sacramental approach,⁹ especially the Eucharistic approach. The Eucharistic experience implies that life is imparted and actualized only in an event of *communion*. It leads to a conclusion which is the identification of being and life with *communion* to the ultimate origin of existence, God himself. Knowledge of God is also founded on *communion* rather than philosophical speculation. This has important implications for theological epistemology which will be explored later.

⁸ For example, Zizioulas writes: "There is no *ousia* in the nude, that is, without hypostasis, to refer to God's substance without referring simultaneously to this personhood." See John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 125.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 101.

Otherness implies personal uniqueness. For Zizioulas, *otherness* is primary and constitutive of the very idea of being. The human being is defined through *otherness*. The *otherness* as uniqueness is generated in a relationship with the absolute Other. It is not an ethical concept but an ontological concept. It means that the Other can truly exist as Other only if it is ultimately regarded as person or hypostasis and not as self or nature, and every being should be treated as an absolutely Other. I will explain these concepts in chapter four.

Zizioulas often uses ‘*man*’ to refer to all human beings. In accordance with his usage, I also use this word in this way which does not imply a sexist understanding.

3. The necessity of reconstructing a theological ontology

3.1 A change of view of One God

Theological ontology comes from the understanding of the Trinity. Many theologians regard that the Cappadoican Fathers in the East and Augustine in the West have said the final words on the Trinity. In the Augustinian tradition, God is one because of the one *ousia* which is equally shared by the three persons. It involves the ontological primacy of the ‘one God’ over the ‘Triune God’.¹⁰ The Augustinian tradition followed and developed by Medieval Scholasticism understands the three persons of the Holy Trinity as relations within one substance. The priority of one substance over the three persons, as well as the identification of the One God with the one substance, and not with the Father is quite clear in this case. If we give priority to the ‘One God’, we make the Trinity logically secondary from an ontological point of view.¹¹ Boethius (d. 525) and Thomas Aquinas (d.

¹⁰ Augustine divides between economic and immanent trinity with his psychological model of trinity, which described the inner life of God as being like a human’s memory, intellect, and will. It is Thomas Aquinas’ scholastic theology which applies this kind of theological speculation to a summit.

¹¹ See John Zizioulas, *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today*, ed. Fr. Gregory Edwards (California: Sebastian Press, 2010), 10, footnote, 22.

1247) provide the philosophical-theological treatises on the doctrines of the Trinity. They assumed the authority of the early church's council regarding the Trinity (three persons sharing one substance). However, they may also have made the doctrine of the Trinity irrelevant to the everyday life of Christians by making the doctrine excessively philosophical.

During the sixteenth century some new reflection on the Trinity begins with the Protestant reformers. Under the influence of so-called 'anti-Trinitarian rationalists',¹² some reformers reject the 'speculation' by the medieval scholastic theologians and their heirs. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the rise of Deism¹³ or 'natural religion' in Great Britain is another serious challenge to the doctrine of the Trinity. They teach about 'reasonable Christianity'. At the same era the rise of Pietism and Revivalism called 'enthusiastic religion' counters the Deism in Western Christianity.¹⁴

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the father of modern liberal theology, looks for the 'essence of Christianity' apart from the dogma of the Trinity which is regarded as the 'Hellenization of Christianity'. The moralization of dogma of

¹² For example, Anabaptists like Menno Simons and Balthasar Hubmaier reject the classical, orthodox doctrine of the Trinity; Michael Servetus and Faustus Socinus, the two best-known heretics during the sixteenth century which was constituted by a relatively diverse group of unorthodox protestants—rejected from Protestantism by other protestants, were known as the anti-trinitarians or anti-Nicenes. See Roger E. Olson and Christopher A. Hall, *The Trinity* (Michigan/ Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 75.

¹³ The most influential deists are John Locke (1632-1704), John Toland (1670-1722), and Matthew Tindal (1656-1733). The deists or rationalists tended toward an implicit anti-Nicene attitude. The representative book of Locke is *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695) which has an influence on the rise of Deism; Toland, *Christianity Not Mystical* (1696); Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (1730). The English philosopher John Locke is often considered one of the fathers of modern, Enlightenment philosophy and Deism. They influence the educated, intellectual elite of Great Britain and North America and spread to the European continent.

¹⁴ Such as Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), Nikolaus Ludwig Count Von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), John Wesley (1703-1791), and Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). They tend to accept Nicene orthodoxy as a given and focus on experience of God and Christ. Zinzendorf is the leader of the pietistic Moravians. His contribution to the doctrine of the Trinity is an analogy of the Trinity as 'the holy family' and the Holy Spirit as 'our dear Mother'. Jonathan Edwards is a leader in the revival known as the Great Awakening of the 1740s and also a passionate Calvinist. He has little new to contribute to the doctrine of the Trinity. His theological work focuses on questions of human depravity, divine sovereignty, original sin, and salvation. See Roger E. Olson and Christopher A. Hall, *The Trinity*, 80-88.

Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) and Adolf Harnack (1851-1930) greatly influence the North American Protestant movement known as the 'social gospel'. Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), a leader of social gospel, has little use for the doctrine of the Trinity. Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) questions the social gospel's idea of the Kingdom of God as a moral ideal toward which we make an evolutionary progress. He also criticizes the individualism of nineteenth-century Protestant social ethics for its inability to respond to the injustices of the Industrial Revolution.

Luther and Calvin propose '*Sola Scriptura*' as a formal principle of Protestantism. It was a foundational doctrinal principle of the Protestant Reformation held by all the Reformers. However, in fact Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism mainly defined confessional churches by written confessions of faith.¹⁵ It was a recovering of scholasticism in some sense when they consciously formulated their doctrinal statements. However, as explained later, this is an inadequate expression of the Christian faith, because they lack a personal truth.

During the twentieth century a new reflection on the Trinity becomes a tide. A personal or a living God rather than a substantialist God becomes necessary for the era. A study of the doctrine of the Trinity should relate to the deeper existential needs of the human person. Zizioulas points out: "*the faith in the Holy Trinity is not simply a matter of accepting a theoretical proposition about God, but of relating one's existence to this faith; Baptism in the Trinity means entering into a certain way of being which is that of the Trinitarian God. Trinitarian theology has profound existential consequences.*"¹⁶ Ebeling opposes abstractionism and emphasizes a

¹⁵ See David M. Whitford ed. *Reformation and Early Modern Europe: A Guide to Research* (Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2007), 137. In 1958, the Catholic historian Ernst Walter Zeeden suggested a new approach: confession-building or confessional formation.

¹⁶ John Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today: Suggestions for an Ecumenical Study", in Alasdair I. C. Heron ed., *The Forgotten Trinity* (London: BBC/CCBI Inter-Church House, 1991),

living God: “By ‘word’ we do not mean the single word. This word, as a unit of language, is an abstraction over against the original conception of word as containing an encounter.”¹⁷ Hick criticizes the Greek philosophers’ approach: “*God was not a proposition completing a syllogism, or an abstract idea accepted by the mind, but the reality which gave meaning to their lives.*”¹⁸ Theology should relate abstractness to concreteness. Christian doctrines should not only pay attention to ‘being-in-general’, but also to particular persons or things. It looks that we need an ontological revolution in theology.

A Swiss pastor Karl Barth (1886-1968) inaugurates a new era in Christian theology and revives the doctrine of Trinity. It was extended by the Austrian Catholic theologian Karl Rahner (1904-1984). German-American thinker Paul Tillich (1886-1965) explained the concept of Triunity from within a generally liberal Protestant framework. British theologian Leonard Hodgson (b. 1889) revived Richard of St. Victor’s and the Cappadocian Fathers’ social analogy of the Trinity. German theologian Jürgen Moltmann (b. 1931) developed a theology of Trinity from the suffering of God on the cross, in dialogue with the traditional depersonalized God. Latin American Liberation theologian Leonardo Boff (b. 1938) related the Trinity to liberation theology. He supports a vision of authentic human community structured according to the community of persons characterized by equality and reciprocity. The moderately feminist Catholic theologian Catherine LaCugna (1952-1997) wrote a massive book on the Trinity entitled *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* in the last decade of the century, which also supports a personalist turn.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the source of the renewal at once of Christianity

19.

¹⁷ G. Ebeling, *The Nature of Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), 185.

¹⁸ John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 61.

itself and its influence on culture. Eastern Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas linked the doctrine of the Trinity with the ontology of person in communion. The book *Being as Communion* by Zizioulas was called a landmark book for the Trinitarian theology in the last century. John Zizioulas' Trinitarian theology represents in some ways the culmination of Trinitarian thought in the twentieth century. We can see the importance of John Zizioulas' ontology of person through a comparison with the Trinitarian theologies of Barth and Rahner.

For Barth, the Trinitarian formula *una substantia--tres personae* means one divine subject in three different modes of being.¹⁹ To avoid the use of words connoting consciousness as a modern concept, Barth uses his own term 'mode' to replace the term 'person'.²⁰ Then the concept of 'person' is not a clear concept of the ontological identity in Barth's Trinitarian theology. As Gunton criticizes the concept of person in the theology of Barth: "*It is rather that it fails to reclaim the relational view of the person from the ravages of modern individualism.*"²¹

In Catholic theology, Karl Rahner (1904-1984) is the most influential thinker in the modern age.²² Karl Rahner questions the traditional Western view of the Trinity and calls for a return to the Biblical view and the Greek Patristic position which identifies God with Father, rather than with the divine substance, as the Augustinian and medieval scholastic traditions do. He proposes a personal God which is called

¹⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. I, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), 363.

²⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. I, 355. Barth writes: "We have avoided the term 'person' in the thesis at the head of the present section. It was never adequately clarified when first introduced into the Church's vocabulary, nor did the interpretation with it was later given and which prevailed in mediaeval and post-Reformation Scholasticism as a whole really brings this clarification, nor has the injection of the modern concept of personality into the debate achieved anything but fresh confusion."

²¹ Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 195.

²² Karl Rahner was a leader at the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) in the early 1960s and continued to work for change of the church's thought and life after the Council until his death in the early 1980s. His best-known and most influential monograph on the doctrine is entitled *The Trinity*. Rahner's main target throughout his life was to oppose widespread secularism, especially in the West. See Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 46.

God the Father.²³ Like Barth, Rahner does not treat the concept of person clearly as a theological ontological category, because he regards that the modern concept of person is tied to individualism derived from experience and philosophy, irrelevant to the doctrine of Trinity.²⁴ In order to avoid the modern concept of person, Rahner uses the ‘mode of subsistence’ to replace ‘person’ or ‘hypostasis’ in the doctrine of Trinity; he prefers to use the description ‘the threefold God’ instead of the ‘triune God’ and “*transforms the classical doctrine of the Trinity into the reflection Trinity of the absolute subject.*”²⁵ Therefore, some problems arise. For example, the relation between the Father, the Son and the Spirit is difficult to describe: “*Because the modes of subsistence within the Trinity do not represent distinct centers of consciousness and action, there cannot be any mutual ‘Thou’ between them either.*”²⁶ Jürgen Moltmann criticized Rahner because he did not apply the concept of person to the three persons of the Trinity but applies the concept of person for the unique essence and consciousness of God: “*And in his way he introduced this individualistic idea into the nature of God himself. The ‘one unique essence’ of God is ‘the sameness’ of the absolute subject and must hence be understood in an exclusive sense.*”²⁷ Through the brief survey above, it seems that despite the resurgence of the doctrine of Trinity, the substantialist and individualist influences linger on.

²³ Ibid., 84. Rahner considers this one of the fundamental assertions about God. Karl Rahner starts from the assumption that God is one self-communication of God, that is: “each one of the three divine persons communicates himself to man in gratuitous grace in his own personal particularity and diversity...since it implies a free personal act, since it occurs from person to person, as a communication of ‘persons’.” See Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. J. Donceel (London: Burns & Oates, 1986), 35.

²⁴ See Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, 43.

²⁵ Ibid., 147.

²⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 146.

²⁷ Ibid.

3.2 A change of the view of the human person

At the same time, during the past century, from a perspective of anthropology, there has been an increasing interest in the study of the concept of personhood, because it is connected with issues like personal identity, the rights of the person or ethical-medical concerns. The modern concepts of person of the Cartesian-Lockean type, which understand person as a center of consciousness, have been opposed by some theologians, such as John Zizioulas, Gunton, Yannaras, LaCugna and Leonardo Boff.²⁸ They believe that person as an individualist concept in the Western tradition has its roots in Augustine and Boethius. Since Descartes discovers the *cogito*, the external world and other people have always been a source of philosophical difficulty.²⁹ From a perspective of epistemology, the Other has to be reduced to something of the self to be recognized. It embodies the self prior to being the Other. The other has been ignored. Therefore, it not only involves an issue of epistemology, but also a problem of relationship among humans. An impersonal relationship leads to indifference and alienation which may cause mental illness and social problems.

Therefore, it is necessary to renew the understanding of personhood in theology from an ontological relational perspective rather than the perspective of an isolated individual or self. To do this, we propose that the theological concept of person or personhood can be traced back to the understanding of personhood in Greek Fathers' Trinitarian theology. Therefore, this research includes two parts: one involves the view of God, and the other involves the view of human person. In

²⁸ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, N. Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985); Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984); Christos Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West* (Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006); Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997); Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988).

²⁹ Bo-Myung Seo, *A Critique of Western Theological Anthropology: Understanding Human Beings in a Third World Context* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 88.

contrast with Western traditional concepts of person, divine persons will be understood as relational entities.

4. About John Zizioulas and his ontological thought

John Zizioulas was born in 1931, and studied at Thessaloniki and Athens. He was Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Glasgow, and then Visiting Professor at Geneva, King's College London, and the Gregorian University, Rome. He became the Metropolitan of Pergamon in 1986. He is the member of the committees for dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, and with the Anglican Church, and has been Secretary of Faith and Order at the World Council of Churches in Geneva.³⁰ He is a prominent Orthodox scholar. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* constitutes the single most significant Orthodox academic theological work of the last half-century. In 2006, the book *Communion and Otherness* was edited and published. It includes many articles which explain the notion of personhood further. In 2010, Gregory Edwards edits Zizioulas' articles into a book *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, and the Church and the World Today*. Up to now, his works include seven books. Most of his articles are collected in these books.³¹

Zizioulas' thought is based on the Cappadocians' identification of hypostasis not

³⁰ Douglas H. Knight, 'Introduction', in Douglas Knight ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church* (Aldershot, Hants/Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 3.

³¹ John Zizioulas, *Ellenismos Kai Christianismos: H Synatese ton duo Kosmon* (Athens: Apostolike Diakonia, 2003). This would be rendered in English as Hellenism and Christianity: The Meeting of Two Worlds. This work is not published in English. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimirs Seminary Press, 1997); *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross, 2001); *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2007); *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics* (London: T&T Clark, 2009); *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today* (California: Sebastian Press, 2010). *Remembering the Future: An Eschatological Ontology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012).

with *ousia* but with personhood,³² and One God is the personhood of the Father rather than the *ousia* of God. It means that the personhood of the Father is the initiator of personal being. What the Father ‘causes’ is a transmission not of *ousia* but of personal otherness.³³ Therefore, ‘One’ and ‘Many’ are constitutive of being simultaneously in the Trinity. The starting point of Zizioulas’ theology is the ontological notion of personhood. He has a deep reflection on the whole systematic theology. His lectures have been edited in a book *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics* in 2008. Although Zizioulas’ treatise *Being as Communion* was not at first greeted as a constructive contribution to the doctrine of the Trinity when it was published in 1985, in the early 1990s it began to influence the reflection on Trinitarian theology and represents in some ways the culmination of Trinitarian thought in the twentieth century. Zizioulas is now regarded as a major Orthodox contributor to modern theology.³⁴ For example, Yves Congar considers Zizioulas to be “ ‘one of the most original and profound theologians of our epoch’ and that he presents ‘a penetrating and coherent reading of the tradition of the Greek Father’.”³⁵

As I stated above, in the process of reviving the doctrine of Trinity, against Barth’s *mode of being* and Rahner’s *mode of subsistence*, Zizioulas retains the use of the word *persons* in relation to the three persons of the Trinity and he reinterprets the ontological concept of person in terms of the Cappadocian theology.³⁶ Thus, he reconstructs a theological ontology: it not only raises the particular to an ontological ultimacy which is impossible in Latin traditional substantialism, but

³² All three of the great Cappadocian fathers, Basil the Great (330-370), Gregory of Nazianzus (329-390), and Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), were key contributors to the Trinitarian reflection in the fourth century.

³³ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 130.

³⁴ See Roger E. Olson & Christopher A. Hall, *The Trinity*, 112-113.

³⁵ On the cover of the book John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*.

³⁶ He considers that the modern dilemma of personhood is that by emphasizing self-existence in freedom as the true essence of personhood, and regarding suicide as the ultimate expression of freedom, the question of self-actualization cannot be truly answered.

also emphasizes a notion of a living God, a personal God. A personal God provides a ground for the being of the human person. The notion of ontological otherness also preserves the dignity of the individual. Theology and anthropology are in the end inseparable. It is the purpose of this research to investigate how Zizioulas deals with these matters, and to what extent his treatment is satisfactory.

5. The current research in this field

The discussions about Zizioulas' Trinitarian theology mainly involve two issues: the first is the Father as cause which has been questioned by many Western theologians, even by theologians who insist on a relational ontology. For example, T. F. Torrance particularly cites from Cyril and Athanasius to oppose the primacy of the Father, warning that there is a danger of an ontological subordinationism, with the Son and the Spirit at least appearing to be less truly God than the Father. Alan Torrance also regards that the Cappadocian projection of causal notions into the internal life of God would seem to be potentially damaging to the identification of being with communion. Gunton insists that all three persons are together the cause of a kind of mutual and reciprocal constitution.

The second issue concerns the ontological concept of person: is the concept of person really from the Cappadocian Fathers? Some Orthodox scholars such as Lucian Turcescu, Andrew Louth and John Behr have claimed that Zizioulas' concept of personhood is different from the view of the Cappadocians. Lucian Turcescu questions the legitimacy of Zizioulas' use of materials taken from the Cappadocian Fathers. John Behr' objection is that Zizioulas' theology is "*an odd mixture of metaphysics and mythology*".³⁷

³⁷ John Behr, 'The Trinitarian Being of the Church', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 48.1/2004: 67-68.

At the same time, Zizioulas' theology gains support by many theologians. Alan Brown defends Zizioulas' theological ontology. For example, in response to Behr's objection to Zizioulas' theology, Alan Brown criticizes that the meaning of Behr's objection is not entirely clear, and argues that concepts such as 'being', 'logos', 'truth' and 'life' are all Scriptural.³⁸ Colin Gunton, in his thesis on "Person and Particularity,"³⁹ defends Zizioulas' theological ontology. He thinks that Zizioulas traces the roots of Western culture back to the thought of Augustine and Boethius which provides an argument for the individualistic tendency in which the other is regarded as a threat. Douglas Farrow, in his thesis, 'Person and Nature: The Necessity-Freedom Dialectic in John Zizioulas',⁴⁰ argues that John Zizioulas' ontology of personhood is different from existentialism.

There are some articles in the book *The Theology of John Zizioulas* edited by Douglas Knight which explore Zizioulas' thought especially. There are some other books which discuss Zizioulas' concepts of communion and person. For example, Patricia Fox's book, *God as Communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson, and the Retrieval of the Symbol of the Triune God*, investigates Zizioulas' central thought: 'God as communion'. In Alan Torrance's book, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation—with Special Reference to Volume One of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics*, there is a section which contrasts Karl Rahner and John Zizioulas on triunity. Alan Torrance highly evaluates Zizioulas' contribution: "*Supremely important is his establishing the primacy of communion over revelation and affirmation of the integral relationship between truth and communion—the essential thing about a person lies precisely in*

³⁸ Alan Brown, 'On the Criticism of *Being as Communion* in Anglophone Orthodox Theology', in Douglas H. Knight ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, 71.

³⁹ Colin Gunton, 'Person and Particularity', in Douglas Knight ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, 97-108.

⁴⁰ Douglas Farrow, 'Person and Nature: The Necessity-Freedom Dialectic in John Zizioulas', in Douglas Knight ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, 109-124.

*his being a revelation of truth, not as 'substance' or 'nature' but as a 'mode of existence'".*⁴¹

Aristotle Papanikolaou, in his article "Is John Zizioulas an Existentialist in Disguise? Response to Lucian Turcescu", looks at Zizioulas' ontology of personhood as a relational ontology of Trinitarian personhood. In his book *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion*, he explores a debate between two contemporary Orthodox theologians, Vladimir Lossky and John Zizioulas, over how to adequately conceive the doctrine of the Trinity as an expression of the realism of divine-human communion, and hence, of the God who is both transcendent and immanent.⁴² In part three of Paul Collins' book *Trinitarian Theology: West and East— Karl Barth, the Cappadocian Fathers, and John Zizioulas*, he discusses the concept of personhood, the category of being and the category of communion.

6. The significance of the research and my contribution

When it comes to the research on Zizioulas, it seems that the researchers tend to focus on the level of relation and particularity which is contrasted with the individualist understanding of personhood. Because the ontology of relationality begins to prevail in modern theology, researchers often appreciate Zizioulas' view of *being as communion*, and confuse Zizioulas ontology of personhood with ontology of relationality.

This is a monograph which studies Zizioulas' ontology of personhood in the realms of Trinity and anthropology.

⁴¹ Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation—with Special Reference to Volume One of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 304.

⁴² Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

Firstly, although personalist ontology is an assertion of the metaphysics of the particular which is constituted in relationship, it is not the entire significance of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood. However, if we have a deeper understanding of the concept of personhood, we will find that the emphasis of Zizioulas' theology is the other. Therefore, it is not sufficient for us to explain person only in terms of relation. In other words, the emphasis of understanding of Zizioulas' concept of personhood is the concept of otherness rather than relation. Otherness as an ontological category breaks away from the traditional understanding of person as an egocentric concept. Otherness as an ontological category will change our view of God and human beings from the traditional solipsism. For a long time, whether in theology or philosophy, the problem of anthropology is the other. The purpose of Zizioulas is to "let the other free". I try to understand Zizioulas' ontology of personhood according to this problem of the other. Therefore, my research embodies the perspective of the other.

Secondly, some critics recognize that there is no dimension of sin in the theology of Zizioulas, but do not explore why Zizioulas puts the sin on a moral level rather than an ontological level. They have no analysis from the concept of personhood itself. I will point out the distinction between the Cappadocian and Zizioulas' understanding of the implication of personhood: essence inside or outside the notion of personhood. Because Zizioulas regards essence as substantial necessity according to Greek philosophy, he has to forsake this concept of essence in order to keep the freedom of personhood. But it brings an anthropological consequence: overlooking sin and justice because Zizioulas regards them as substantial concepts. How to solve this problem? I will explain sin and justice and as relational or existential concepts. Thus, it will not conflict with the relational concept of personhood and personhood can include the concepts of sin and justice itself.

Therefore, sin and justice are both substantial and relational or existential. I think that it is a more complete understanding of the being of God and the human person than that of Zizioulas.

Thirdly, between the self and the Other, Zizioulas only emphasizes an ontological principle: the Other prior to the self. Because of the lack of the notion of justice, I criticize that this ontological principle cannot influence a society.

7. Summary of thesis

The thesis includes three parts. Part one mainly explores the source of ontology of personhood and Zizioulas' ontology of personhood. It includes two chapters. Chapter one traces the background and source of the ontology of personhood. There is then a conceptual revolution and an ontological revolution in the fourth century: the identification of *hypostasis* not with *ousia* but with personhood; and an identification of God's ultimate being with a person rather than *ousia*. A new idea of one God comes into being. It influences the Council of Constantinople in 381 CE and the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE.

Chapter two will focus on Zizioulas' ontology of personhood which is based on the Father as personal cause. Zizioulas' Trinitarian formula is not completely same with the Cappadocian Fathers. I explore the importance of causality in theological and philosophical contexts. I also discuss some theological criticisms of the Father as cause and of the concept of personhood, as well as Zizioulas' critique of the ontology of relationality.

Part two mainly examines the being of humans as personhood in communion. It consists of two chapters. Chapter three shows the person of God as the existential ground for the personhood of human. This chapter clarifies the basic meaning and three characteristics of personhood; the doctrine of the Trinity gives us the truth of

our own existence: the Father as personal cause for personal existence and personhood in the light of Christology. At the same time I will introduce two modes of existence and the transformation from one type to the other: from biological hypostasis to ecclesial hypostasis.

Chapter four explores personal otherness and communion and clarifies the basic meaning of Otherness: it implies uniqueness. Otherness is constitutive of the human being. It raises a criticism of the self prior to the Other. 'Otherness' as a primary anthropological concept is contradicted by the category of totality in traditional Western philosophy and theology. I explore a possibility to transform a human-human relation from an impersonal relation to a personal relation. At the same time, because otherness can only exist in communion, it can be applied to criticism of Levinas' concept of otherness without communion.

Part three includes three chapters. Chapter five attempts to explain why the Western idea of One God causes at least three problems in Trinitarian theology from the perspective of ontology of personhood: the first is the separation of the *oikonomia* and *theologia* in the doctrine of God; the second is the problem of *Filioque*; the third is that unity precedes diversity logically or ontologically in God.

Chapter six criticizes the substantialist theological anthropology from the perspective of the ontology of personhood. I analyze the concept of personhood in Western substantialist anthropology, criticize this concept which does not include otherness and communion, criticize the relationship between God and human as a-personal union, and the tendency towards moralism.

Chapter seven analyzes the contributions and criticizes the flaws of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood. Zizioulas reconstructs a theological ontology and provides a new theological approach, sets up a personal knowledge for Christianity, and changes the view of soteriology: salvation first concerns hypostasis' transformation

rather than human nature. However, there are some problems in Zizioulas' theology of ontology of personhood: he wrongly regards the concepts of sin and justice as ethical categories alone and his theology is detached from the injustice of the society and so on.

Part I

The Being of God as Personhood, or Persons-in-Communion

Chapter One

The background and source of the ontology of personhood

In Greek ontology, *Ousia* as a single reality is more real than individual beings. While unchanging Form is an eternal ontological category for Greek philosophy in Plato, ‘person’ as an ontological concept is inconceivable. Only the soul is a form that ensures man’s continuity. For Aristotle, a man is a concrete individual or person. Death dissolves the concrete individual or person completely but not his ‘substance’. So the person is not an ultimate ontological category as ‘substance’. So the concept of personhood, i.e. the state of persons-in-communion is ontologically impossible too. However, for Jewish and Christian theology, the situation is different. Firstly as Christ says, God is not “*the God of the dead, but the God of the living*” as witnessed in the book of Moses, “*I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*”(Mark 12:26-27) The individual can attain eternal existence because of the resurrection of Jesus according to the Bible. According to the Cappadocian Fathers, ‘person’⁴³ could be used as a synonym for hypostasis: it is a combination of the ontological category ‘hypostasis’ and the Greek relational category ‘*prosopon*’, which originally meant ‘face’ or ‘mask’ in Greek theatre. It will provide a completely different ontology which would be regarded as impossible in Greek substantialist philosophy. *Ousia*, as a philosophical term, is not found in the Bible, whereas hypostasis appears in Wisdom, Paul, and Hebrews.⁴⁴ Therefore, there is a possibility for an ontological revolution.

⁴³ Person and personhood in this thesis should not be understood in terms of ‘personality’, i.e., a complex of natural, psychological or moral qualities; or in terms of self-consciousness. Person cannot be conceived in itself as a static entity, but only as it relates to other persons. Person as a relational category has a marked contrast with the Boethian individualistic tradition. See John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 212.

⁴⁴ Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1977), 161.

This chapter will analyze the influence of substantialism on the idea of God, its theological problems and the possibility of an ontological revolution which leads to the ontology of personhood. In this way, new ideas of God and ultimate reality have come into being.

1.1 The influence of Greek substantialism on the idea of One God

The concept of *ousia* (or *substantia* in Latin) has affected the doctrine of God developed by Christian writers of the first four centuries A.D., and especially the Trinitarian concept of one God in three persons. *Ousia* is a Greek word. From the standpoint of etymology, *ousia* means being; it is the abstract noun connected with the verb 'to be'. *Ousia* means 'thing-of-a-kind' in Plato and the thing in question is real. It corresponds to the question 'What is *x*?' *Ousia* is more real than any individual existence. The concept of *ousia* or reality refers to a system of unchanging Forms which lend to the world of appearances some measure of order and consistency. In the *Timaeus*, Plato shows how the unchanging Forms come to be embodied in the world of appearances. When *ousia* indicates the most permanent form of being and the ultimate principle of explanation, it corresponds to Aristotle's 'secondary substance'.

Substance—what is most properly and especially so called—is what is neither said of a subject nor in a subject; e.g. this man, or this horse. What are called secondary substances are the species in which are the things primarily called substances, together with the genera of these species; for instance, this man belongs in the species, man, but the genus of the species is animal; these, then, are called secondary substances—for instance, man, and animal.⁴⁵

Ousia is absolute being and it is the cause of *x* or the first manifestation of *x*. In *Metaphysics* Book XII, Aristotle bases his doctrine of God on his cosmology. He conceives of an unmoved mover or first cause, eternal, invisible and unchangeable.

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Categories*, 2a 31; 3b 10.

Divinity is conceived as a perfect mind, and divinity must be absolutely one. On the other hand, Platonic use of *ousia* as a collective term denotes ‘unchanging (genuine, and therefore immaterial) reality. When Christian theologians applied these terms to God in the Bible, problems inevitably arose.

The word *homoousios*, translated ‘consubstantial’ or ‘coessential’ in Latin, appears to have been introduced by Gnostic Christians of the second century. Researcher found it in summaries and criticisms of Gnostic teaching made by Irenaeus. It was used by Ptolemaeus and some other second-century Gnostics.⁴⁶ Irenaeus takes over the word from his Gnostic opponents, and he applies this word to common philosophical themes: the whole created order.⁴⁷

At the end of the third century, *homoousios* has been used to formulate the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. It is especially noteworthy in Tertullian, who relies upon the phrase *una substantia* to express the unity manifested in the three Persons of the Godhead. The *una substantia* represents the stuff or reality, called *spiritus*, which the Second and Third Persons derive from the First.⁴⁸ Origen was the first writer to use the term *homoousios* to indicate the Son’s relationship to the Father. The terms *ousia* and *homoousios* were drawn into the Arian controversy: the Arians claim that the Father is necessarily superior to the Son in status and the Son is derived from the will of the Father; The Son is not ‘*consubstantial with him*’. Therefore, *ousia* and *homoousios* had become the focus of Nicene controversy.

The Nicene Fathers have interpreted *homoousios* along the line which suggests that Father and Son are identical in the strictest sense, i.e., ‘*a single reality*’. ‘*A single reality*’ was a common Western expression of Christian monotheism.⁴⁹ It

⁴⁶ Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1977), 190.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

easily leads to an understanding which regards Father and Son as aspects of a single reality. This is a flaw of Greek substantialism which cannot distinguish the otherness of each person.

Christopher Stead points out that the usage of *ousia* in the early Christian centuries presents more problems than is commonly supposed.⁵⁰ He analyzes these problems in his book *Divine Substance*. I will choose two main themes from Stead which concern my thesis.

First, God has been described as mind or first principle:

Christian thinkers show some uncertainty about the description of God as mind...some early Christian writers use this description without reserve; most later writers use it more sparingly, in special contexts and with emphasis on the element of analogy. Two lines of thought in particular kept it in circulation. First, the mere title, the Logos, implies a power that derives from the Father as a word or thought proceeds from the mind that expresses it...Secondly, the concept of God as mind lives on in the doctrine of universal providence and foreknowledge. This hardly needs illustration or discussion; the doctrine that God made the world with wisdom and intelligence and guides and foresees human history rests on a clear biblical foundation and can easily borrow the language of contemporary Platonic theism; it can appeal to the doctrine that intelligent beings are *eo ipso* [by that very fact] better than unintelligent, and the maker superior to the product; thus no characterization of God is tolerable if it deprives him of intelligence.⁵¹

Secondly, the 'Person' is not an ontological concept of ultimate existence. Because hypostasis and *ousia* are used as synonyms, the Son will not be another hypostasis. As Christopher Stead points out: "*We do not find clear references to a system in which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are described as constituting one Godhead which is conceptually distinguishable from each of the three persons, including the Father.*"⁵²

1.2 Problem of the 'person' in the Trinitarian formula

⁵⁰ Ibid., 131.

⁵¹ Ibid., 169-170.

⁵² Ibid., 249.

At the end of the second century, Tertullian (c. 160-225AD) is the first to employ the word 'Trinity' (*una substantia, tres personae*). He indicates the unity of God with 'substance', and the other word 'persons' means plurality. While 'substance' refers to the unitive element, 'person' designates the otherness, or independent subsistence, of the three.⁵³ "*Persona*" is not an ontological term, but it is used in contrast to *substantia* which is metaphysical. Most recently the interpretation of *persona* has proved that the word involves a combination of individuality and relationality in Tertullian's theology.⁵⁴ According to Osborn's study, Tertullian never defines it in either way but he does use it in both legal and philosophical senses. In Tertullian's Trinitarian theology, the words *persona* and *substantia* have not dissolved the tension between the three and the one. The history of the concept of person is summed up by Osborn: "*After Tertullian, persona has a ragged history. Marius Victorinus does not use it in his account of the Trinity. Hilary and Ambrose tell us little. Even Augustine is less than lucid on Trinitarian usage. The chief problem is Christological not Trinitarian: how can Jesus, God and man, be one person? ...It is claimed that only in Boethius, who imports the meaning of hypostasis does something like a philosophical definition appear.*"⁵⁵

The Western Greek writer, Hippolytus, translated the formula for the Christians of the East. *Prosopon* has been used in Greek with reference to the Trinity first by Hippolytus.⁵⁶ The Latin '*substantia*' may be literally translated into Greek as 'hypostasis'. In general, hypostasis was used to denote single unchanging being of God. The word '*personae*' has been expressed in Greek as '*prosopon*' which meant 'aspect' or 'façade'. The concept of 'person' becomes an adjunct to ontological

⁵³ Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 132-133.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London, S.P.C.K., 1952), 159.

being. The Greek term *‘prosopon’* replacing the Tertullian Latin term *‘personae’* risks denoting that “*persons would be fronts for the essence of God behind or beneath them*”.⁵⁷ It can lead to Sabellianism.⁵⁸

1.2.1 Western Sabellianism in Trinitarian theology

Sabellianism represented an interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Sabellius (fl.ca. 215) taught in Rome and his teachings became widespread in the West. At the beginning of the third century, this approach to deal with the Christian doctrine of God in terms of the Logos took the form of modalism, for which the persons of the Trinity are roles that God takes for the sake of creation. God played the role of Father in the Old Testament, the Son in the New Testament, and Holy Spirit in our own time, adopting these three identities to perform particular functions for us within history.⁵⁹

Sabellius uses the term ‘person’ not in an ontological sense but roles assumed by the One God. Thus ‘person’ has been used in the singular, denoting only “One Person” in God.

1.2.2 Eastern Tritheism

In the East, Origen (c. 185-254AD) used the term “hypostases” for the Trinity. Origen affirms that each of the Three is a distinct hypostasis from all eternity, not just manifested in the economy as for Tertullian. It stems directly from the idea of eternal generation. The independence is theologically prior to the union as love, will and action. The ultimate ground of His being is the Father, who alone is *‘the*

⁵⁷ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Douglas Knight (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 50.

⁵⁸ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 38, see footnote 30.

⁵⁹ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 48.

fountain-head of deity'. As Kelly said, "one must be careful, however, not to attribute to Origen any doctrine of consubstantiality between Father and Son."⁶⁰

The Son is the Father's image, the reflection of His glory.

From Origen onwards the East continually replaces the term 'person' with 'hypostasis', which means God had three unchanging beings, '*tres substantiae*'. It risked collapsing into tritheism and it contradicted the Latin expression '*una substantis*' if the hypostasis is identified with the Latin '*substantia*' in the Trinitarian formulation.⁶¹

1.2.3 Arianism and Eunomianism

The Logos approach has originated with the Greek apologists, particularly Justin Martyr (c.100-165AD), but developed by the Alexandrian theologians: Clement and above all Origen. The concept of Logos for Philo is an instrument for harmonizing Greek cosmology with the Old Testament. On the basis of the Fourth Gospel, Justin applies this idea to Christ, and establishes a foundation for communication with the Greeks. This offered the possibility of converting Greek thought to Christianity, but there is a danger for the Christian gospel. According to the Logos approach, God projected the Logos in order to create the cosmos. It has not changed the Greek concepts of God and cosmology, and could lead to a wrong Christology: "*For many generations after Justin the Logos could be thought of as a projection of God always somehow connected with the existence of the world.*"⁶²

The question is whether the Logos was uncreated or a part of the creation. For the second-century apologists there was little clarity on whether the Logos and Spirit

⁶⁰ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978), 130.

⁶¹ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 37.

⁶² John Ziziouals, *Communion and Otherness*, 180.

are divine or mere parts of creation.⁶³ Arius pushes this question to the extreme ending up in heresy.

In about 318, Arius, a priest of Alexandria, began to teach a doctrine that God is ingenerate and eternal. Since the Son is generated he is not eternal, but created by the will of the Father. The fundamental premise of Arius' system is the affirmation of the absolute uniqueness and transcendence of God, the unoriginate source of all reality. Arius said, "*We acknowledge one God, who is alone ingenerate, alone eternal, alone without beginning, alone true, alone possessing immortality, alone wise, alone good, alone sovereign, alone judge of all, etc.*"⁶⁴ The being and essence of the Godhead cannot be shared or communicated. The Arians asserted that the Logos should be related to creation rather than to God's being. According to Kelly, the view of Arius and his colleagues on the Son can be summarized in four aspects.

Firstly, the Son must be a creature. He is a perfect creature, and not to be compared with the rest of creation; he comes from the Father's will. "*To suggest that the Son is an emanation from, or a consubstantial portion of the Father is to reduce the Godhead to physical categories.*"⁶⁵

Secondly, the Son as a creature must have had a beginning. Prior to His generation He did not exist.

Thirdly, the Son can have no communion with, and indeed no direct knowledge of, His Father. Although He is God's Word and Wisdom, He is distinct from that Word and that Wisdom which belong to God's very essence; He is a creature pure and simple, and only bears these titles because He participates in the essential Word and Wisdom. In Himself He is, like all other creatures, "*alien from and utterly*

⁶³ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 46.

⁶⁴ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper & Row, Publisher, 1978), 227.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

dissimilar to the Father's essence and individual being'.⁶⁶ Being finite, therefore, and of a different order of existence, He cannot comprehend the infinite God.

Fourthly, to the question whether the Son can be called God or is indeed Son of God, the answer is that these are in fact courtesy titles. Arius wrote: 'He is not God truly, but by participation in grace...He too is called God in name only.'⁶⁷

Arius speaks of three persons of the holy triad in the sense of Origenistic language. The Arians seek an array of Scriptural texts in support of their theses, such as Proverbs 8. 22 ('The Lord created me'), Acts 2. 36 ('God has made Him Lord and Christ'), Romans 8.29 ('The first-born among many'), Corinthians I, 15 ('The first-born of all creation), etc. Arius regards that there are a host of passages which attributed ignorance, weakness, suffering or development to the Son of God.⁶⁸ The Arians themselves claim to be simply continuing the Alexandrine tradition which could be traced back to Origen.⁶⁹

Eunomius was by birth a Cappadocian, and slightly older than Gregory. He was one of the most interesting heretics of the fourth century. He and his teacher Aetius developed the Arian heresy to its extreme. He completed and formulated his teacher's heretical tenets. They asserted the absolute unlikeness of the being of the Father and that of the Son. Starting with the conception of God as absolute being, unbegotten and incapable of begetting, they think that eternal generation is inconceivable, and the generation of the Son of God must have had a beginning. The Arian conclusion is that the Son did not exist before the generation. They are against the equality and similarity of essence from the mere fact that the Father's essence is unbegotten, and that of the Son is begotten. The Son is the first creation

⁶⁶ Athanasius, *C. Ar.* I, 6. See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 228.

⁶⁷ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 229.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 227-230.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 230.

of the Divine Energy, and is the instrument by whom God created the world. In this sense, the Son is the expressed image and likeness of the Energy of the Father as the origin of creative power.⁷⁰ They viewed the Holy Spirit as sharing the Divine nature in an even remoter degree, as being only the production of the only-begotten Son. Through the influence of the followers of Aetius, Eunomius became bishop of Cyzicus in Mysia in 360. When Gregory came, in 379, to Constantinople, he retired. He was a consummate dialectician in the eyes of all parties.⁷¹

Consequently, there is no ontological concept to locate the real distinctiveness of Father, Son and Spirit in the uniqueness of each hypostasis, described in terms of its relation of origin. In order to refute Arianism and Eunomianism, there is a necessity in theology to make a sharp distinction between substance and person. While the concept of nature expresses the equality of the hypostases, persons express the different origins in God.

1.3 Reasons underlying the problem of the Trinitarian formulation

For Sabellianism, God is of One substance, and there is no ontological identity for each person of the Trinity.

Arius' conception of God is in the end Greek. The Christology has been understood through the Logos approach. It can be summed up in the question of the relationship between God and the world. For the ancient Greek, there is an ontological affinity between the world and God: from the early Pre-Socratic tendency to unite being and thinking as to form a unity. *“This affinity was expressed either through the mind (nous), which is common between God and Man, or*

⁷⁰ “Image’ and ‘Energy’ borrowed from Holy Scripture (Heb. I. 3). But borrowed with a difference— not ‘the Image of His Substance,’ which they would not admit, but of His ‘Energy,’ which is a very different conception. Cf. Philip Schaff ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), second series, Vol. 7, 281.

⁷¹ Cf. Philip Schaff ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, Vol. 7, 282.

through the Reason (*Logos*), which came to be understood especially by Stoicism, as the link, at once cosmic and divine, that unites God and the world.”⁷² Arianism highlighted the philosophical issue of the ontological relation between God and the world.⁷³

I will analyze the reasons from two aspects: one involves the idea of truth; the other involves the concept of person.

1.3.1 The Logos approach to the idea of truth

For Greek thought, truth is the unity existing between the intelligible world, the thinking mind and being. The way to seek truth transcends history. For Christianity, Christology is the sole starting point to understand truth because Christ claims himself to be the truth (John 14:6). For Jews, truth may be considered as God’s promises and the manifestations of God’s presence and His activity in history towards an ultimate end. When Christ as the truth encounters with Greek thought and the Jewish mentality, Zizioulas states that the Greek Fathers face a problem:

Can truth be considered simultaneously from the point of view of the ‘nature’ of being (Greek preoccupation), from the view of the goal or end of history (preoccupation of the Jews), and from the viewpoint of Christ, who is both a historical person and the permanent ground (the *Logos* of being—the Christian claim)—and all while preserving God’s “otherness” in relation to creation?⁷⁴

During the patristic period, the existence of God was a ‘given’ for nearly all Christians or pagans alike. The question that preoccupied the Fathers was not whether God existed or not, but the question which tormented entire generations: how He existed. To answer the question about the being of God was not easy. The greatest difficulty stemmed from ancient Greek ontology: the being of God⁷⁵ and

⁷² John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 180.

⁷³ See John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 181.

⁷⁴ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 72.

⁷⁵ In the thought of ancient Greeks, their God was a rational, connective force, that holds the world

the being of world formed an unbreakable unity.⁷⁶

The Logos approach is one of the most dramatic attempts to reconcile the Greek idea of truth with the Christian truth. Because of Christ's claim to be the truth (John 14:6), Christology is the sole starting point for a Christian understanding of truth. Zizioulas argues: "*Nevertheless, this presupposition is by no means easy to interpret. How should one understand Christ to be the truth? 'What is truth?' (John 18:38). Christ left Pontius Pilate's question unanswered, and throughout the ages the Church has not answered it with one voice. Our problems today concerning truth appear to stem directly from these different understandings of truth in the course of the Church's history.*"⁷⁷ There are some issues in the Logos approach according to Zizioulas.

The first issue is about **epistemology**. Justin developed an idea of truth similar if not identical to that of Platonism: God, who is known '*only through the mind*',⁷⁸ as the ultimate truth, is understood to be '*he who is always the same in himself and in relation to all things.*'⁷⁹ This mind was given, according to Justin, simply '*in order to contemplate that same being who is the cause of all intelligent beings.*'⁸⁰ Justin's view has not rejected the ontologically necessary link between God and the world. Thus there is an interrelated epistemology which emphasizes the possibility of knowing God (for ancient Greeks, the cosmos gives us knowledge of God). *Nous* is the medium between God and Man which leads us to the idea of Logos. Christ, as the *Logos* of God, establishes a link between God and the world, between the truth and the mind. Thus, Christ is not truth itself. But Jesus said, "I am the truth" (John

together in harmony (cosmos means order and beauty), or a reason that allowed them to explain the cosmos. For the Greeks the cosmos shows us something of the nature of God. Cf. *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 41.

⁷⁶ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 16.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁷⁸ Justin, *Dial.* 3, 7. C.f. John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 73, footnote, 17.

⁷⁹ Justin, *Dial.* 3, 5. C.f. John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 73, footnote, 16.

⁸⁰ Justin, *Dial.* 4, 1. C.f. John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 73, footnote, 18.

14:6).

The second issue is about **ontology**. The danger of a monistic ontology was not apparently problematic for the Church until the time of Clement of Alexandria, who tried to elaborate a theological system starting from Greek substantialist ontology. The application of the Logos concept in this sense led to the crisis of Arianism. Clement's way of understanding truth develops along the direction of Justin. The Greek view of truth influences the way of understanding the idea of God: truth as the 'nature' of being. This view has a decisive significance for later theology in the West. Origen connected the idea of God so closely with that of creation that he came to speak of eternal creation. Since God is eternally a creator, the link between the Logos of God and the *logoi* of creation comes to be an organic and unbreakable unity, as in the Greek idea between God and the world. Origen interpreted the Scriptures essentially in a Greek manner.

The third issue is about **Christianity**. Christ is 'truth itself' not in his humanity, but in his relation to truth. It is 'true' only in so far as it participates in the truth. The Logos of God seems to indicate that "*the incarnation does not realize the truth in a fundamental way, but merely reveals a pre-existing truth*".⁸¹ The prototype of truth is found in spiritual souls, this truth as a kind of image has been imprinted in those who think according to the truth.⁸² Thus it essentially does away with the need of an authentic revelation.

The fourth issue is about **salvation**. By developing the Logos as the link between the world and God, Justin gave the principle of knowledge a key role in salvation to the point of arguing that even before Christ and among the pagans true knowledge as salvation was possible, for example, among the ancient Greek philosophers. This

⁸¹ John Ziziouals, *Being as Communion*, 77.

⁸² See John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 75-77.

in fact provides a fertile ground for Gnosticism.

The fifth issue is about **spirituality**. A Christian Gnosticism emerges, i.e., the tendency to approach spirituality through the intellect. *“The line inaugurated by Justin was developed further in the catechetical school of Alexandria, where Greek philosophy was influential. Two great names stand out in this respect: Clement of Alexandria (d. 215) and Origen (d. 253). Their thought could be described as representing a kind of Christian Gnosticism with particular significance for spirituality.”*⁸³ There are two aspects of Gnosticism, in particular, which challenged the early church in the Patristic age. On the one hand, it tends to undermine the value of the material world and to attribute creation not to God but to a demiurge, which is to be held responsible also for the evil that humanity experiences and this evil domain resides principally in matter. Spirituality in this approach consists in an escape from matter in time, which would involve asceticism or its opposite. On the other hand, it concerns the understanding that salvation and spiritual life consist of knowledge.

Both Clement and Origen operated with the idea of the Logos and used revelation as their starting point in theology and spirituality. However, this revelation is not the revelation of Jesus Christ. As Zizioulas comments, *“This idea of revelation seems to lie at the very heart of the problem, since revelation always unifies existence, through an idea or a meaning that is singular and comprehensive, forming a connection between created and uncreated rationality.”*⁸⁴ Like Clement influenced by Gnosticism, Origen identified spiritual perfection with true revelation and knowledge that the Logos of God grants to the human soul. The essence of spirituality is the contemplation of the divine Logos or of God in and through the

⁸³ John Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 162.

⁸⁴ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 77.

Logos.⁸⁵ He undermined the historical Christ. His influence accounts for many deviations from the early biblical mentality.⁸⁶

1.3.2 'Persona', 'Prosopon' and 'hypostasis' in Graeco-Roman thought

The term 'person' entered theological terminology since Tertullian in the West and introduced in the East probably through Hippolytus. The history of the terms 'hypostasis' and 'person' is extremely complicated. The historical aspect of this development with regard to the use of these terms in the Trinitarian theology of the Greek Fathers is very obscure. Here I will analyze its meaning briefly according to its significance for the thesis.

The term 'person' in Greek thought was originally understood anatomically as the part of the head that is 'below the cranium', or from the usage in the theater as actor's mask. Zizioulas considers that it includes two aspects from the actor's mask. One is that man strives to fight against the harmonious unity which oppresses him as rational and moral necessity, the necessity of the cosmological order we call fate. So he has to suffer the consequences and he can never escape this fate ultimately. The other is that the same man who becomes a person in the mask acquires the bitter taste of a brief freedom as a unique and unrepeatable entity. The 'person' is tragically related to the mask; the "person" is not his true "hypostasis" which means "nature" or "substance" in Greek. In other word, the mask of "person" has no ontological content in the sense of an eternal being.

In ancient Roman thought, from an etymological perspective, the origin of *persona* is probably to be traced back to the Etruscan word *phersu*, which would connect it with the ritual or theatrical mask. At the same time, declares Zizioulas,

⁸⁵ Ibid., 162.

⁸⁶ See John Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 163.

the anthropological connotation did not differ essentially from the use of the Greek in the beginning, but the Roman *persona* **leaned more towards the idea of concrete individual**. Besides the theatrical mask, *persona* as a category has a more sociological content: “*persona* is the role which one plays in one’s social or legal relationships, the moral or ‘legal’ person which either collectively or individually has nothing to do with the ontology of the person”.⁸⁷ The Roman *persona* subordinates his freedom to the organized whole, and the individual is a means, a possibility, of tasting freedom or affirming one’s identity. This identity marks one man different from another which is guaranteed by the social whole. Zizioulas regards that the politicization and sociology in the Western mentality cannot be understood without involving the Roman *persona*.⁸⁸

The concept of person in Greek and Roman thought is ontologically impossible to be grounded. The term “hypostasis” was linked with the term “*ousia*” or substance (the Latin term *subsantia* would literally translate into Greek as hypostasis), and even identified with it in Greek philosophy. It was accepted in the first Christian centuries. Zizioulas cites Athanasius’ *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya* about the identification of the two terms: “*hypostasis is ousia and has no other meaning apart from being itself...for hypostasis and ousia are existence.*”⁸⁹ The other argument is the Synodical letter of Alexandria 362 AD which refers to Nicaea as having anathematized those who profess that the son is “of another hypostasis or *ousia*.”⁹⁰ The problem with hypostasis by itself is that it does not express the relational dimension of God or the communion between the Three. (see 1.4.2 below)

⁸⁷ Ibid., 34.

⁸⁸ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 27-49.

⁸⁹ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 36. See footnote 23.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 36.

In conclusion, we can see that ‘person’ and ‘*hypostasis*’ are not related in ancient Graeco-Roman world. As Zizioulas says: “*it is precisely this identification of substance with hypostasis, diffused so widely in the Greek thought of the first Christian centuries, that created all the difficulties and disputes concerning the holy Trinity in the fourth century.*”⁹¹ Therefore, there is a necessity for an ontological revolution.

1.4. A new idea of truth and an ontological revolution

Athanasius claims that the Son belongs to God’s substance. But the idea of ontological otherness within one substance has been proposed by the Cappadocian Fathers through an ontological revolution. In Zizioulas’ view all of these have been realized by the transformation of the idea of truth from the Logos approach to the Eucharistic approach.

1.4.1 A new idea of truth: the identification of truth with life in worship

The Eucharist, also called Holy Communion, the Sacrament of the Altar, the Blessed Sacrament, the Lord’s Supper, or other names, is one of the most important Christian sacraments. According to Zizioulas, the Eucharist as the locus of experience of the triune God is communion with the living God, the source of theological knowledge. It gives priority to experience over reason in theological epistemology. Such a priority for Zizioulas is consistent with the Eastern patristic approach and in contrast with Western substantialist approach in theology.

In his work *Being as Communion* the Eucharistic approach was introduced as the Greek patristic synthesis concerning truth. The Logos theologians of the first three centuries understand truth in terms of cosmology. An entirely different approach,

⁹¹ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* 36.

i.e., the Eucharistic approach, to the idea of truth has been provided by the Greek Fathers to answer the question of truth. The representatives are Ignatius of Antioch (c.35-50AD) and St Irenaeus (c.130-202AD). Zizioulas tells us that this was not an intellectual movement. Through studying the works of Irenaeus and that of Ignatius, he found that the Eucharist is the center in their theology and its role is decisive for the identification of being or existence with life. The identification of being with life has been developed in the Greek patristic thought in the second century.

The word ‘life’ in western minds means the idea of something ‘practical’ as opposed to something ‘contemplative’ or ‘theoretical’. From Greek thought, Zizioulas searches the cause of why life had been put in opposition to being. For Aristotle, life is a quality added to being, and not being itself since the individual life cannot be eternal. The truth of being is not found in life, but precedes it. *“With being we use the verb to be while with life we use the verb to have: life is possessed by being, just as a movement or telos is possessed by things in general. It is precisely because life is something possessed, and cannot precede being, that truth as the meaning of being relates ultimately to being as such, not to life.”*⁹² Thus the Greek mind was unable to say at the same time ‘being and life’. **But the Christian had to say both at once.** This identification of being with life affected the idea of truth in a decisive way. It receives further clarification in the Trinitarian theologies of Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers—they provide the foundation for the revolution of Greek ontology.

Zizioulas gives both historical and theological reasons for this identification. There are three reasons to explain why the theology of the Eucharist leads to an identification of existence with life and therefore truth with life.

Firstly, the Bible sets the roots of **the relationship between the Eucharist and**

⁹² John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 79.

life. Ignatius of Antioch speaks of truth in connection with life. This view is the continuation of the Fourth Gospel's definition of knowledge of God as '*eternal life*' or '*true life*.' (John 3: 15, 16; 14: 6; 17:3). Ignatius' way of combining knowledge with life points towards an ontological rather than an ethical approach to truth which leads to an understanding of truth as practice. For Ignatius, life signifies not only practice but being forever: i.e., that which does not die. Truth is identical with the 'teaching of incorruptibility'.⁹³

Secondly, the Eucharist as the true Christ **in the historical and material sense of 'truth'** has been applied to the fight against Docetism and Gnosticism: Ignatius in combating Docetism and Irenaeus in combating Gnosticism. For both men the Eucharist imparts life. Thus truth becomes historical without ceasing to be ontological.

Finally, the Eucharist was understood as community: "*The life of the Eucharist is the life of God Himself, but this is not life in the sense of an Aristotelian movement which flows out mechanically from the interior of existence.*"⁹⁴ There is an analogy between the existence within the Trinity and the existence within the members of the Eucharistic community. It is the life of communion with God, such as communion in the Trinity. Irenaeus arrives at the conclusion: "*Knowledge and communion are identical*",⁹⁵ i.e., **Man knows God and himself in this communion-event.** A synthesis made by the Greek Fathers leads to the identification of truth with communion.

Because the Eucharistic experience implies that life is given in an event of communion, we can call the Eucharistic theology a theology of life. The significance of the Eucharistic theology lies in how to explain Christ as truth

⁹³ Ibid., 79-80.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 81.

⁹⁵ See Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV, 20:5. See also John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 81;

because He is life and all beings find their meaning in their incorruptible existence which are imparted and actualized in the event of communion rather than lying in an epistemological principle to explain the universe which has been exemplified by Justin's Logos approach. But Irenaeus seems to stop here, because his primary concern is that created being ultimately depends upon the Trinity. The question of the being of God or Trinitarian theology has not been answered until the fourth century. Zizioulas emphasizes: "*But it must be strongly underlined that without this foundation of the Church's Eucharistic experience, such as exhibited in Ignatius and Irenaeus, the Trinitarian theology of the fourth century would remain a problem.*"⁹⁶ It means that persons can experience this living God of communion in the Eucharist and this leads directly to the Trinitarian theological developments of the fourth century: the identification of being and life with communion.

1.4.2 The ontological revolution by Athanasius

Facing the challenge of the heresy, the Church was compelled to search for greater clarity for the identity of the Son and Spirit: whether Logos and Spirit are divine or part of creation. The Arian crisis forced the Fathers to revise Origen's teachings and the cosmological approach to truth. The fundamental question is a revision of the doctrine of the Logos. Athanasius proposes that the doctrine of the Logos can be maintained only if the Logos becomes identical with the Son as part of the Trinity.⁹⁷ Firstly, Athanasius made a clear distinction between 'substance' and 'will'. The Son's being belongs to the substance of God, while the being of the world belongs to the will of God. It "*makes it plain that the being of the Son in his relation to God was not of the same kind as the being of the world*".⁹⁸ This

⁹⁶ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 82.

⁹⁷ Cf. John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 83.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

distinction has been used to argue against the Arians, through breaking out of an ontological affinity between God and the world in Greek philosophy. Zizioulas comments:

He thus avoided the trap into which Justin and Origen has fallen, not by abandoning ontological thought but, on the contrary, by raising it up to the ultimate character which its nature requires. *To be* is not the same as *to will* or, hence, as to act. This assertion, apparently Greek and not Hebrew, presented itself as the means for protecting the biblical roots of the Gospel from the dangers of Greek ontology. God's being, in an ultimate sense, remained free in relation to the world, in such a way that the Greek mind could identify it as 'being' without having to link it with the world out of an ontological necessity.⁹⁹

Secondly, Zizioulas argues that Athanasius developed a relational character to the idea of substance. "*To say that the Son belongs to God's substance implies that substance possesses almost by definition a relational character,*"¹⁰⁰ i.e. 'Father' is by definition a relational term, because no Father is conceivable without a son. It is obvious that Athanasius makes the use of 'substance' un-Greek and leads to a new ontology.¹⁰¹ As a consequence, the ontological idea of communion belongs not to the level of will and action but to that of substance. When communion becomes an ontological category, Athanasius transformed the idea of substance.

From the viewpoint of epistemology, Athanasius' ontology of communion is not based on a Greek rational starting point, but comes from the Eucharistic experience: Communion, freedom and otherness of God and the world. In order to understand the relationship between communion and substance, we should review briefly two main approaches to relational category in Greek philosophy: Stoic and Aristotelian. For Stoicism, a category is a predicate, a way of talking about being. In Stoic philosophy there are four categories. The first is **substance or substrate**, which corresponds to matter. Second, there is the **quality (*poion*)** that differentiates matter.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 84.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 84.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 85.

Thirdly, there is **‘being in a certain state’ or disposition**. This is the category of relation, which distinguishes relatively impermanent or accidental dispositions of individuals. Fourthly, there is **relative disposition**, which classifies properties that one thing possessed in relation to something else. In Stoic category, the relation is relative: *“Relative dispositions are the relations of an individual thing to other individual things that are associated with it in the world, but on which its continuing existence as an entity does not depend.”*¹⁰²

For Aristotle, in Book I of the Categories, Aristotle lists ten categories of being. The first category is divided into **primary and secondary substances**. Primary substance are individual substances, secondary substances are kinds of substances, or species and genera respectively. The two meanings of the word substance would also prove decisive in both Latin and Greek medieval theology. The remaining nine categories of being are **accidents, that is, characteristics that may reside in a substance but are not essential to it**. These include **quantity, quality, relation, place, time, posture, having, acting, and being acted on**. With respect to the category of relation, a term is said to be relative to another if one implies the other, for example, husband to wife.

In Stoic and Aristotelian philosophies, relation does not indicate what something is in itself, i.e., an ontological category. Therefore, Athanasius’ thought involves a revolutionary change concerning the meaning of substance in Greek thought. It means that the ultimate character of God’s being as substance can be conceived only as communion.¹⁰³ Zizioulas claims: *“This was significant progress towards an ontology founded on biblical premises, a decisive step towards a Christianization of Hellenism.”*¹⁰⁴ In Latin Trinitarian tradition, which would rely on Aristotelian

¹⁰² J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), 169.

¹⁰³ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 84.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

rather than Stoic philosophy, relation would be identified with substance: relation shows what something is. In the Greek Trinitarian tradition, relation will show only *how*, but not *what*, something is.¹⁰⁵

But this relational divine substance had not been further conceptualized. In the interior of this ontology, speaks Zizioulas, Athanasius left a number of basic problems unanswered. One of the questions raised by Athanasius' ontological basis concerns the being of God. The use of the idea of substance by Athanasius means that the Son has always belonged to God's being. "*Athanasius demonstrated that ontological otherness is an inevitable result of the distinction between will and nature, but he does not show to what extent 'interior' communion within one substance implies otherness at an ontological level.*"¹⁰⁶ In Athanasius's age, *ousia* and hypostasis are synonymous. An identifying of *ousia* with hypostasis implied that a thing's concrete individuality (hypostasis) means simply that it is (i.e. its *ousia*). A category must express the distinctiveness while emphasizing both the relations between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and their transcendence to the world within the immanent Trinity. *Ousia* was clearly not the answer to express the threeness of God, since three *ousiai* would be equivalent to three gods. **On the other hand, the problem with hypostasis by itself is that it does not express the relational dimension of God or the communion between the Three.**

1.4.3 The Cappadocian ontological revolution

In order to avoid Sabellianism, Zizioulas argues: "*A mode of expression thus had to be found which would give theology the ability to avoid Sabellianism, that is, which would give an ontological content to each person of the Holy Trinity, without*

¹⁰⁵ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 58-59.

¹⁰⁶ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 87.

endangering its biblical principles: monotheism and the absolute ontological independence of God in relation to the world. From this endeavour came the identification of hypostasis with person."¹⁰⁷ It came through a radical innovation that involved a redefinition of terms. The significance of the identification of *prosopon* with hypostasis "includes a philosophical landmark, a revolution in Greek philosophy"¹⁰⁸.

In order to avoid Arianism and Eunomianism, it is necessary to make a sharp distinction between substance and person in God: "*By being a person the Father was to be distinguished from divine substance, and thus it would be wrong to conclude that the Son is not God or homoousios with the Father. When God is called Father or 'unbegotten', he is called so not with reference to his substance, but to personhood.*"¹⁰⁹

In the fourth century the Cappadocian Fathers sort out problems of the Trinitarian theology concerning the persons and unity of God, through the concept's revolution.

According to Zizioulas, up until that time 'hypostasis' had meant being or substance and it does not express the relational dimension of God or the communion between the Three. The Cappadocian Fathers made a distinction between these two meanings so that essence and hypostasis could no longer be regarded as synonyms, but they identify 'substance' with 'nature'.¹¹⁰ The Latin term '*substantia*' was expressed in Greek not by 'hypostasis', but by '*ousia*'. The 'hypostasis' meant the same as 'person'. From then on, the 'person' is no longer an adjunct to a being and becomes the being itself and is simultaneously, as a most

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰⁹ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 160.

¹¹⁰ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 50.

significant point, the constitutive element (the “principle” or “cause”) of beings.¹¹¹ It is a combination of the ontological category of ‘hypostasis’ and the relational dimension of a concrete ‘*prosopon*’. “*The relational dimension of person needed to be combined with the ontological character of hypostasis and this is precisely the genius of Basil,*”¹¹² argues Zizioulas. This identification was to Basil the most adequate way to express both the distinctiveness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and their inseparable unity or *koinonia* and **hypostasis in the new sense are related to one another**. This was a revolutionary move: “*the term ‘hypostasis’ which had referred to what was most fundamental and unchanging, was now a synonym for person, which consequently was understood as an ‘ontological’ category; person no longer denoted just a relationship that an entity could take on or the role that an actor would play*”¹¹³. But it has received almost no mentioning in the history of philosophy. According to Zizioulas, the possible reason is that “*‘hypostasis’ bore several nuances which allowed this development, so this conceptual revolution was not entirely arbitrary*”¹¹⁴.

The Cappadocian Fathers defended the ontological integrity of each person and successfully excluded Sabellian understanding in Trinitarian theology. On the other hand, against Eunomianism, a clear and fundamental distinction between nature and person allows the concept of person to emerge more clearly as a distinct category in ontology.¹¹⁵ However, the Cappadocian Fathers would face the other problem: how to avoid tritheism or how to deal with the unity or oneness of God.

According to Zizioulas, the Cappadocian Fathers solve the problem through two steps. The first step is to suggest the *ousia* (substance) or *physis* (nature) is a general

¹¹¹ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 39.

¹¹² Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 83.

¹¹³ John D. Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 51.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹¹⁵ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 160.

category, while hypostases (plural) refer to concrete individuals. In this way it is logically possible to speak of one substance and three hypostases (or persons) through the analogy of the three men. But the other theological difficulty arises, because three men would be analogical with three Gods.

The second step is to distinguish the being of person and the being of God. In human existence, nature precedes the person and each human person can be conceived as an entity independent ontologically from other human beings. But each of the persons of God's existence transcends space and time, so God has not had a beginning, and the three persons do not exist prior to their divine nature and vice versa, but coincide with it. At the same time, the three persons of the Trinity are united in an unbreakable communion (*Koinonia*) and each person exists by the others. The three persons of the Trinity exist simultaneously as an unbreakable 'one'. Then the 'one' does not precede the 'many' but the 'one' and the 'many' coexist. Logically, the Cappadocian Fathers solve the tension between 'tritheism' and the 'oneness of God'.¹¹⁶

Substance indicates divine oneness, but the ground of unity remains the Father.¹¹⁷ It brings us to the following discussion on the identification of God with the Father in Chapter Two.

1.5 Influence of the ontological revolution on the Second Ecumenical Council and later Christological debate

1.5.1 Its influence on the Creed of Constantinople

Zizioulas provides the historical testimony about the influence of this ontological revolution on the Council of Constantinople of 381 CE. The Creed of Nicaea at the

¹¹⁶ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 51.

¹¹⁷ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 118.

point where it referred to the Son as being ‘*from the substance of the Father*’ (*ek tes ousias tou patros*) had been changed into ‘*from the Father*’ (*ek tou patros*). The pneumatology of the Second Ecumenical Council involves the following main theses:

1) The Holy Spirit is God

Zizioulas asserts that it is a victory for Basil’s way of speaking of God. First, there is no mention of the word *homoousios* (Basil avoids this term on his pneumatology). *Homoousios* is not replaced with another philosophical term, but with strictly scriptural language. “*It describes him as Lord (kyrion), a reference to 2 Cor. 3.17, as Life-giving (Zoopoion), which is taken from Jn 6.63, and as ‘having spoken through the prophets’ (2 Pet. 1.21).*”¹¹⁸ Zizioulas concludes that it is based on soteriological and existential concerns rather than on speculative or metaphysical thought.

Secondly, the only non-scriptural language used to describe the divinity of the Spirit is ‘*worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son*’. Zizioulas argues that it is another Basilian victory, “*for it was he who argued for the divinity of the Spirit in terms of equal honor (homotimia) in worship.*”¹¹⁹

2) The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father

Zizioulas argues that because Basilian theology had affected the pneumatology of Constantinople much, **then the Creed about the procession of the Spirit from the Father should be explained by Basilian terms.** First, ‘*the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father*’ means that the ultimate ontological ground of the Holy

¹¹⁸ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 191.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

Spirit is a person, and not substance. Zizioulas asserts that it safeguards the faith that the person ‘causes’ God to be.¹²⁰ Second, the Spirit, by proceeding from the Father, and not from divine substance, is a person too. Zizioulas points out that a question raised is whether the Spirit proceeds also from the Son. In other word, the question concerns the *Filioque*. We will discuss this issue in Chapter Five.

Because of the influence of Basilian theology on the pneumatology of Constantinople, Zizioulas claims that the reference of the Creed to the procession of the Spirit from the Father should be placed in the light of this theology. The importance of this idea has been expressed through two aspects: on the one hand, the utmost implication of the phrase ‘*from the Father*’ should be interpreted through the ‘person’ in the true sense. “*In asserting that the Spirit proceeds from the Father we must understand, in strictly Basilian terms that the ultimate ontological ground of the Holy Spirit is a person, and not substance.*”¹²¹ The Spirit is not simply a power issuing from divine substance; He is a product of love and freedom and not of substantial necessity.

1.5.2 Its influence on Chalcedonian Christology

The Creed of Chalcedon, as the Doctrine of the Hypostatic Union was adopted at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 in Asia Minor.¹²² The definition is that Christ is “acknowledged in two natures”, which “come together into one person and hypostasis”.

The Christology debate involves the usage of hypostasis and person:

In opposition to Nestorian and to Jacobite doctrine, it was also important to clarify the

¹²⁰ Ibid., 192.

¹²¹ Ibid., 192.

¹²² That Council of Chalcedon is that fourth of the first seven Ecumenical Councils accepted by the following Christian denominations: Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Catholic and many Protestant Christian churches. It is the first Council not recognised by any of the oriental Orthodox churches who may be classified as non-Chalcedonian.

meaning of Trinitarian terms and to distinguish among them. The sixth chapter of *The Doctrine of the Fathers* consisted of a group of quotations intended to show “that nature and hypostasis are not the same, but that *ousia* and nature are the same, likewise that hypostasis and person are the same.” All these terms had been employed in the discussions of the doctrine of the person of Christ...in the Trinity, nature or *ousia* referred to that which was one, hypostasis or person to that which was more than one; in the person of Christ nature or *ousia* referred to that which was one. A further complication was the history of previous usage even within the orthodox tradition, where *ousia* and hypostasis had sometimes been equated. Both the Nestorian and the Jacobite traditions had their own distinctive usages: the former distinguished between hypostasis and person, assigning to Christ one person but two hypostases; the latter tied nature to hypostasis, ascribing to Christ not only a composite hypostasis, as did the Chalcedonians, but a composite nature. ‘What causes the error of the heretics,’ according to John of Damascus, ‘is their saying that nature and hypostasis are the same’.¹²³

The Chalcedonian formulation owes a lot to this neat identification from the Cappadocian Fathers onward between hypostasis and persona, so much so that the Chalcedonian Fathers can tackle the complicated problem of Christ’s identity and personhood in the new Chalcedonian formulation of ‘one hypostasis, two natures’.

¹²³ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, II (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 81-82.

Chapter Two

Analysis of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood

In chapter one, I introduce the idea of an ontological revolution advanced by Zizioulas. The ontological revolution described above denotes two things simultaneously: first, it is a conceptual revolution, i.e., person as a relational ontological being as fundamental as *ousia*, and personhood, i.e. the state of the person especially in the state of personal or relational communion, becomes related ontological categories. At the same time, it means the identification of God with the Father. The primary principle in Trinitarian theology is the personhood of the Father, i.e., the Father as the cause of the existence of Trinity. Some theologians accept the conceptual revolution, but they oppose the Father as cause. I will explore the importance of 'the Father as cause' in the later part of this chapter.

Moreover, some Orthodox scholars such as Lucian Turcescu, Andrew Louth and John Behr have claimed that Zizioulas' view of personhood is in fact different from the views of the Cappadocian Fathers. This chapter will explain the meaning of the concept of personhood, and discuss the issue of the Father as personal cause in the being of God. Some criticisms of and defenses for Zizioulas will be advanced, including Zizioulas' critique of relational ontology.

2.1. The meaning of the being of God as person

2.1.1 The being of God as person answering the question '*how* God is'

For the Cappadocian Fathers, the Trinitarian formula is: one *ousia*, three *hypostases* that is identified as the Latin *personae*. The Father is the ground of unity or oneness. In Zizioulas' Trinitarian theology, the Trinitarian formula is: God the Father, three persons. Though Zizioulas does not entirely oppose the concept of

essence, Zizioulas' emphasis is on the person of the Father. This ontology of personhood means that person precedes substance. All of Zizioulas' theological thought is founded on the concept of personhood. He termed this approach an ontology of personhood and the resultant theology 'personal theology'.

For Zizioulas, there are three ways to describe the being of God in terms of Cappadocian theology: (a) *that* God exists, (b) *what* God is, and (c) *how* God is who he is.

For (a) to say that God exists, is merely to indicate his existence rather than non-existence.¹²⁴ The question of God's existence was not one that patristic writers had to engage with.

For (b) the question is 'what God is'. The 'what' question relates to the essence of a thing. Saint Gregory Nazianzus makes this distinction between 'what' and 'that' questions in his *Second Theological Oration*. Because the essence of God is simply beyond our conception, Gregory claims that we cannot give an answer to this 'what' question. It is the first principle introduced by the Fathers that we cannot know the 'what', i.e., the essence of God. Zizioulas contrasts it with a Greek principle: "*a basic principle of Greek thought is that we can come to know the essence of beings and that the mind can achieve this, by conceiving the idea and then being led to the essence itself.*"¹²⁵ According to Plato, our minds reach beyond the material world to that truth. The more the mind is purified of all materiality, the more it is able to reach the reality, which is what the form is. For Aristotle, the essence of things is in the material hypostasis. There are certain natural laws operating in them. The Eastern Fathers are different from the Greek philosophers: **they believe that the mind cannot conceive or comprehend the essence of God.**

¹²⁴ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 54.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

For (c) the question ‘*how* God is’ represents a third way to refer to the being of God. It concerns the question of ‘*how*’ something is, i.e., in what way God is who he is. In *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, Zizioulas answers this question in terms of the view of the Cappadocian Fathers: “*God is God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit—these persons indicate how God is*”.¹²⁶ Here Zizioulas sees the issue of ‘*how*’ as ontologically fundamental: “*The ‘how’ question is as ontologically fundamental as the ‘what’ question: they both refer to what we call ‘being’.*” In *Communion and Otherness*, Zizioulas directly describes that the Father as cause is to answer **how** God is: “*Giving existence or being to the Son by the Father is a matter not of nature, of the **what** God is, but of **how** God is.*”¹²⁷ In this book he discusses the issue of causality and he distinguishes between *ousia* and person or hypostasis in the divine being. The person of the Father has been discussed as an ontological principle in the doctrine of God. Thus, we can see that Zizioulas describes this ‘*how*’ question from different angles and both angles form a whole to answer the ‘*how*’ question.

2.1.2 The being of God as person giving rise to otherness and communion

The consequence of the Father as cause is that **the personal Father generates personal otherness and communion** in the divine being. Otherness and communion are two aspects of the concept of the person. Zizioulas proposes the possibility for their coexistence in Trinitarian theology. “*The significance of the person rests in the facts that he represents two things simultaneously which are at first sight in contradiction: particularity and communion. Being a person is fundamentally different from being an individual or a ‘personality’, for a person*

¹²⁶ Ibid., 57.

¹²⁷ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 129.

cannot be imagined in himself but only with his relationships.”¹²⁸ In short, the Father as cause is the origin of the **Trinitarian personhood**. Here, two points are to be noted.

Firstly, person as cause generates otherness¹²⁹. In the doctrine of the Trinity, when the concept of ‘person’ is identified with ‘hypostasis’, the concept of ‘person’ becomes an ontological category, and otherness will become ontologically ultimate in the case of God’s three persons. In the Cappadocian view, these three persons are indeed three complete entities. Three complete persons have a common substance (*substantia or ousia*). The particularity and integrity of each person is as fundamental as what is common to them that gives them their unity.

In one sense, the Father as personal cause is about transmission of personal otherness.¹³⁰ *“This implies that the idea of causation is used in order to describe the how of divine being and avoid making the emergence of the Trinity a matter of transmission of ousia. What the Father ‘causes’ is a transmission not of ousia but of personal otherness (i.e., of the how of being). The principle of causality distinguishes the persons, it involves the emergence of otherness in divine being.”*¹³¹

Secondly, person is a relational entity in Trinitarian theology. Zizioulas sets up an idea of relational entity through all of this: each is found entirety within the other; each person has his own ontological integrity, and yet they are one. In other words, each person is distinct from another but each exists within the other persons. The characteristics of relational entity can be analyzed on two levels:

(a) They are constituted in relationship. Even the Father as a relational entity is

¹²⁸ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 106.

¹²⁹ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 103-104.

¹³⁰ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 130.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 129-130.

inconceivable without the Son and the Spirit.

(b) The Fatherhood of God as relational avoids the accusations of being as ‘oppressive’ or ‘paternalistic’ or ‘sexist’ and so on; its significance is that a relational ontology may dissolve the sexism in religion and society. *“His freedom in bringing them forth into being does not impose itself upon them, since they are not already there, and their own freedom does not require that their consent be asked, since they are not established as entities before their relationship with the Father.”*¹³² Zizioulas sets up this idea through contrasting the Fatherhood of God with human Fatherhood. He points out that the context of human Fatherhood is opposite to that of the Fatherhood of God: *“individuality before relationality, the entity of the human Father is already established prior to that of his son.”*¹³³ So the divine Fatherhood is totally inconceivable in human terms, which are conditioned by individualism in time.

Zizioulas raises two related issues to explain relational entity: *“How is it possible for one person to be the bearer of the entire being of God? How is it possible for a person to exist within another person, without losing their identity?”*¹³⁴ He discusses these questions from the contrast between creation and the uncreated: created nature is different from uncreated nature concerning time and space:

(a) Human nature is composite, and it is being constantly re-divided. Single person cannot be the bearer of the entire human essence because of his mortality. For God, there is no beginning and no mortality, no limitation of space, and each person of God is the entire being, not a portion of the being of God.

(b) *“In God, the existence of the one person within the others actually creates a*

¹³² Ibid., 122.

¹³³ Ibid., 122.

¹³⁴ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 63.

particularity, and 'individuality' and an otherness."¹³⁵

One Substance is common to three persons in Trinity. But referring to this relationship of persons, the Cappadocian Fathers employed another concept 'perichoresis', which refers to the unity and distinction of each person. Zizioulas interprets this concept in terms of Saint Basil's letter: "*whatever the Father is, is also found in the Son and whatever the Son is, is also found in the Father. The Son is found in his entirety within the Father and he has the Father in his entirety within him. Thus, the hypostasis of the Son is the image and the likeness by which the Father can be known and the hypostasis of the Father is known in the image of the Son.*"¹³⁶ The argument comes from the Fourth Gospel; the three persons inhere in one another. "*Whomsoever has seen me, has seen the Father, for I am in the Father and the Father is in me*" (John 14:11).

2.2 Further analysis of Zizioulas' ontological concept of personhood

2.2.1 Has Zizioulas misunderstood the Cappadocian concept of divine person?

Some Orthodox scholars such as Lucian Turcescu, Andrew Louth and John Behr, who style themselves as traditionalists, have claimed that Zizioulas' view of personhood, the Holy Trinity and the Church is not really traditional, and is different from the view of the Early Church Fathers. More specifically, they have claimed that it differs from the views of the Cappadocian Fathers, namely, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nazianzus.

Turcescu questions the legitimacy of Zizioulas' use of material taken from the Cappadocian Fathers. He criticizes that Zizioulas uses nineteenth and twentieth

¹³⁵ Ibid., 64.

¹³⁶ Basil, *Letter 38*, see John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 62-63.

century insights to foist on the Cappadocian Fathers. This methodology leads him to misleading conclusions. Zizioulas is therefore in error **when he contends that the Cappadocian Fathers did not understand a person as an individual.**¹³⁷

Turcescu contends that philosophical concepts shaped Gregory of Nyssa's view of the individual.¹³⁸ *"To explain the distinction between God's substance and the divine persons, the Cappadocian Fathers used the analogy of the common and the particular, as detailed in Aristotle and the Stoics"*.¹³⁹ It means that Turcescu understands hypostasis according to the Greek philosophical understanding of the individual. *"It now becomes evident that for Gregory hypostasis means 'individual' and is opposed to species. In the human and divine cases, hypostasis can also be rendered as 'person'."*¹⁴⁰ He cites the example of Gregory: *"Similarly, continues Gregory, one can think of Peter, James, and John as many, yet the human in them is one."*¹⁴¹

Zizioulas, however, has answered back forcibly from three aspects:

Firstly, if the concept of the person is understood as an 'individual', it will change the view of God.

What sort of being would God be if he possessed such a kind of personhood, defined as three individuals, three 'axis of consciousness', on which natural or moral qualities concur, and who can be regarded as numbers subject to addition and combination? He would be an anthropomorphic monstrosity, unworthy of the name of God, and in the eyes of the Fathers, as sheer blasphemy.¹⁴²

Secondly, there are limitations and deficiencies of the analogy between human and divine being in a logical sense. Zizioulas points to Gregory of Nyssa's claim

¹³⁷ Lucian Turcescu, "Person versus Individual and Other Modern Misreading of Nyssa", *Modern theology* 18. 4/ 2002: 527-539.

¹³⁸ Lucian Turcescu, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), the whole chapter two.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁴² John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 171.

that it is a misuse of language and not accurately, in using the example of Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and so on, as three particular human beings or hypostases in order to illustrate the three persons of the Holy Trinity. The deficiencies are as follows: human mortality involving separation between human beings; the possibility of addition or subtraction of human beings; the transience and change of human persons; the derivation of human persons from different personal causes. These factors apply purely to human personhood. The Cappadocian Fathers must exclude these factors when applying this analogy. No natural or moral quality would be used by any of the Fathers to distinguish a divine person, simply because such qualities are common to all three divine persons. All natural and moral qualities, such as energy, goodness, will, and so on, are qualities commonly possessed by the divine persons and they have nothing to do with the concept of divine personhood.

Prestige supports this view: “*the differences that distinguish different human beings are manifold, but the differences that distinguish the divine persons consist simply in the ‘idiotes’ expressed in the names of Fatherhood, Sonship and Sanctification.*”¹⁴³ Therefore, Zizioulas emphasizes that we should rule out any idea of a ‘*collection of properties*’ in divine personhood. The concept of person should not be understood as an ‘*individual*’ in the sense of an identity conceivable in itself, an ‘*axis of consciousness*’ and a concurrence of natural or moral qualities, or a number that can subject to addition or combination.

Thirdly, divine person is a relational ‘mode of being’. “*For divine personhood, being defined solely and exclusively in terms of a relational ‘mode of being’, admits of no individualism in the sense ofhuman personhood.*”¹⁴⁴ It conveys a sense of ontological relationship. Zizioulas asks a fundamental question: “*Are we as*

¹⁴³ G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1952), 244.

¹⁴⁴ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 176.

*theologians to draw our concept of human personhood from the study of the human person or from God?”*¹⁴⁵ From the observation of humanity, we shall arrive at an identification of personhood with individuality, centre of consciousness, collection of natural and moral qualities, and so on.¹⁴⁶ If we derive personhood from Trinity, there is no individualism in the sense of an entity conceivable in itself instead of a relational ‘*mode of being*’. The identification of person with an individual is to misunderstand the Cappadocian thought:

Any application of such characteristics to divine personhood would not simply be a gross misunderstanding of Cappadocian thought. Ironically enough, it would also amount to a real—not imaginative—submission of patristic thought to modern existentialist philosophy. For it is precisely modern existentialist personalism that refuses to do what I have been trying to do throughout my writings, namely to work out a concept of the person that would be a reflection of divine, not human, personhood.¹⁴⁷

*Tucescu’s criticisms have also been answered by Papanikolaou.*¹⁴⁸ Papanikolaou claims that Turcescu grounds his critique primarily on interpretation of passages by Gregory of Nyssa, while Gregory Nazianzus’s thought is a main source for Zizioulas’s concept of personhood: “*Of all the Cappadocian Fathers, however, Zizioulas’s development of his relational ontology of Trinitarian personhood relies least on the thought of Gregory of Nyssa...The Cappadocian Father that is never mentioned by Turcescu is arguably the one whose thought is most significant for Zizioulas’s claims about a relational ontology of Trinitarian personhood: Gregory Nazianzus*”¹⁴⁹

2.2.2 Zizioulas’ understanding of the concept of person vis-à-vis the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 176.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 176.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 176-177.

¹⁴⁸ Aristotle Papanikolaou, “Is John Zizioulas an Existentialist in Disguise? Response to Lucian Turcescu,” in *Modern Theology* 20.4, October 2004, 601-607.

¹⁴⁹ Aristotle Papanikolaou, “Is John Zizioulas an Existentialist in Disguise? Response to Lucian Turcescu,” in *Modern Theology*, Vol. 20 no. 4 (October 2004), 602.

Cappadocian Fathers

Zizioulas' understanding of the concept of personhood is based on that of the Cappadocian Fathers, and his understanding of the rich connotation of the concept of person has advanced Cappadocian Fathers' insights to bear on the post-modern quest for otherness and communion. For Zizioulas, the personal Father generates personal otherness and communion in divine being. Otherness and communion are two aspects in the concept of person. "*The significance of the person rests in the facts that he represents two things simultaneously which are at first sight in contradiction: particularity and communion.*"¹⁵⁰ However, these two aspects do not exhaust the whole range of connotations expounded by the Cappadocian Fathers.

For Gregory of Nazianzus, the concept of 'person' not only includes the meaning of 'otherness' and 'communion', but also the common substance, essence or *ousia* of God which has been hypostasized in each person of the Trinity. Kelly highlights the concept of *perichoresis* or co-inherence of Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Didymus that arose from this understanding of common *substantia* or *ousia*.

The essence of their doctrine is that the one Godhead exists simultaneously in three modes of being, or hypostases. So Basil remarks, "*Everything that the Father is seen in the Son, and everything that the Son is belongs to the Father. The Son in His entirety abides in the Father, and in return possesses the Father in entirety in Himself. Thus the hypostasis of the Son is, so to speak, the form and presentation by which the Father is known, and the Father's hypostasis is recognized in the form of the Son.*" Here we have the doctrine of the co-inherence, or as it was later called 'perichoresis', of the divine Persons. The Godhead can be said to exist

¹⁵⁰ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 106.

'undivided...in divided Persons',¹⁵¹ and there is an 'identity of nature' in the three hypostases.¹⁵²

To explain how the one substance can be simultaneously present in three Persons they appeal to the analogy of a universal and its particulars. Basil writes:

'Ousia and hypostasis' are differentiated exactly as universal and particular are, e.g. animal and particular man. From this point of view each of the divine hypostases is the ousia or essence of Godhead determined by its appropriate particularizing characteristic, or identifying peculiarity...Gregory of Nazianzus has to confess...the distinction of the Persons is grounded in Their origin and mutual relation. They are, we should observe, so many ways in which the one indivisible divine substance distributes and presents itself, and hence They come to be termed 'modes of coming to be.'¹⁵³

Prestige also summarizes the Cappadocian thought: "*Yet the whole unvaried common substance, being incomposite, is identical with the whole unvaried being of each person; there is no question of accidents attaching to it; the entire substance of the Son is the same as the entire substance of the Father: the individuality is only the manner in which the identical substance is objectively presented in each several Person.*"¹⁵⁴ Therefore, each person of the Trinity includes a common substance. However, for Zizioulas, he only takes on the perspective of the otherness of three persons in the Cappadocian ontological concept of person.

When Jaroslav Pelikan discusses Christology in history, he writes: "*Simply defined, a hypostasis was an ousia together with its properties; but Christ, being a composite hypostasis, had to be defined as a composite ousia together with its properties. Another simple definition was to say that hypostasis was the particular, nature the general.*"¹⁵⁵ A hypostasis bearing two natures is the creed of Chalcedon. Therefore, when we describe the meaning of hypostasis, we cannot put aside the

¹⁵¹ Gregory Nazianzen, *or.* 31. 14.

¹⁵² Didymus, *De. Trin.* I, 16 (PG 39, 336). See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 264.

¹⁵³ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 264-265.

¹⁵⁴ G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 244.

¹⁵⁵ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, II (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 82.

element of *ousia*.

Cathrine Mowry LaCugna, a feminist theologian, also criticizes that Zizioulas' concept of personhood lacks a level of essence. LaCugna emphasizes that the catholic person is inclusive, and such person expressed the totality of a nature. The source is that "*Jesus is the communion of divine and human, 'hypostatically' uniting two natures 'without separation, without mingling, without confusion' (Chalcedon).*"¹⁵⁶

2.2.3 A different Trinitarian formula from the Cappadocian Fathers

In the Cappadocian Trinitarian theology, being is understood as *ousia* and hypostasis (person) simultaneously (*mia ousia, treis hypostaseis*). "*For the Cappadocians, 'being' is a notion we apply to God simultaneously in two senses. It denotes (a) the what he is of God's being, and this the Cappadocian Fathers call the ousia or substance or nature of God; and (b) it refers to the how he is, which they identify with this personhood.*"¹⁵⁷ Therefore, there are two kinds of ontological principles in Cappadocian Trinitarian theology, but **only one 'personal' principle for Zizioulas'** theological ontology. Zizioulas describes these **two ways to denote being**: "*both denote being, but the former refers to the **what** and the latter to the **how** of being. Giving existence or being to the Son by the Father is a matter not of nature, of the **what** God is, but of **how** God is.*"¹⁵⁸ According to the theology of Gregory Nazianzen, 'substance' means divine oneness or unity, but person of the Father is the ground of unity of the three persons: "*the three have one nature...the ground of unity being the Father, out of whom and towards whom the subsequent*

¹⁵⁶ Cathrine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us*, 296.

¹⁵⁷ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 125.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

persons are reckoned.”¹⁵⁹

The Cappadocian formula, *mia ousia, treis hypostaseis*, manifests a precise distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* and the divine *ousia* exists hypostatically. It means that *ousia* and person are used together in the Trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers. In fact, the *ousia* and person are not contradictory in their Trinitarian theology. Logically speaking, when *ousia* denotes the general, and person denotes the particular in Trinitarian theology, they are not two elements in opposition. In fact from the perspective of existence, they express unity in Trinity. There is a balance when the Cappadocian Fathers uses *ousia* and person simultaneously. The only problem is how to understand the concept of *ousia*. If we accept it from the angle of nominalism rather than realism, i.e., the essence of God as an concept conceived by the abstract intellect as existing in each person, the view of *ousia* will not threaten the ontology of personhood in Trinitarian theology.

For Zizioulas, based on his understanding of the ontology of personhood, there is no *ousia* in his formula of Trinity or Trinitarian theology. It is not exactly the same with the Trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers. In his Trinitarian theology, in order to oppose substantialism, he only emphasizes one ontological principle, namely, the ‘personal’ principle. In other words, he only considers the question of *how* God is. He gives up the question of *what* God is. For him, “*the Father as ‘cause’ is God, or the God in an ultimate sense, not because he holds the divine essence and transmits it...but because he is the ultimate ontological principle of divine personhood.*”¹⁶⁰

Furthermore, the ultimate ontological principle of personhood involves ontological otherness and communion in the divine being, while substance means

¹⁵⁹ Gregory Nazianzus, *Or.* 42.15. See *Communion and Otherness*, 118.

¹⁶⁰ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 130.

divine oneness. Substance is outside persons. Zizioulas only concentrates on the one way to denote being in terms of personhood. It directly avoids the emergence of the Trinity as a matter of transmission of *ousia*, and it is a transmission of ‘personal’ otherness, i.e., of the how of being.

We can understand John Zizioulas in this way: he is developing the Cappadocian Trinitarian theology in the modern context. He provides an entirely different way of approaching the doctrine of the Trinity. As we state in chapter one, the Cappadocians form the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity among controversies concerning heresies. They had to protect the equal identity of the Son and the Spirit with the Father, or their full deity. They used the term *homoousios* to affirm that the Son shares one and the same divine nature as the Father. But in the modern background, John Zizioulas’ purpose is to oppose substantialist understanding of the doctrine of God and preserves the ontological notion of otherness. Zizioulas uses God the Father to express One God instead of substance or *ousia* which denotes divine oneness. Thus substance is outside persons, and it is not necessary for Zizioulas to apply the concept of substance or *ousia* in his Trinitarian formula. Zizioulas only takes one route to denote the oneness of being in terms of personhood. **Therefore, his theological emphasis is on the causality of Father which applies a personalist principle instead of a substantialist principle.**

According to the Father as personal cause, Zizioulas asserts that the Cappadocians reversed the Greek situation, for the Trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers involves a philosophy in which the particular was not secondary to being or nature, thus it can be free in an ultimate sense. The absolute otherness of God’s existence dictates that the approach to God contrasts acutely with that of the Greeks. Based on it, Zizioulas opposes Western substantialist theology which is in parallel with Greek substantialism. **His formula for Trinity**

prefers ‘God the Father, three persons’ to ‘one substance, three persons.’ It leads to great implications for theological anthropology and ecclesiology for our modern times.

2.3 Further ontological implications of Zizioulas’ unique understanding of person as the ultimate ontological category - Taking seriously ‘the Father as cause’

2.3.1 *Monas* refer to the Father ontologically

Zizioulas expounds the concept of *monarchia* of the Father in his work. *Monarchia* means one *arche*. It was first employed by theologians to indicate that there is only one rule in God, amounting to one will, one power, and so on.¹⁶¹ Because the concept was applied not only to God’s economy in the world but to God in his immanent eternal life, thus the question involves the being of God. *Arche* is attached exclusively to the Father in Basil’s theology: “*For Father is the one who has given the beginning of being to the others...Son is the one who has had the beginning of his being by birth from the other*’.¹⁶² In Basil’ context, the meaning of being does not denote *ousia* but rather hypostasis (person). Gregory Nazianzen refers to all three persons of the Trinity when he uses the term *monarchia* in the early sense of one rule, will and power: “*It is, however, a **monarchia** that is not limited to one person, for it is possible for unity if at variance with itself to come into a condition of plurality.*”¹⁶³ Therefore, T. F. Torrance is right in some sense when he thinks that Gregory Nazianzus’ does not want the monarchy to be limited to the Father.¹⁶⁴ But Gregory refers to the Father when he expresses ontologically

¹⁶¹ Justin, *Dial.* 1; Tatian, *Or. Ad Gr.* 14, etc.; see also John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 131.

¹⁶² Basil, *C. Eun.* 2.22; see also John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 131-132.

¹⁶³ Gregory Naz., *Theol. Or.* 3.2; see also John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 132.

¹⁶⁴ See T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 239. “*While Gregory*

with the term *monas*. This is the text that immediately follows the one just quoted: “*For this reason, the One having moved from the beginning (from all eternity) to a Dyad, stopped (or rested) in Triad. And this is for us the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The one as the Begetter and the Emitter, without passion of course and without reference to time, and not in a corporeal manner, of whom the others are one of them the begotten and the other the emission.*”¹⁶⁵.

In his unique understanding of the concept of person, Zizioulas argues that *monas* referred to the Father rather than the *ousia* ontologically in this passage of Gregory, “*If the monas referred to something other than the Father, that is to ousia or something common to the three persons, we would have to exegete the text in the following way: ‘The one ousia (monas) moved to a Dyad and finally stopped at the Triad’.* This would mean that from the one *ousia* came first the two persons together to which a third one was added finally to make the Trinity.”¹⁶⁶ If the *monas* refers to the Father, it explains itself: “*the one as the Begetter and Emitter, of whom the others are the one begotten and the other the emission.*”¹⁶⁷ It is consistent with Gregory’s thought, because Gregory wants to exclude any understanding of the Trinity as a derivation from an ‘a-personal something’ in his *Theological Oration*. Zizioulas concludes that there is a distinction between the moral sense and the ontological sense when Gregory uses *monarchia*: “*In the moral sense of unity of mind, will, and so on, he refers it to the three persons taken together (how could it be otherwise?). But when he refers to how the Trinity emerged ontologically, he identifies the monas with the Father.*”¹⁶⁸

Nazianzen offered much the same teaching as his fellow Cappadocians, he exercised more flexibility in the use of theological terms...while Gregory nevertheless spoke of the Father as the arche [origin] and the aitia [cause] in order to secure the unity of the Godhead.”

¹⁶⁵ Gregory Naz., *Theol. Or.* 3.2; see also John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 133.

¹⁶⁶ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 133.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 133-134.

2.3.2 Stressing person to the extent of excluding *ousia*

Zizioulas tends to oppose the concepts of person and *ousia*, and he excludes the notion of *ousia* from his ontology of personhood, because he insists that we cannot know the *ousia* of God and the Christian truth is identified with life.¹⁶⁹ At the same time, he considers that *ousia* means necessity which is opposite to freedom. Zizioulas contends that the Cappadocian Fathers confer freedom in ontology, something that Greek philosophy had never done before, when he introduces Gregory of Nazianzus's concept of causality: "*By not being a matter of transmission of substance, causality involves freedom in personal being and makes God the Trinity not a necessary but a free being.*"¹⁷⁰

Firstly Zizioulas excludes the possibility of truth or knowledge formed from substantialist approach as the revelation of God. In other words, only the particular is real, and no universal principle as the essence of God can be grasped: goodness, righteousness or holiness had been excluded as the concepts of ethics. In Zizioulas' Christian doctrines, there is only one kind of knowledge, i.e., personal knowledge. His theology cannot escape from the influences of traditional Eastern traditional theology. I will analyze his epistemology in chapter seven.

Secondly, because of the lack of the perspective of *ousia*, it is easy for some Western theologians to attack his teaching as subordinationism.¹⁷¹ According to Gregory of Nazianzus, *ousia* exists in each person which guarantees equality for each Triune person. When Gregory of Nazianzus discusses the person of the Son, he refers to *ousia* simultaneously: "*He is called the Son of God, because he and the Father have the same nature, not only for this reason, he is eternally begotten of the*

¹⁶⁹ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 56.

¹⁷⁰ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 130. See also Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion*, 82-85.

¹⁷¹ We can find the concept of *ousia* in Zizioulas's works, but he does not apply this term from an ontological perspective.

Father.”¹⁷² Zizioulas consents to this view, but in his ontology of personhood, he does not apply the notion of *ousia* to his theological system. Therefore, we may suspect that it is difficult for Zizioulas’ model of Trinity to serve as a model for social order as the social Trinity would do.¹⁷³ In chapter seven, I will discuss this issue.

Thirdly, philosophically speaking, there is no communion without some degree of similarity in essence, because the similarity in essence is the presupposition of communion. When Zizioulas only emphasizes the particularity of the person, would there be a danger of non-communion?

2.3.3 Causality in Trinity transcending Greek cosmology

Zizioulas has responded to criticism that causality in Trinity entails the danger of projecting into God subordinationist notions which ‘smack of a cosmological theology.’¹⁷⁴ Zizioulas traces the notion of cause back to the Fathers. The idea of causality comes from Greek philosophy, and it influenced the Greek Fathers. It is about the question of how and why something is caused, that is, has come into being. When the Cappadocian Fathers employed this notion in theology, there are some innovations with regard to this Greek philosophical concept.

Firstly, the concept of cause was removed from its necessary involvement with time. The argument is from *Oration* of Gregory Nazianzen: “*The name of the unoriginate is Father; of that who has had a beginning (arche), Son; and of that who is together with the beginning, Holy Spirit. And the union of them is the Father,*

¹⁷² Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.*, 30.20.

¹⁷³ Social models of the Trinity, with their very strong emphasis on the personal, relational, and social aspects of being, they focus on the distinctly practical significance of Trinitarian faith for Christian life in the world. For example: Leonardo Boff · *Trinity and Society*, London: Burns & Oates, 1988.

¹⁷⁴ Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion*, 289.

from whom and to whom are referred those who follow...with neither time nor will nor power instigating”.¹⁷⁵ In the same *Oration*, Gregory Nazianzen says: “*Those who exist from the first cause without time*”.¹⁷⁶ **When causation has been applied beyond time, Zizioulas claims that cosmological implications need not be read into the Trinity.**

Secondly, though timeless causality can be found in Neoplatonism, the Cappadocian Fathers reject such **substantialist causation**, i.e., there is a distinction between Neoplatonism and the Cappadocian view of causation. Zizioulas concedes that the Greek idea of causality from its inception was tied up with the dynamic movement of *ousia*.¹⁷⁷ **Though the Cappadocian Fathers used the term *physis* (nature) with regard to God, they refused to attach causality to it.** Zizioulas emphasizes that “*this is extremely important, and it is overlooked by the critics of Cappadocian theology. Causal language is permissible, according to the Cappadocian Fathers, only at the level of personhood, not of substance. It refers to the how, not to the what of God. Causality is used by these Fathers as a strictly personalist notion presupposing a clear distinction between person and ousia.*”¹⁷⁸

2.3.4 Person, Relationality or Communion as central ontological categories of the Trinity

One key term to understand personhood is communion. Zizioulas’ book *Being as Communion* embodies the importance of this ontological concept. For Zizioulas, communion is an action. Zizioulas describes it in terms of the Eucharistic experience: “*The Eucharistic experience implies that life is imparted and*

¹⁷⁵ Gregory Naz., *Or.* 42. 15.

¹⁷⁶ Gregory Naz., *Or.* 31. 10; 5. 14.

¹⁷⁷ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 128.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

actualized in an event of communion.”¹⁷⁹ Person as relational entity in Trinitarian theology can be understood through the concept of communion. Zizioulas’ ontology of personhood is a relational ontology. “*Relational ontology contains in its very nature a dimension of transcendence, an openness of being, pointing to beyond the self, to seeking communion with the Other.*”¹⁸⁰ It brings about a change of the idea of truth, as I state in chapter one section 1.4.1. It identifies truth with life rather than an objective idea like that of the Greek idea of truth. Thus, communion, relationality and person are all ontological categories. For Zizioulas, the person of the Father as the ultimate cause renders each person a relational or communal entity in Trinity, each person has his own ontological integrity because of the person of Father in his communion and transmission of otherness.

Zizioulas also pinpoints that besides taking the Father as ultimate reality, there are two alternative views of ultimate reality. One is the Augustinian view that the three are one because they are relations within the one divine substance; the other is “*what makes the three one, accounting for or expressing their unity, is their relationship or communion with each other*”.¹⁸¹ The latter implies that relationality or communion is the ultimate ontological category. Later we shall see that the Alexandrian type of relational ontology represented by T. F. Torrance, Alan J. Torrance and Colin Gunton effectively take the second alternative understanding of ontology. And it is this second kind of relational ontology that Zizioulas basically debates with.

2.3.5 Rendering communion primordial not in conflict with the ontological

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 82.

¹⁸⁰ John Zizioulas, “Relational Ontology: Insights from Patristic Thought.” In John Polkinghore ed., *The Trinity and an Entangled World: Relationality in Physical Science and Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2010), 155.

¹⁸¹ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 136.

ultimacy of the Father

Facing the criticism that “*if a particular person [within the Trinity] is regarded as ontological ultimate, the other persons in communion...will no longer be safeguarded ontologically*”¹⁸², Zizioulas argues that the assumption is “*a latent individualism, a deficient integration of communion into the notion of the person*”.¹⁸³ Zizioulas thinks that there is no inconsistency in rendering communion primordial while simultaneously upholding ontological ultimacy of the Father. Zizioulas’ logic is that the person is a relational term. This means that person’s identity emerges from a relationship or connotes a relationship. “*This means that when we utter the word ‘Father’ we indicate automatically a relationship, that is, a specific identity which emerges from a relationship or connotes a relationship (schesis).*”¹⁸⁴ Zizioulas regards that it is impossible to make the Father ontologically ultimate without, at the same time, making communion primordial.

2.3.6 Personal ordering in the immanent Trinity not a substantial subordinationism

Zizioulas argues that there is an ordering in the Trinity: the Father comes first, the Son second, and the Spirit third in biblical and patristic references to the Holy Trinity, and the order cannot be reversed –we cannot place any of the other persons before the Father. Zizioulas quotes Gregory Nazianzen’s words to indicate the ordering in the immanent Trinity: “[t]he union is the Father from whom and to whom the ordering of persons runs its course.”¹⁸⁵ Zizioulas lists the example of

¹⁸² Ibid., 126.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 127.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 126.

¹⁸⁵ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 138, footnote, 76. Gregory Naz., *Or.* 42.15; cf. Basil, *C. Eun.* 1:20; 3:1: the Son is second to the Father ‘because he came from him’, i.e., not in the economy but in the immanent Trinity. Gregory of Nyssa insists on this order, too, with regard to the third place, that he Spirit occupies in the immanent Trinity. See also Zizioulas, *Communion and*

Jesus in Gethsemane or in the desert to indicate an ordering in both the economic and the immanent Trinity: “*the Son’s filial ‘Yes’ to the Father...can only make sense if it points to the eternal filial relationship between the two persons. It is mainly this unbroken eternal filial relationship that accounts for the fact that Christ’s humanity; or rather Christ in his humanity, never sinned, that is, contradicted the will of the Father, although he was tempted to do so in the desert and before going to the Cross.*”¹⁸⁶ According to the Bible and the theology of Gregory Nazianzen as we stated above, “*When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.*” (1 Corinthians 15.28) Zizioulas claims that every movement in God begins with the Father and ends with him. Therefore it inevitably established an ordering in both the economic and the immanent Trinity.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, the temporal, moral and functional terms or phrase such as ‘*the Father is greater than I*’ (John 14.28) must be understood through the ordering in the immanent Trinity rather than through “*a hierarchy of value or importance*”¹⁸⁸, because Zizioulas claims that ‘*a hierarchy of value*’ would be anthropomorphic and cannot be used for uncreated existence.

Zizioulas claims that causality does not necessarily endanger equality or lead to subordinationism. Rather, only when divine nature is confused with the divine person, and the ‘*begotten or emission*’ has been read as transmission of *ousia* by the Father to the other two persons, then the equality of the Trinitarian persons as fully divine is put at risk. According to Zizioulas, **a priori possession of divine nature by any person** would imply the **existence of this nature prior to personhood**, and

Otherness, 138, footnote 76.

¹⁸⁶ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 138.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

it will run the risk of inequality of deity in the Trinity. He quotes the words of Basil to indicate the relation of order and equality: “*why is it necessary, if the Spirit is third in rank, for him to be also third in nature?...Just as the Son is second to the Father in rank because he derives from him...but not second in nature, for the deity is one in each of them, so also is the Spirit.*”¹⁸⁹ In terms of the Cappadocian view that divine nature does **not** exist prior to the divine persons, Zizioulas posits that the Father is greater than the Son not in nature, but in the way (the *how*) that nature exists, i.e., in the hypostasization of nature. So Trinitarian ordering refers to the emergence of persons, and equality refers to the one divine substance. Therefore, Zizioulas concludes that Trinitarian ordering and causation **protect rather than threaten** the equality and fullness of each person’s deity, once that ordering and causation pertain to personhood rather than to substance or *ousia*.¹⁹⁰

For some critics, they have different Trinitarian theologies. Zizioulas argues that the crucial point is that many theologians such as V. I. Lossky,¹⁹¹ T. F. Torrance¹⁹² and C. Gunton¹⁹³ dissociate the economic Trinity from God’s eternal being. They make this ordering refer to the economic Trinity and to soteriology. Then they can fight Zizioulas’ on the ground of subordinationism in the immanent Trinity. For example, according to Lossky, in order to avoid subordinationism, it is necessary to divest the economic properties in relation to the persons of the Trinity.¹⁹⁴ Cyril insists that the Father is said to be greater than the Son only economically, and thus left no room for subordinationism in the case of Holy Trinity.¹⁹⁵ However,

¹⁸⁹ Basil, *C. Eun* 3.1; see also in John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 140.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁹¹ See Vladimir. Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwook, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974), 92.

¹⁹² See T. F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 1994, 32.

¹⁹³ See C. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 196.

¹⁹⁴ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976), 83.

¹⁹⁵ See T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 338.

Zizioulas distinguishes between the economical Trinity and immanent Trinity but he does not separate them. So his critics charge that there is subordinationism in some sense in Zizioulas' Trinitarian theology. But there are problems for the critics themselves when they separate the economic Trinity from the immanent Trinity. I will discuss this issue in chapter five.

However, in order to resolve the tension between personal freedom and subordinationism, a contemporary Orthodox theologian Papanikolaou suggests a way to resolve the tension between personal freedom and subordinationism. He suggests that three persons of God are mutually constitutive and there exists mutual causality. Papanikolaou argues:

This mutually constitutive relationship between communion and otherness means for the Trinity that the Son causes the Father and the Spirit to be; that the Spirit causes the Father and the Son to be; as much as the Father causes the Son and the Spirit to be. The identity of each person is dependent on the other persons. On the level of freedom, each person being the cause of the existence of the other persons means that each person freely confirms their free will to exist in communion with other persons, and by so doing, cause the existence of the other as person.¹⁹⁶

By extending the notion of causality to the three persons, it might seem that Papanikolaou preserves the notion of freedom within the Trinity and avoids subordinationism. However, according to Zizioulas, the flaw of this theory is that it would endanger monotheism if the relationship between giver and recipient of personal otherness were symmetrical, or the Father, the Son and the Spirit are caused by each other.

2.3.7 Zizioulas' ontology of personhood transcending necessity to bring about freedom

Zizioulas constructs his theological ontology on an ontological concept of

¹⁹⁶ Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 151.

'person' rather than 'essence'. In other words, the concept of person is based on 'how God is', the divine modes of existence. Essence expresses "what God is". Zizioulas' ontological principle is the priority of person over nature. For Zizioulas, 'essence' means ontological necessity, and 'person' signifies ontological freedom. One major purpose of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood is to affirm the ontological freedom of God and man. It means that the ontological freedom of God and man are not limited by the necessity of the substance in Zizioulas' thoughts. He writes: "*The manner [person] in which God exercises His ontological freedom, that precisely which makes Him ontologically free, is the way in which He transcends and abolishes the ontological necessity of the substance by being God as Father, that is, as He who 'begets' the Son and 'brings forth' the Spirit.*"¹⁹⁷ In his ontological principle, the relation between person and nature is antithetical. But the relationship between person and nature in a human person is dialectical: "*Creaturely necessities do not inhibit creaturely personhood; in their proper place and time they enhance it.*"¹⁹⁸ This means that the person-nature relationship is mainly about freedom-necessity in the ontological sense. If we locate freedom-necessity on the ethical level, we will easily misunderstand Zizioulas' thought as anti-essence or anti-ethics. We will again explore these problems later.

2.4 Preliminary evaluation of Zizioulas ontological proposal

In view of the remarkable proposal by Zizioulas, some theologians accept the conceptual revolution, but they oppose the Father as cause. However, the most trenchant criticism on Zizioulas ontological proposal does not come from theologians of substantialist ontology, but from theologians who equally stress the

¹⁹⁷ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 44.

¹⁹⁸ Douglas Farrow, 'Person and Nature: The Necessity-Freedom Dialectic in John Zizioulas', in Douglas H. Knight ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, 121.

ontology of relationality.

2.4.1 Criticisms of the *monarchia* of the Father as cause

The monarchy (*monarchia*) of the Father indicating the one *arche* in divine existence has been criticized by many theologians.¹⁹⁹ The main criticism is that giving preeminence to the Father would threaten the equality of Trinitarian persons; the second criticism is whether taking Father as cause of the Trinity would endanger Zizioulas' identification of being and communion. The third one is that causality as a cosmological category is not a proper category in Trinitarian theology. Now that Zizioulas idea of ontological revolution seems to promote this divine Monarchia of the Father, Zizioulas has to face these criticisms. The following section will discuss these.

Many theologians offer criticisms involving the Father as personal cause. For example, T. F. Torrance opposes the view of the monarchy of the Father on different theological grounds: "*In the Cappadocian framework this meant that procession is regarded as taking place between different modes of existence or relations of origin, which is hardly satisfactory for it falls short of affirming the homoousion of the Spirit.*"²⁰⁰ Torrance thinks that Gregory Nazianzen' view of causality was not limited to the Father: "*Gregory Nazianzen felt strongly that to subordinate any of the three divine Persons to another was to overthrow the doctrine of the Trinity. He was thus returning to the more unified conception of the divine arche advocated by Athanasius, who had also rejected any idea of degrees of Deity in the Trinity.*"²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ According to Gregory Nazianzen, in the ontological sense, *monarchia* means unity of personal derivation. The *monas* is identified with the Father. In the moral sense, *monarchia* signifies unity of rule. It is shared equally by the three persons. See his *Theol. Or.* 3.2 or John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 119, footnote 21.

²⁰⁰ Thomas. F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 186.

²⁰¹ T. F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark,

Torrance particularly cites from Cyril and Athanasius to oppose the primacy of the Father, since there is a danger of an ontological subordinationism, with the Son and the Spirit at least appearing to be less truly God than the Father. In fact, the two Alexandrians tended to over-stress the equality of the persons in their age of heretical context. Their views are the main arguments for Torrance to criticize the primacy of the Father.²⁰²

For Alan Torrance, there are some problems with Zizioulas' concept of causality:

The first problem is that there is a contradiction between 'the Father as cause' and 'Holy Trinity' as ontologically primordial: "*If the Trinity derives from a causal act of the Father, is the 'concept' of the 'Holy Trinity' really being conceived as ontologically primordial? Does the exclusively primordial reality not actually become the person of the Father?*"

The second problem is that causality threatens personal equality of the Trinity: "*Zizioulas commits theology by these means to 'a kind of subordination of the Son to the Father' – even though he might not be 'obliged to downgrade the Logos into something created.'*"²⁰³

The third problem is that Alan Torrance regards that the Cappadocian projection of causal notions into the internal life of God would seem to be potentially damaging to Zizioulas' identification of being and communion: "*It obviated the view that the ultimate ontological category is a 'structure of communion existing by itself'.*"²⁰⁴

The fourth problem is that 'causality' is a category of cosmology: it cannot be integrated with the Eucharistic experience that Zizioulas perceives as the context of

1994), 30.

²⁰² See T. F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement*, 30-35.

²⁰³ Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 293.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Trinitarian articulation.²⁰⁵ This means that ‘causality’ is not a proper category in Trinitarian theology.

I will discuss the question of T. F. Torrance and the first question of Alan Torrance which involve the ontology of relationality in **the coming sections**. The second question of Alan Torrance involves an issue of subordinationism. The answer can be found in 2.3.6 “Personal ordering in the immanent Trinity not a substantial subordinationism”. The third criticism involves the relation between person and communion. The reply can be acquired in part 2.3.5 “Rendering communion primordial not in conflict with the ontological ultimacy of the Father”. The fourth asks whether ‘causality’ is a proper notion for Trinitarian theology. In part 2.3.3 “Causality in Trinity transcending Greek cosmology”, according to Zizioulas, causality is a proper category when we apply it on the personal level.

2.4.2 Criticism of Zizioulas ontology – Alexandrian ontology of relationality versus Cappadocian ontology of relationality

Besides Zizioulas, T. F. Torrance represents an alternative way to explore the being of God, i.e., a relational ontology in Alexandrian Trinitarian theology vis-à-vis a relational ontology of personhood in Cappadocian tradition as propounded by Zizioulas. We have seen their criticisms of Zizioulas over the Cappadocian notion of the Father as cause; now we turn to more ontological issues in their criticisms of Zizioulas.

Torrance’s famous book *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* constructs a Trinitarian theology in the Alexandrian tradition. His view is based on Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria. He criticizes the Cappadocian Fathers:

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 290-292.

We recall that the conflation of these two senses by the Cappadocian Fathers gave rise to serious difficulties, not least in connection with their conception of the Unity of God as deriving ‘from the Person of the Father, thereby replacing the Nicene formula ‘from the Being of the Father.’ In the Cappadocian framework this meant that procession is regarded as taking place between different modes of existence or relations of origin, which is hardly satisfactory for it falls short of affirming the *homoousion* of the Spirit.²⁰⁶

As we have pointed out above Torrance writes: “*Gregory Nazianzen felt strongly that to subordinate any of the three divine Persons to another was to overthrow the doctrine of the Trinity. He was thus returning to the more unified conception of the divine arche advocated by Athanasius, who had also rejected any idea of degrees of Deity in the Trinity.*”²⁰⁷

T. F. Torrance asserts the superiority of the Alexandrian tradition:

It was upon the Athanasian-Epiphonian basis that classical Christian theology developed into its flowering in the great work of Cyril of Alexandria. In our day it has been upon the Athanasian-Epiphonian-Cyrline basis, together with the Trinitarian teaching of Gregory Nazianzen who insisted that the Monarchia may not be limited to one Person, that doctrinal agreement on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity has been reached between Orthodox and Reformed Churches.²⁰⁸

Besides T. F. Torrance, Alan J. Torrance and Colin Gunton also propose criticisms in the same vein.

Alan Torrance queries Zizioulas: “*it seems to us that he fails to offer sufficiently compelling arguments as to why it should be of ‘incalculable importance’ that we do not conceive of the intra-divine communion of the Triunity as the ground of all that is, that is, as sufficient in itself and as indeed ‘capable’ of existing ‘by*

²⁰⁶ Thomas. F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons*, 186.

²⁰⁷ T. F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspective: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 30.

²⁰⁸ Thomas. F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons*, 185. Torrance argues that the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity at the Council of Constantinople’s development did not follow the line advocated by the Cappadocians in grounding the unity of the Godhead in the Person of the Father as the unique and exclusive Principle of the Godhead, but reverted to the doctrine of the Son as begotten of the Being of the Father and made a similar affirmation of the Holy Spirit. It is reaffirmation of Nicene theology which operated on the basis laid down by Athanasius. See 182.

itself’.”²⁰⁹ Alan Torrance is consistent with T. F. Torrance when they cite Cyril’s opinion to safeguard the ultimacy of personal communion over against monarchian conceptions.

To quote T. F. Torrance again, ‘*Cyril’s conception of the interrelation of the three perfect, coequal, coeternal, enhypostatic Persons through their wholly reciprocal indwelling and containing of one another, in which they are inconfusedly united and inseparably distinguished, was very different, for it carried within it the combined notion of *mia ousia* and *mia arche*.*’²¹⁰

Gunton also criticizes that while causality preserves the due priority of the Father in the Godhead, it is not an adequate theology for the mutual constitution of Father, Son, and Spirit:

Whatever the priority of the Father, it must not be conceived in such a way as to detract from the fact that all three persons are together the cause of mutual and reciprocal constitution. Thus the Father is what he is not only because he begets the Son, but also because the Son responds in the way made known in his obedience as incarnate, and so can be understood to be the one who shares in the constitution of the being of God by means of his eternal response of obedience and love.²¹¹

Such the ontology of relationality based on the Alexandrian tradition, is different from the ontology of the Cappadocian Fathers. On such notion of ‘intra-divine communion’ as the ultimate reality in God, Zizioulas points out that though the view “*appears to be different from that of making substance the ultimate reality, yet the difference is actually very little and the difficulties it presents are exactly the same*”.²¹² It means that they all create the ‘**fourth**’ reality behind the three persons.

He responds to their criticisms from three aspects.

Firstly, Zizioulas claims that it will violate the **biblical monotheism** of ‘God the

²⁰⁹ Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation*, 293.

²¹⁰ Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation*, 294. The quotation is taken from T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 340.

²¹¹ Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 196.

²¹² John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*. 134.

Father' if anything beyond the Father is regarded as ultimate reality. He quotes Karl Rahner's view which sustains "God is Father" in the Bible.²¹³

[The Augustinian-Western conception of the Trinity] begins with the one God, the one divine essence as a whole, and only afterward does it see God as three in persons. Of course, great care is then taken and must be taken, not to set up this divine 'essence' itself as a 'fourth' reality pre-existing in the three persons. The Bible and the Greeks would have us start from the one unoriginate God, who is already Father even when nothing is known as yet about generation and spiration. He is known as the one unoriginate hypostasis which is not positively conceived as 'absolute' even before it is explicitly known as relative.²¹⁴

Secondly, Zizioulas questions the 'oneness' or 'unity' of the three divine persons (in the co-emergence and co-existence of the three persons) as the ultimate reality in God. **The one God is not the Father but the unity of Father, Son and Spirit in their co-inherence or inter-relatedness.** The problem is that this ontology of relationship or communion has ruled out ontological derivation, and replaced it with ontological co-emergence or 'co-inherence'. It will not be in accordance with the creedal and biblical expression 'from the Father', because 'from the Father' means an ontological derivation. In this case, otherness of the persons in Trinity "*is not derived from a particular Other but is itself the ultimate explanation of itself*."²¹⁵

Thirdly, Zizioulas argues that relationality as the ultimate reality is wrong, because "*if the one God is not a particular hypostasis, our prayer cannot be addressed to the one God but only to the Trinity or to the 'Triunity.'*"²¹⁶ Logically, the one God is left out of our prayer. Zizioulas points out that according to the Bible, in praying to the Trinity, we are ultimately praying to the one God, the Father. And he provides two biblical verses as argument, "*then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every*

²¹³ see also John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 134.

²¹⁴ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (London: Burns & Oates, 1986), 17.

²¹⁵ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*. 135.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

authority and power” (1 Corinthians 15.24); and “*for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father*” (Ephesians 2.18).

In response to Gunton’s ‘*three persons are together the cause of mutual and reciprocal constitution*’, Zizioulas thinks that it will threaten the coincidence of the One and the many in divine being:

In other words, had the Three been simultaneously the ontological cause of divine being, there would be no ‘One’ in God, but ultimately only ‘Many’ – unless a unitive concept such as ‘Triunity’ is introduced, which would imply something like a fourth principle in divine being. Equally, if the One were not one of the Three, this would not allow for the Many to be constitutive of being. The ontological monarchy of the Father, that is, of a relational being, and the attachment of ontological causation to him, serve to safeguard the coincidence of the One and the many in divine being, a coincidence that raises otherness to the primary state of being without destroying its unity and oneness.²¹⁷

It seems that Zizioulas has provided plausible replies to his critics, and the criticisms of the Father as cause are at least not conclusive.

2.4.3 Further analysis of the true Cappadocian intention

When T. F. Torrance and other theologians criticize the view of causality of the Cappadocian Fathers, and Zizioulas responds to their criticisms, they ignore two issues which we should make clear.

Firstly, Gregory Nazianzen’s person as cause does not deny the *homousion* of three persons. I think both T. F. Torrance and John Zizioulas overlook this issue. According to Zizioulas’ introduction to the ontological revolution and his understanding of the ontology of personhood, it is difficult for us to know the relationship between the Council of Nicea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (381): whether or not the Cappadocian Fathers safeguard the *homoousios* when they posit the Father as the ultimate ontological principle. Zizioulas gives priority to freedom when he introduces Gregory Nazianzen’s concept of causality: “*By not*

²¹⁷ Ibid., 35

*being a matter of transmission of substance, causality involves freedom in personal being and makes God the Trinity not a necessary but a free being.*²¹⁸

However, Zizioulas does not highlight the real purpose of Gregory Nazianzen, namely, his intention to affirm the Nicene faith. In order to preserve the idea of *homoousios* of the first Ecumenical Council and oppose the attack of Arianism, Gregory distinguishes the concept of hypostasis (person) from *ousia* and insists that the Father and Son are relational entities. The difference between them is the origin and the relation. Therefore, the difference is in ‘person’ or hypostasis and the *ousia* of the three persons is one and the same. Thus, he insists on the view of *homoousios* of Athanasius. It means that he safeguards the Nicene Creed. As it is said by Kelly:

The climax of the developments we have been studying was the affirmation of the Nicene faith at the council of Constantinople in 381. At this the consubstantiality of the Spirit as well as of the Son was formally endorsed. The theology which prevailed, as exemplified by the great Cappadocians themselves and by teachers like Didymus the Blind and Evagrius Ponticus, may be fairly described as in substance that of Athanasius. It is true that their angle of approach was somewhat different from his. Emerging from the Homoousian tradition, it was natural that they should make the three hypostases, rather than the one divine substance, their starting-point.²¹⁹

Secondly, I think that T. F. Torrance’s criticism of Gregory Nazianzen breaks away from his historical context. Athanasius’ *homoousion* could not deal with the problem of Arius completely. Cyril of Alexandria (A.D. 376-444) lived mainly in 5th century, and he was primarily concerned with Christology, dealing with a series of attacks against the Novatians. It means we cannot just understand Gregory Nazianzen’s Trinitarian theology in terms of Athanasius and Cyril. We should locate the importance of the Cappadocian Fathers’ view of causality in a theological and philosophical context.

²¹⁸ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 130.

²¹⁹ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 263-264.

Gregory Nazianzen in his *theological orations* discussed the question of Arians and Eunomians: whether the Son is the essence of God or the energy of God. This is a dilemma: if the Church replied that the Son is the essence of God, it would not have been possible to distinguish between the Son and the Father; if the answer is the energy, they would have reduced the Son to a creature. Gregory proposes a third way to answer Eunomians' question: the Son is neither essence nor energy, but an identity that can be described only in terms of his relationships. The 'Father' and 'Son' are categories of relationship and persons. The concept of person is not an essence, i.e., not a being in itself.

On the other hand, the importance of the above view was a response to the Platonists, particularly in Plotinus' system of emanations, which proposes that the procession from one to another is a natural evolution outwards from the One, in a process of degeneration or disintegration. Zizioulas considers that Gregory Nazianzen's opinion eliminates the Platonic image of God as a crater overflowing with love, for "*this analogy makes the Father's begetting of the Son involuntary, which would suggest that the entire Trinity exists as a natural and necessary consequence of the essence that God is.*"²²⁰ Gregory Nazianzen's argument is: "*for we shall not venture to speak of 'an overflow of goodness,' as one of the Greek philosophers dared to say...let us not ever look on this generation as involuntary, like some natural overflow, hard to be retained, and by no means befitting our conception of Deity.*"²²¹

Therefore, T. F. Torrance, who asserts the superiority of the Athanasian-Epiphonian-Cyrline tradition over the Trinitarian teaching of Gregory Nazianzen, ignores some important theological and philosophical problems that the

²²⁰ Ibid., 61.

²²¹ Gregory Naz., *Theol. Or.* 3.2.

Cappadocian Fathers have treated with their ontology of personhood. On the other hand, although Zizioulas is right in expounding the Cappadocian view of the Father as cause, nevertheless he may have understressed the continuity of the Cappadocian Fathers with Athanasius' theology. The overall effect of the Cappadocian Fathers' theology is that the ontological understanding of personhood is deepened and although they affirmed Athanasius' concept of *homoousion* they did not allow it to strengthen a substantialist understanding of the Triune God, but uses the concept of hypostasis to inaugurate a new ontology of personhood that would have far reaching implications as we are going to investigate in the following chapters. We must bear in mind that this ontology of personhood has to repudiate the substantialist understanding of the Godhead, as well as humanhood, that has pervaded Western theology until now.

2.4.4 Defense of the Father as cause – Calvin and others

In fact, Zizioulas is fully aware that in the East, since Origen, there is subordinationism in Trinitarian theology. In making the Father the ultimate reason for existence, speaks Zizioulas, "*theology accepted a kind of subordination of the Son to the Father without being obliged to downgrade Logos into something created. But this was possible only because the Son's otherness was founded on the same substance*".²²² It is obvious that the Cappadocian Fathers and John Zizioulas continue the Eastern traditional Monarchianism of the Father which was criticized as 'subordinationism' by some Western theologians. But the Cappadocian Fathers separate hypostases from *ousia*, and identify hypostases with person. That means Gregory accepts a kind of subordination which is different from Arianism. Gregory Nazianzen writes: "*When we admit that, in respect of being the Cause, the Father is*

²²² John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 89.

*greater than the Son, they (Arianism) should assume the premise that He is the Cause by Nature, and then deduce the conclusion that He is greater by Nature also.*²²³

When we reflect on the Cappodocian notion of ‘the Father as cause’, it may be beneficial to consider the famous Reformed theologian Calvin, for Calvin supports the monarchy of the Father. Many theologians argue that the main theological influence on Calvin was Augustine, but it is evident that Calvin appeals to the writings of Gregory Nazianzen to understand the divine as a personal God. He pays more attention to each personhood in Trinity.²²⁴ Calvin rejects the theological method of the Latin schoolmen that begin with the abstract question ‘what God is’. Instead he begins with that of ‘*what kind of God is he*’.²²⁵ For Calvin, the relation between ‘person’ and ‘essence’ cannot be separated.

When we confess to believe in one God, under the name of God is understood a single, simple essence, in which we comprehend three persons, or hypostases. Therefore, whenever the name of God is mentioned without particularization, there are designated no less the Son and the Spirit than the Father; but where the Son is joined to the Father, then the relation of the two enters in; and so we distinguish among the persons. But because the peculiar qualities in the persons carry an order within them, e.g., in the Father is the beginning and the source, so often as mention is made of the Father and the Son together, or the Spirit, the name of God is peculiarly applied to the Father. In this way, unity of essence is retained, and a reasoned order is kept, which yet takes nothing away from the deity of the Son and the Spirit.²²⁶

Calvin gives primacy to the biblical revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At the same time he believes the orthodox expression of the Trinity: One God in Three persons and Three persons in One God.²²⁷ Calvin used the words of Gregory of Nazianzen to express the relation between one and three: “*I cannot think of the one without quickly being encircled by the splendor of the three; nor can I*

²²³ Gregory Naz., *Or. Theol.* 29.15.

²²⁴ For example, T. F. Torrance. J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, 13. 17.

²²⁵ Calvin, *Institute* I. 2. 2.

²²⁶ J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I. 13.20.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, I 554, 6, 21.

discern the three without being straightway carried back to the one."²²⁸

Calvin begins with the distinction of persons in God, because to know God is to know him precisely as three persons,²²⁹ and it was only the person of Christ revealed by the Son of the Father distinguishing him from the Father and the Spirit.²³⁰ He accepts the Greek term *prosopon*, and its Latin translation *persona*, as equivalent to hypostasis used in this way, and agrees to the use of *subsistentia* as a literal translation of *hypostasis*.²³¹ It means that Calvin affirms the ontological otherness among the three persons. He cites the words: "*the stamp of the Father's hypostasis*" [Hebrews 1:3]. By this language Calvin affirms the distinctiveness of the Persons of the Trinity: "*from this we also easily ascertain the Son's hypostasis, which distinguishes him from the Father. The same reasoning applies to the Holy Spirit...*"²³²

Calvin distinguishes between hypostasis and essence: hypostasis refers to being in relation, but essence refers to being in itself. Calvin argues that this distinction within the utter unity of God with different persons is not contradictory. It is in this sense that Calvin speaks of the three divine persons in the one being of God, who are what they are as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in their consubstantial relations with one another.²³³

In modern theology, there are also some Western theologians who maintain the monarchy of the Father. For example, Moltmann avers that the monarchy of the Father does not threaten the equality of persons in Trinity through the concept of *perichoresis*, i.e., subordinationism in the doctrine of the Trinity is avoided:

²²⁸ Ibid., I, 13, 17.

²²⁹ Ibid., I, 13.2

²³⁰ Ibid., I, 13.16.

²³¹ Ibid., I.13. 2.

²³² Ibid., I, 13. 2

²³³ T. F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 28.

It is true that the Trinity is constituted with the Father as starting point, inasmuch as he is understood as being ‘the origin of the Godhead’. But this ‘monarchy of the Father’ only applies to the constitution of the Trinity. It has no validity within the eternal circulation of the divine life, and none in the perichoretic unity of the Trinity. Here the three Persons are equal; they live and are manifested in one another and through one another.²³⁴

Karl Rahner also supports the monarchy of the Father:

The Bible and the Greeks would have us start from the one unoriginate God, who is already Father even when nothing is known as yet about generation and spiration. He is known as the one unoriginate hypostasis which is not positively conceived as ‘absolute’ even before it is explicitly known as relative. But the medieval-Latin starting point happens to be different. And thus one may believe that Christian theology too may and should put a treatise on the one God before the treatise on the triune God.²³⁵

The other theologian who supports ‘the monarchy of the Father’ is Catherine LaCugna. In her book *God for Us*, she argues that subordination in the economy does not entail subordination at the level of ‘*theologia*’. “*The Cappadocian solution effectively precludes ontological subordinationism while allowing for an economic subordination, since Son and Spirit in the economy are sent by the Father who sends. Thus subordination in the economy is maintained alongside a strict nonsubordination at the level of ‘theology’.*”²³⁶

All the above theological voices support Zizioulas’ claim that acceptance of the monarchy of the Father does not necessarily commit one to an objectionable form of subordinationism.

²³⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993), 175-176.

²³⁵ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, 17.

²³⁶ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 70.

Part II

From God's Person to Human Person

Chapter Three

The person of the Father as the ontological ground for the personhood of human beings

This chapter will answer a question: what is it that causes particular human beings to be? In Greek philosophy, the particular is caused by the general. “*In other words, particular human beings are in so far as they participate either in the ideal ‘human being’ or in the ‘nature’ of humanity, its species.*”²³⁷ In contrast with the Greek view, Zizioulas thinks that the cause of being is the particular, not the general. According to the ontology of personhood in Trinitarian theology, Zizioulas develops the implications of his ‘personal’ ontology for anthropology. God’s being is caused not by divine substance but by the Father. Similarly, when a human being exists as God himself exists, he takes on God’s ‘ways of being’. The reason is that “*God created humankind in his image*”. (Genesis 1. 27) Therefore, the anthropology in terms of the personalist ontology includes two aspects simultaneously: the Father is the ultimate giver of personhood, and each single person acquires personal otherness, i.e., absolute particularity in Christ, i.e., the particular is raised to the level of ontological primacy.

I will describe the anthropological implications of Zizioulas’ ontology of personhood: the meaning of ‘personhood’, the being of God as the ontological ground for the being of man, and our transformation from biological to ecclesial hypostasis. It also changes the traditional views of personhood and soteriology which I will discuss in chapters six and seven.

3.1 The ontological meaning of personhood

²³⁷ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 104.

Based on the Cappadocian fathers, the concept of person (and therefore personhood) is a relational and ontological category and does not refer primarily to a self-conscious or individual rational being in terms of a being-in-itself or being-by-itself.

3.1.1 *Ekstasis* and *hypostasis* as two basic aspects of personhood

‘Person’ as an ontological concept does not mean ‘substance’ or ‘nature’ but is a ‘mode of existence’. The concept of personhood implies two things simultaneously: particularity and communion. Communion is explained by Zizioulas with liturgical or sacramental approach,²³⁸ especially the Eucharistic approach which will be explained in the next section. Zizioulas describes the concept of personhood in terms of two terms: *ekstasis* and *hypostasis*. *Ekstasis* was used in the mystical writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus, etc. The term *ek-stasis* means a movement towards communion, which leads to a transcendence of the boundaries of oneself: “*The person in its ecstatic character reveals its being in a catholic, that is, integral and undivided, way, and thus in its being ecstatic it becomes hypostatic, that is, the bearer of its nature in its totality.*”²³⁹ **Hypostasis means the particular being.** Zizioulas writes: “*While ekstasis signifies that a person is a revelation of truth by the fact of being in communion, hypostasis signifies that in and through his communion a person affirms his own identity and his particularity; he ‘supports his own nature’ in a particular and unique way.*”²⁴⁰

Therefore, the concept of ‘person’ is fundamentally different from the individualization of ‘nature’ or, more importantly, ‘personality’.²⁴¹ First, ‘nature’ or

²³⁸ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 101.

²³⁹ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 213.

²⁴⁰ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 106.

²⁴¹ Aquinas is the representative proponent of ‘the individualization of ‘nature’’. See Joseph Bobik, translation and interpretation, *Aquinas on Being and Essence* (Notre Dame: University of Notre

'personality' exists in itself, but a person is constituted within his relationships and the person cannot be conceived of oneself as a static entity. Moreover, nature is about qualities or capacities of any kind: biological, social or moral; personality means a complex of natural, psychological or moral qualities which can be contained in the individual, especially in individual consciousness. On the contrary, being a person is basically different from being an individual or personality, for personhood is about "*hypostasis, that is, the claim to uniqueness in the absolute sense of the term, and this cannot be guaranteed by reference to sex or function or role, or even cultivated consciousness of the 'self' and its psychological experiences, since all of these can be classified, thus representing qualities shared by more than one being and not pointing to absolute uniqueness.*"²⁴² Finally, the 'person' cannot exist in fallen existence, but 'nature' or 'personality' can, because nature is in terms of "*this individualized and individualizing Adam in us*".²⁴³

Before the fourth century, when the notion of *hypostasis* was identical with that of 'substance', these two words are the same in usage denoting the ultimate particular being in itself since Aristotle. But when the term *hypostasis* ceased to denote 'substance' and became synonymous with that of 'person' in theology, the significance for anthropology is revolutionary: "*for the identification of **hypostasis** not with **ousia** but with personhood means that the ontological question is not answered by pointing to the self-existent, to a being as it is determined by its own*

Dame Press, 1965), 59-107. The essence of man is a composite substance. The composite substances are form and matter. For man, form and matter signify soul and body. It means we cannot say that either one of them alone is itself the essence. (59) Humanity or essence signifies that by which man is man: "*Humanity, for example, though composed, is not man; it must be received into something which is designated matter.*" (107) Matter is the principle of individuation. It is designated matter which constitutes the principle of individuation. "*The principle of individuation is not matter taken in just any way whatever, but only designated matter...such matter is not placed in the definition of man as man, but it would be placed in the definition of Socrates, if Socrates had a definition. Rather, it is nondesignated matter which is placed in the definition of man; for this bone and this flesh are not placed in the definition of man, but bone and flesh absolutely.*" (75)

²⁴² John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 111.

²⁴³ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 107.

boundaries, but to a being which in its ekstasis breaks through these boundaries in a movement of communion.”²⁴⁴ Therefore, Zizioulas claims that the ontological identity is to be found ultimately not in ‘substance’, but only in a being which is free from the boundaries of the ‘self’. Because “*these boundaries render it subject to individualization, comprehension, combination, definition, description and use, such a being free from these boundaries is free, not in a moral but in an ontological sense, that is, in the way it is constituted and realized as a being.*”²⁴⁵ Furthermore, since *hypostasis* is identical with person, not with substance, it exists not in its ‘self-existence’ but in communion. Therefore, **communion does not threaten personal particularity; it is constitutive of it.** Thus Zizioulas proposes an **important idea for a ‘personal’ being: the coincidence of otherness and communion.**

The mystery of being a person lies in the fact that here otherness and communion are not in contradiction but coincide. Truth as communion does not lead to the dissolving of the diversity of beings into one vast ocean of being, but to the affirmation of otherness in and through love. The difference between this truth and that of ‘nature in itself’ lies in the following: while the latter is subject to fragmentation, individualization, conceptualization, comprehension, etc., the person is not. So in the context of personhood, otherness is incompatible with division.²⁴⁶

3.1.2 Three characteristics of the concept of personhood

For Zizioulas, there are three characteristics in his concept of personhood.

(a) *The person is otherness in communion and communion in otherness.* Because the person is an identity that emerges through relationship in terms of Trinitarian theology, Zizioulas analyzes the concept of person through “I-Thou” relationship: “*It is an ‘I’ that can exist only as long as it relates to a ‘thou’ which affirms its existence and its otherness. If we isolate the ‘I’ from the ‘thou’ we lost not only its*

²⁴⁴ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 214.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 214.

²⁴⁶ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 106-107.

otherness but also its very being; it simply cannot be without the other. This is what distinguishes a person from an individual."²⁴⁷

(b) *Personhood is freedom.* Freedom is the basic presupposition for the constitution of personhood. Furthermore, **this freedom is not freedom from the other but freedom for the other.** "*In its anthropological significance, as well as in its theological significance, personhood is inconceivable without freedom; it is the freedom of being other.*"²⁴⁸ Zizioulas distinguishes the concept of 'other' from 'different': 'different' can be understood in the sense of qualities (clever, beautiful, holy, etc.), which is not what the person is about: to be a person implies not simply the freedom to have different qualities, but mainly the freedom simply to be yourself. Zizioulas' purpose is to show that "*a person is not subject to norms and stereotypes; a person cannot be classified in any way; a person's uniqueness is absolute.*"²⁴⁹

(c) *Personhood is creativity.* Creativity is a consequence of freedom. Because freedom is not from but for someone or something other than ourselves, thus freedom makes the person go outside and beyond the boundaries of the 'self'. It can be expressed by the concept of '*ekstasis*' which means a movement of affirmation of the other. The affirmation of the other is not limited to the 'other' that already exists, but wants to affirm an 'other'. This is the totally free grace of the person. This is the creativity which is defined by Zizioulas: "*Just as God created the world totally as free grace, so the person wants to create its own 'other'.*"²⁵⁰ A person as a creator brings about a totally other identity as an act of freedom and communion.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 9.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 9.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 10.

3.2 The being of God as the ontological ground for the being of humans

Zizioulas claims the being of God as the ontological ground for the being of human: “*Because we are made in the image of God we can see intimations of this in our own relationships. Because man is made in the image of God, we can find analogies between God and man, that are based in the relationships of the persons of God. The doctrine of the Trinity gives us the truth of our own existence.*”²⁵¹ Absolute uniqueness is constituted by an unbroken ontological relationship. It acquires tremendous existential significance when placed in the context of human being. Personal identity is guaranteed by relationship with God, thus the identity would not be isolated: “*Personal identity is totally lost if isolated, for its ontological condition is relationship.*”²⁵² The condition to form *hypostasis* is that the *hypo-static* and the *ek-static* have to coincide. The Father as cause, a particular Christology, and a particular pneumatology have been provided by John Zizioulas as the conditions for the being of man.

3.2.1 The Father as personal cause for personal existence

Because the concept of personhood is related also to the idea of divine causality, the Father being the cause of personhood in God’s being can throw light on our own personal existence. Zizioulas argues for the significance of ‘causality’ from three aspects of our existence as persons.²⁵³

Firstly, it means that a person is always a gift from someone. It affirms that personal existence is not self-existent, self-sufficient or self-explicable. It cannot attribute one’s own personal identity to oneself or to a-personal something. **The**

²⁵¹ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 64.

²⁵² John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 112.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 141.

notion of self-existence is a substantialist notion. Causality in Trinitarian existence reveals to us a personhood which is constituted by love. Ontologically, persons are the outcome of love and freedom, and they owe their being who they are, their distinctive otherness as persons, to other person(s). Persons are givers and recipients of personal identity.

Secondly, **divine causality means that personal otherness is not symmetrical but a-symmetrical.** Thus otherness is hierarchical, since **we are not ‘other’ by ourselves but by someone else, who in this way is ‘higher’, that is, ontologically ‘prior’ to us, the giver of our otherness.** There are three important points of view about this a-symmetry: (a) Hierarchical ordering is inherent in personhood, all personal relations being ontologically a-symmetrical. (b) The persons are ontologically free and fully equal. **A-symmetry does not exclude equality.** Zizioulas writes: “*A-symmetry is not incompatible with equality.*”²⁵⁴ (c) All others owe their being to the person who in his own being generates otherness, that is, the Father. This makes the Father the ultimate giver for human personhood, because **the Father’s personhood is not given or caused by someone else, but is the uncaused cause of all personhood.**

The idea of a-symmetry is important to preclude the logical possibility that the ultimate giver, the Father, receives his personhood from those who receive it from him. **Reciprocity or a symmetrical ‘personal’ relationship here will threaten monotheism.**²⁵⁵ Zizioulas regards this as the conclusion for personal existence from an analysis of the Cappadocian theology of the Father as cause.

3.2.2 Christ is the way to personal existence

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 144.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 144.

The realization of the drive of man towards personal ontology cannot be provided by created being. Christ is the way to fulfilling the human drive to personhood. There are three conditions of a Christology for human existence.

(a) Christology is one from above, not from below. It means the nature of Christ is not prior to his person. Chalcedon made an important ontological statement in speaking of the hypostasis of the Son as the only personal identity of Christ. Man acquires personal identity and ontological particularity only by basing his being on the Father-Son relationship in which nature is not primary to the particular being. It means the fact that being is 'given'.

(b) In Christ, the particular is raised to the level of ontological primacy, and the general exists only in and through the particular. The 'who' of Christ is the Son. The two natures give their qualities to the personal identity without making the identity depend on these qualities. However, in Greek philosophy, our identity ultimately depends on these qualities. In Christ, the aim does not exclude natural qualities from the identity of 'I' –but 'enhypostasizes' these qualities. So the cause of being is the particular, not the general man. It means that our identities do not ultimately depend on nature, but on hypostasis or personhood.

(c) Christ exists in the personal relationship with the Father. The salvation for the world is the union of the created with the uncreated. This union is not mechanical or magical synthesis of two natures, but through the communion with the triune God: the incarnation is a movement from the Father back to the Father, through Christ in the Holy Spirit. This model of union provides a possibility for the union of the created with the uncreated.

Zizioulas criticizes that Christology tends to be discussed only in terms of natures, divine and human. He regards that "Christology is a matter of relationships

of persons acting in freedom”.²⁵⁶ Zizioulas criticizes the view that Christ gave up his divinity in suffering for our sake in terms of the self-emptying (*kenosis*) in the incarnation. Zizioulas denies this view because Christ’s divinity has been affirmed by the relationship with the Father, and this relationship is in no way altered by the incarnation. The nature of Christ is the same with the Father and this nature exists without interruption. He can suffer because he took human nature. In Christ nothing of his divinity receded or was withdrawn in the incarnation. He was completely human and completely God as the Council of Chalcedon (451) stated that in Christ we acknowledge complete divinity and complete humanity, nothing missing in either respect.

For Zizioulas, Christology and Pneumatology belong together and cannot be separated. The Holy Spirit is the ‘life-giver’.²⁵⁷ Zizioulas has not emphasized alone the function of Spirit as the drive towards the realization of personal ontology, because he insists a proper synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology.²⁵⁸ “*Pneumatology contributes to Christology this dimension of communion. And it is because of this function of Pneumatology that it is possible to speak of Christ as having a ‘body,’ i.e., to speak of ecclesiology, of the Church as the Body of Christ.*”²⁵⁹

3.3 From biological to ecclesial hypostasis

Zizioulas describes the human person in terms of two modes of existence. One may be called *hypostasis* of biological existence; the other *hypostasis* of ecclesial existence. For Zizioulas, the transformation from biological to ecclesial hypostasis

²⁵⁶ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 109.

²⁵⁷ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 204.

²⁵⁸ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 126-132.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

means the realization of personhood and this realization is salvation: “*The eternal survival of the person as a unique, unrepeatable and free ‘hypostasis,’ as loving and being loved, constitutes the quintessence of salvation, the bringing of the Gospel to man.*”²⁶⁰ In this section, I will introduce these two modes of existence. Since it is very different from traditional Western anthropology, it also leads to a different soteriology. I will analyze it in chapter seven.

3.3.1 The ontology of communion as a standard to distinguish two modes of existence

In the first part 1.4.2, we have stated that Athanasius develops the idea of communion which belongs to an ontological category. The ontology of communion has been formed within the Eucharistic theology developed by Ignatius, through Irenaeus, up to Athanasius.²⁶¹ This is an ontological revolution subverting the ‘being-in-itself’ of Greek substantialist philosophy. Based on the ontology of communion, Zizioulas concludes: “*In summarizing this attempt at a synthesis of Greek patristic thought concerning truth, we can say that the Greek Fathers’ main success in this area rests in the identification of truth with communion.*”²⁶² When this point of view has been applied to created existence, Zizioulas describes the fallen existence as the rupture between being and communion.²⁶³ Then salvation means a recovery of the relation between being and communion. It is very different from the Western soteriological categories like sin, justification and sanctification.

From the perspective of the relationship between God and man, God created the world so that it would participate in his own glorious life. The responsibility of man

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 49.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 83.

²⁶² Ibid., 101.

²⁶³ Ibid., 102.

is to bring the world into a living relationship or communion with him. He was to be the mediator between the material world and God, and so he was created at the end of creation, when everything else was ready for him. God gave man God's own freedom and the capacity for self-government. But the freedom of man includes a possibility for the fall of man. "*Man has the freedom which every other created being in the material world lacks, and he exercises it by accepting or rejecting each given event or situation.*"²⁶⁴ When man decided to exercise his freedom by saying 'no' to God and makes himself 'God', the fall happens. "*Adam succumbed to the temptation to declare himself 'God' and set out to redirect creation from the uncreated God to his own, created self. In deciding that everything should refer to him, his fall was also the fall of creation.*"²⁶⁵

Zizioulas lists three consequences of the fall or rupture between being and communion.

The first consequence is idolatry. Zizioulas explains the reason: **idolatry is the elevation of created existence into an ultimate point of reference.** Since man realizes how much weaker he is, he regarded nature as a god, or indeed as many gods. He began to divinize the forces of nature and then to worship them. It is a tragedy for mankind to deify creation, for it leads to a dissolution: "*When man took God's place and turned himself to nature, all creation became victim to man's delusion. Man and creation have together become confined to a life determined by the laws of nature. Though biological life seems to point towards life without limit, it only takes them in the direction of eventual dissolution.*"²⁶⁶

The second consequence is that truth has been linked with the nature or substance of things. The substance or *ousia* of things becomes the ultimate content

²⁶⁴ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 98.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

of truth. The being of things has been recognized before a relationship, and every single being acquires an ontological status on its own merit. The world consists of objects, thus the known and the knower exist as two opposite partners. *“Since the being of things is ultimate and prior to communion, and everything that exists posits its own being as something ‘given’ to man the world ultimately consists of a fragmented existence in which beings are particular before they can relate to each other: you first are and then relate.”*²⁶⁷

The third consequence is a ‘dying being’. One biological fact is that death takes place at the end of life. We will analyze death as an ontological problem which is connected with individualization in the next section on the biological hypostasis.

Therefore, for Zizioulas, from the perspective of the ontology of communion, the biological hypostasis as a natural life is determined by the laws of nature which lacks communion with God. Only the ecclesial hypostasis as new life is in communion with God. The ecclesial hypostasis does not exclude the existence of the biological body.

3.3.2 Biological hypostasis

3.3.2.1 The emergence of biological hypostasis

For Zizioulas, biological hypostasis is produced by human biological nature: *“The hypostasis of biological existence is ‘constituted’ by a man’s conception and birth. Every man who comes into the world bears his ‘hypostasis’, which is not entirely unrelated to love: he is the product of a communion between two people.”*²⁶⁸ This biological hypostasis can be traced back to two ‘passions’. The first ‘passion’ is tied to the natural instinct which Zizioulas calls ‘ontological

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 103.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 50.

necessity'. Because the natural instinct or impulse is subject to necessity rather than freedom, thus the person as a being 'subsists' not as freedom but as necessity. The second 'passion' is distinguished by two stages: one is called individualism, the separation of the hypostases; the other is death. The earlier stage means the self-affirmation without an ontological relationship with his parents: "*The body, which is born as a biological hypostasis, behaves like the fortress of an ego, like a new 'mask' which hinders the hypostasis from becoming a person, that is, from affirming itself as love and freedom.*"²⁶⁹

3.3.2.2 Death as an ontological problem for biological hypostasis

Death is the final stage of biological hypostasis. Zizioulas distinguishes two kinds of death. One is in the sense of biology which belongs to the nature of what is created; the other is the opposite of real life in our fallen existence.²⁷⁰ This kind of death is the outcome of the fall.

Zizioulas thinks that there is a possible misconception about biological death: death entered the world as the punishment for disobedience and the fall.²⁷¹ It means that an ethical relationship between God and the world determined the death of man. It seems that God introduced death to creation and imposed it on man. Salvation has often been set out in moral and judicial terms. For Zizioulas, biological death has not been caused by man's act of disobedience. Zizioulas regards that death has always been the natural condition of created beings, and **death is inevitable for creation.**²⁷² Because the world came from nothingness, death is only a return to nothingness.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 51.

²⁷⁰ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 264.

²⁷¹ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 102.

²⁷² John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 51; *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 102.

Death is not only a biological phenomenon. For Zizioulas, he also discusses death as the opposite of the real life and I would call it spiritual death. “*Life is always understood as relationship and as communion.*”²⁷³ Death means the being is deprived of the benefit of existing forever; death as the state of corruption, destruction and perdition must be understood in relation to the definition of life. It is easy for us to understand those concepts of Zizioulas if we borrow the existentialist theological term—‘the authentic being of man’. John Macquarrie explains: “*The commandment of the Creator is life. (Romans 7.10) Whereas man in his fallen existence loses his being and runs into death, when he exists according to the command and intention of the Creator, he gains his being and attains to life in the fullest sense.*”²⁷⁴

An important significance for anthropology is that Zizioulas traces the life of spiritual death and the new spiritual life to ‘*after the flesh*’ or ‘*after the Spirit*’. It is different from the judgment based on human nature. Zizioulas’ understanding is consistent with the New Testament: “So that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8. 4) The existence of the fall or death is an existence ‘after the flesh’. Man’s authentic existence is ‘after the Spirit’ which expresses a way of man’s being: man is oriented to God, to the invisible and eternal rather than to the world, i.e., the visible, the tangible, and the temporal.

Death is an ontological problem for human beings. Zizioulas claims that the problem cannot be put right simply by our obedience: “*Athanasius pointed out that if the problem could be solved simply by forgiving Adam his sin, God could have done so. Adam could have repented, and indeed he did weep and regret what he had*

²⁷³ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 78.

²⁷⁴ John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology: A comparison of Heidegger and Bultmann* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), 129.

done. God could have forgiven him, and all would have been well. But Athanasius shows that the heart of the problem was not obedience or disobedience, because this was not a moral but an ontological problem.”²⁷⁵ The ontological problem determines the significance of death and resurrection of Jesus:

This victory is achieved in the Resurrection, without which there can be no talk of salvation, because death is the problem of creation. “*If Christ has not been raised*”, says St Paul, “*your faith is in vain*” (I Cor. 15.14). Christ is ‘the Saviour of the world’ not because he sacrificed himself on the Cross, thereby wiping away the sins of the world, but because “*he is risen from the dead having trampled death by death.*”²⁷⁶

The themes of death and life are the main categories in Zizioulas’ theology. For Zizioulas, sin is a moral consideration, and death is ontological. However, he did not discuss the problem of sin. From the above quotation, he also wants to say that the Cross is not related to the atoning of sins.

3.3.3 The ecclesial hypostasis

The new mode of existence formed in the Church is called ‘the hypostasis of ecclesial existence’ by Zizioulas. The hypostasis of ecclesial existence is the new life, an eternal life. The ecclesial existence exists truly in unbroken relationship with God. The true definition of man is the creature who participates freely in the life of God—not a creature who lives from some resources of his own.²⁷⁷

3.3.3.1 The emergence of a new particular hypostasis through Baptism

According to Zizioulas, ‘the hypostasis of ecclesial existence’ is produced from the new birth of man through baptism. Baptism leads to a new mode of existence, to a regeneration (I Peter 1. 3, 23) and to a new ‘hypostasis’. The realization of the

²⁷⁵ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 102. Zizioulas did not explain the source of Athanasius’ opinion.

²⁷⁶ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 261.

²⁷⁷ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 115.

ecclesial hypostasis is through baptism. According to the hypostatic communion, Zizioulas defines the essence of baptism: “*This adoption of man by God, the identification of his hypostasis with the hypostasis of the Son of God, is the essence of baptism.*”²⁷⁸ The new hypostasis of man is realized through the Church. Therefore, in early patristic literature the image of the Church as mother is often employed. Through the Church a birth takes place: man is born as ‘hypostasis,’ as person.

Baptism brings about a transformation of personal identity. This understanding is based on the personal identity of Jesus. It means an ontological or personal principle which has been applied from God to man: “*As an ecclesial hypostasis man thus proves that what is valid for God can also be valid for man: the nature does not determine the person; the person enables the nature to exist; freedom is identified with the being of man.*”²⁷⁹

Firstly, Zizioulas discusses the case of incarnation. What makes Christ a person is the relationship with the Father through which all his other relationships exist and by which they are determined. In the incarnation, Christ took on other relationships such as relationships with his mother, his disciples, and the entire people of Israel. Zizioulas claims that “*all these relationships belong to his personal identity, and they are all judged by the decisive relationship that Christ has with the Father.*”²⁸⁰ It can provide an answer for one question: where does Christ get his consciousness of himself from? There was a long discussion, chiefly in Roman Catholic theological circles, of whether Christ had two kinds of consciousness in two natures. **Zizioulas claims that the consciousness to be a self has been produced in a relationship.** According to this logic, Christ has a single self-consciousness. Christ

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 56.

²⁷⁹ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 57.

²⁸⁰ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 112.

draws his consciousness of himself from his relationship with the Father and is determined by this single relationship. Zizioulas claims that only until 20th century did some philosophers find that self-consciousness is decided by relationship. “*After many centuries, some twentieth-century philosophers have made the discovery that there is no ‘I’ without a ‘you’.*”²⁸¹ It is important for the practice of faith. Zizioulas uses iconography as an example: there are different meanings in Western portraits of Christ and those in Byzantine. In the West, Christ is portrayed as a baby alone with his mother, the Virgin Mary, which means that the maternal relationship gives the identity to the baby. But in Byzantine, the painter shows us that the child is God, and so the baby is not defined by the Virgin but by his relationship with the Father.²⁸²

Secondly, it can be used in the human case. “*We are persons because our distinct identity is given by our various relationships, biological relationships with our parents, natural relationships with our environment, and a vast complex of other social and political relationships.*”²⁸³ We receive our personhood from the whole vast community. When we accept baptism, it means there is a relationship between us and God. This relationship will eventually determine all other relationships. That means that only one relationship is the most important and ultimate for us. This relationship makes me myself rather than someone else.

Personal identity has some basic characteristics. Zizioulas introduces two of them: one is that through the Church man transcends exclusivism. According to Zizioulas, when man loves as a biological hypostasis, he inevitably excludes others: the family has priority in love over ‘strangers’. But the ecclesial hypostasis constitutes a transcendence of this exclusiveness. “*The ecclesial hypostasis is the*

²⁸¹ Ibid., 113.

²⁸² See John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 112-113.

²⁸³ Ibid., 111.

capacity of the person to love without exclusiveness, and to do this not out of conformity with a moral commandment ('Love thy neighbor,' etc.) but out of his 'hypostatic constitution,' out of the fact that his new birth from the womb of the Church has made him part of a network of relationships which transcends every exclusiveness."²⁸⁴ Zizioulas expresses this characteristic through the concept of 'catholicity'. Catholicity permits the person to become a hypostasis without falling into individuality. In the Church two things are realized simultaneously: the world is presented to man not as mutually exclusive portions but as a single whole. Man is called upon to unite every concrete being. At the same time this man expresses and realizes a catholic presence in the world, a hypostasis which is not an individual **but an authentic person in communion**. Zizioulas defines this characteristic on an ontological level rather than a moral level: Thus the ecclesial hypostasis is not a moral perfection or an improvement of nature or biological hypostasis, but a new creation.²⁸⁵

3.3.3.2 Eucharistic hypostasis as a relational expression between biological and ecclesial hypostasis

Zizioulas begins to discuss the other question related to our existential experience: "*What happens to the biological hypostasis of man when that which I have called the ecclesial hypostasis is brought into being?*"²⁸⁶ In spite of the existence of the ecclesial hypostasis, man does not cease at the same time to be born and to die in accordance with his biological hypostasis. In fact, the encounter between the ecclesial and the biological hypostases creates a paradoxical relationship in human existence. In theory, baptism gives man a personal identity

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 58.

²⁸⁵ See John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 58, footnote 53.

²⁸⁶ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 58.

determined by his relationship with God. But the ecclesial hypostasis is not entirely realized in man's historical existence: "*Man appears to exist in his ecclesial identity not as that which he is but as that which he will be; the ecclesial identity is linked with eschatology, that is, with the final outcome of his existence.*"²⁸⁷ In practice a question arises: "*What kind of experience of authentic personhood is it that the ecclesial hypostasis offers?*"²⁸⁸

Zizioulas uses a new ontological category of sacramental or Eucharistic hypostasis to express the authentic personhood which is offered historically and experientially by the holy Eucharist.

Firstly, Zizioulas explains the Eucharist which is different from Eastern Orthodoxy under the influence of Western scholasticism: "*The Eucharist is first of all an assembly, a community, a network of relations, in which man 'subsists' in a manner different from the biological as a member of a body which transcends every exclusiveness of a biological or social kind.*"²⁸⁹ It means that the Eucharist provides a locus where man experiences the transcendence of the ontological necessity and exclusiveness entailed by the biological hypostasis: "*The Eucharist is the only historical context of human existence where the terms 'father,' 'brother,' etc., lose their biological exclusiveness, and reveal, as we have seen, relationships of free and universal love.*"²⁹⁰ The Eucharist is the ecclesial identity in its historical realization. For in the Eucharist, man becomes an authentic person. "*[Eucharist] has as its object man's transcendence of his biological hypostasis and his becoming an authentic person.*"²⁹¹ The Eucharist means that man ultimately exists only

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 59.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 59.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 60.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 60.

²⁹¹ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 61. See footnote 61. Zizioulas takes marriage as example: "it would be a mistake to regard marriage as a simple confirmation and blessing of a biological fact. Linked with the Eucharist it becomes a reminder that although the newly married couple have been

within Christ.²⁹²

Secondly, Zizioulas stresses that it is the eschatological character of the Eucharist that expresses the relationship between the ecclesial and the biological hypostasis. The ecclesial hypostasis is not simply a historical being but points to an eschatological being transcending history. “*The ecclesial hypostasis reveals man as a person, which, however, has its roots in the future and is perpetually inspired, or rather maintained and nourished, by the future. The truth and the ontology of the person belong to the future, are images of the future.*”²⁹³ According to the book of Hebrews, Zizioulas cleverly explains this hypostasis as “*the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*” (Hebrews 11:1) in light of the eschatological character of the Eucharist. Therefore, the eschatological character of the ecclesial hypostasis contains a kind of dialectic of ‘already but not yet.’ This dialectic appears in the Eucharist: it provides a perspective to render man as a person to see that his true home is not in this world, but in the future, “*The ecclesial hypostasis, as a transcendence of the biological, draws its beginning from the being of God and from that which it will itself be at the end of the age.*”²⁹⁴

blessed in order to create their own family, nevertheless the ultimate and essential network of relationships which constitutes their hypostasis is not the family but the Church as expressed in the Eucharistic assembly. This eschatological transcendence of the biological hypostasis is also conveyed by the ‘crowning’ of the bride and groom, but is lost essentially and existentially from the moment the rite of marriage is separate from the eucharist.”

²⁹² See John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 116.

²⁹³ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 62.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Chapter Four

Personal otherness and communion

In chapter two, I have already briefly explored the consequence of regarding the Father as personal cause who generates personal otherness and communion. Communion and otherness are two aspects of the concept of person. This kind of understanding of person in communion rejects the paradigm of the introspective, self-reflective, autonomous and self-sufficient person. This chapter will further explain the concept of otherness and communion, criticize Emmanuel Levinas' concept of otherness without communion,²⁹⁵ and discuss the transformation of an impersonal relation between humans and humans to a personal relation. It means that the ultimate human-human relationship should not be 'ethical' or anything other than personal or ontological.

4.1 Personal otherness of the being of human person

4.1.1 The basic meaning of Otherness: uniqueness and relationship

For Zizioulas, otherness is primary and constitutive of the very idea of being. It should be distinguished from an ethical concept: "*Respect for otherness is a matter not of ethics but of ontology: if otherness disappears beings simply cease to be.*"²⁹⁶

Firstly, otherness, by definition, implies personal uniqueness. The uniqueness has been formed in the unique relationship in which a certain other is singled out as the unique Other. Uniqueness is not understood in terms of nature, but is rooted in personal existence. Zizioulas analyzes the ground of uniqueness:

All qualities that we normally use in our culture to indicate difference are in fact common to all three divine Persons; they belong to divine nature (omniscience, holiness, might, goodness,

²⁹⁵ Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) was a French philosopher of Lithuanian Jewish ancestry who is known for his work related to Jewish philosophy, existentialism, ethics, and ontology.

²⁹⁶ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 11.

energy, etc.). The only otherness we can speak of in the case of the Trinity is personal otherness. It is an otherness that involves uniqueness and radical alterity stemming not from natural or moral qualities, or from a combination of such qualities, but from unique relations.²⁹⁷

Secondly, Otherness as uniqueness is generated in a relationship with the absolute Other. “*Only if the ultimate goal of a particular being is the Other, and only if this Other is a person that can hypostasize the particular and elevate it to the status of ontological ultimacy, can this particular being survive as particular, and not be swallowed up by the general.*”²⁹⁸ This means that if the existence of a certain being has the general as its ultimate goal, it will be destined to be absorbed by the general. Thus, Zizioulas affirms the crucial question for human beings: “*is whether in all truth the ultimate goal in our existence is—to put it in terms borrowed from patristic theology—the ‘other’ not as $\lambda\lambda\omicron$ but as $\lambda\lambda\omicron\zeta$ (otherness of being), that is, not as nature but as person or hypostasis.*”²⁹⁹

The Other must be a person rather than a principle such as morality, a code of behavior, etc. This point can be used to criticize the tendency to reduce religion into a kind of ethics. However, it raises some questions: whether the work of the Cross can be morally described through the absolute priority of the Other, whether martyrdom and asceticism are part of ethics, and whether we have such an ethic of otherness. Zizioulas thinks that the application of otherness to morality involves a logical difficulty, because otherness is generated from unique relations rather than the self alone or its nature. “*The Other can truly exist as Other only if it is ultimately regarded as person or hypostasis and not as self or nature, it will mean that every being should be treated as absolutely Other in the above sense.*”³⁰⁰ Ethics operates with general principles which belong to a general category of beings. However, it is

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 70.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 68.

²⁹⁹ Gregory Naz., *Ep.* 101. 4 (PG 37, 180A-B); Maximus, *Ep.* 15 (PG 91, 552B): $\lambda\lambda\omicron$ =otherness of nature; $\lambda\lambda\omicron\zeta$ =otherness of person. See Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 68, footnote 157.

³⁰⁰ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 69.

difficult to comprehend otherness by a general category of beings like essence or nature. Therefore, Zizioulas claims that we cannot regard and treat all ‘others’ as absolutely and truly Other from the perspective of ethics. In other words, we can only understand others as absolutely and truly others ‘in Christ’ or ontologically.

4.1.2 Otherness as constitutive of human person

For Zizioulas, there is an internal relationship between communion, otherness, freedom and ‘to be the other’. All communion must make otherness a primary and constitutive ingredient; it makes the other free, not only having the ‘freedom of will’, but also having the freedom to be the other: “*Otherness is necessary for freedom to exist: if there is no absolute, ontological otherness between God and the world, there is no ontological freedom allowing each of these two ‘beings’ to be themselves and thus to be at all.*”³⁰¹ For Zizioulas, ontological otherness is the presupposition for the other to be other. The Father as personal cause generates otherness, namely, God is the source of all otherness. Zizioulas analyzes two facets of otherness.

(a) The human being is defined through otherness. Human being’s identity emerges only in relation to other beings: God and the rest of creation. Freedom is the presupposition: a human being is distinguished from the animals by his or her freedom. Rational capacity is often regarded as man’s distinctive characteristic but it needs to be qualified by freedom. Freedom means the drive to ontological otherness with respect to God, animals and other human beings. At the social level, classes or qualities of any kind lack ontological otherness. The human being who has freedom for otherness refuses to be identified as a member of class or group, or a category of natural or moral qualities.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 19.

(b) The drive of the human being towards otherness is rooted in the divine call to Adam. The call simultaneously implies three things: relationship, freedom, and otherness. First, through the call, a relationship has been constituted: Adam as a human being other than God and the rest of creation in freedom. Through the relationship, our emphasis on otherness and freedom can be distinguished from individualism: *“The otherness is not the result of self-affirmation; it is an otherness granted and is not self-existent, but a particularity which is a gift of the Other.”*³⁰² Second, the call means that God is the ground for the existence of human. If there is no God, there is no man, and there is no freedom for the human being to be the ultimate other: *“Freedom without God would lose its ontological character; it would be reduced to freedom of the will.”*³⁰³ Third, Zizioulas introduces a-symmetry into relationality. Ultimately, only God, not humans, is an initiator or the subject of the call. His idea can be distinguished from the ontology of relationship, i.e., the human being does not spring automatically from just any relationship. Instead, otherness is a unique gift which comes from the Other or God. Finally, the identity of a human being is constantly formed through the response to this call of the Other. Because of the human free will, Zizioulas emphasizes that *“as long as there is freedom there is history: the ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to the call, which defines humanity and makes the human being an historical being... To this call, Adam in his freedom answered with a ‘no’. It was Christ who fulfilled it, thus revealing and realizing in himself what it means to be truly human.”*³⁰⁴

4.1.3 Otherness beyond the conflict between the particular/person and the general/nature

³⁰² John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 41.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

In the thought of the Greek Fathers, hypostasis or person signifies the particular, while nature or *ousia* expresses the common or general. For Zizioulas, the individual ceases to exist after death, but nature or *ousia* of human beings does not disappear. There seems to be a conflict between the particular and the general. Of course, the conflict mentioned here does not mean a formal logical contradiction, but a kind of existential tension.

There are two areas in which the ontological level of human existence manifests itself in a decisive and uncontrollable way: the way a human being is established as a particular through biological birth, and the way it ceases to be a particular after death. Both of these facts are ontological and not merely psychological, since they are constitutive of a particular human being and totally uncontrollable by our minds or feelings. Both of them involve a conflict between the particular and the general, the 'hypostatic' and the 'natural'.³⁰⁵

This kind of conflict only exists in the created realm. In the case of the human being, nature precedes the person, whereas in God the two coincide fully. Human beings are born as a result of pre-existing natural laws, common to all humans. So the general being in this case is ontologically prior to the particular. In God the divine persons exist not as a result of given natural laws. Three persons and one substance exist simultaneously as one and many. So there cannot be any conflict between the particular and the general for God.

Zizioulas affirms that the conflict is ontological and not merely psychological. Everything that exists, whether consciously or unconsciously, undergoes and suffers this conflict. Zizioulas criticizes that ever since Augustine the Western mind has tended to treat the conflict between nature and person as a psychological experience of the self and its consciousness. Zizioulas regards it as an ontological

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 56.

matter instead.

Zizioulas emphasizes that the conflict can only be resolved in the body because the body is ontologically constitutive of the human being and so essential for his identity and particularity. Because the body is absolutely important for a human being to be a particular, the resurrection of the body is necessary if the conflict is to be resolved. According to Zizioulas, from the apologists, above all Irenaeus, to Methodius of Olympus in the fourth century, Christian anthropology could not conceive human identity without the body. He affirms the Creeds which include the most important article of the Resurrection of Christ from the very beginning (1 Corinthians 15). The creeds emphasize the resurrection of the ‘flesh’ or the ‘body’ of Christ, and not simply his ‘death’ for our sin. For the human being, the resolution of the conflict cannot be found outside the body itself. For example, some people resort to the immortality of the soul, a kind of escape from the body, but this amounts to the loss of the human being itself. For Zizioulas, the conflict between hypostasis and nature can be resolved by “*the resurrection both as an historical event in the person of Christ and as the eschatological destiny for all humanity*”.³⁰⁶

4.1.4 Otherness decides the end of ecclesial existence

According to this view of personal otherness, Zizioulas explains the meaning of the being of the Church: “*By being the body of Christ, the Church exists as the hypostasization of all particular beings in the unique hypostasis of Christ, which guarantees the ontological truth, the eternal survival...of every being we regard as unique and indispensable, for he is the only one in whom death, which threatens the particular with extinction, is overcome.*”³⁰⁷ Since the being of Church is ‘the

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 62.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 75-76.

hypostasization of all particular beings in the unique hypostasis of Christ', the Church in every respect serves this purpose. "*The Church is the place where God's love as the love of a particular and ontologically unique being is freely offered to his creation in the person of Christ, so that every particular human being may freely obtain ontological otherness in him. This is the 'essence' of the Church—everything else is meant to be the means for its realization.*"³⁰⁸

Zizioulas describes the Church fundamentally as Eucharistic way of being. It is in the Eucharist that the love of God is offered to humanity as the unique hypostasis in which all human beings can freely obtain otherness and uniqueness. The two most important sacraments are connected in their ontological significance: "*The only way for a particular being ontologically to be truly Other is to be born again, this time not from nature but from the Spirit... What Baptism initiates, therefore, the Eucharist fulfils. Otherness as the emergence of a new particular being through Baptism is granted eternal being through communion in the Eucharist.*"³⁰⁹ At the same time, there is an ontological relationship between the Church and the world when Zizioulas understands of the Church through the Eucharist. He argues this issue in his book *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*.³¹⁰ He develops a cosmic dimension of the Eucharist and the Church. Therefore, Zizioulas' ecclesiology is related to ecology as well. The ontological foundation of these issues is the ontology of personhood. Given space limitations, this article can't fully explore ecclesiology.

Because Zizioulas regards that Pneumatology contributes to Christology the dimension of communion, and therefore, Christology cannot be separated from

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 79.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 80.

³¹⁰ John Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, ed. Luke Ben Tallon (London: T & T Clark, 2011).

Pneumatology,³¹¹ Zizioulas affirms Spirit as the force of hypostasization. “*The Spirit offers the particularizing force which guarantees that hypostasization in Christ will not end up in an absorption of the many into the one, in the loss of otherness.*”³¹²

4.2 Personal communion in otherness

As we have described, for Zizioulas, Church is the place, as a Eucharistic way of being, where human beings can obtain otherness in communion. Communion is explained by Zizioulas by the liturgical or sacramental approach, especially the Eucharistic approach.³¹³ Communion is an ontological category: “*The ontology of communion [is] formed within the current of eucharistic theology that connected Ignatius, through Irenaeus, up to Athanasius.*”³¹⁴ Communion is an event: “*True knowledge is not a knowledge of the essence or the nature of things, but of how they are connected within the communion-event.*”³¹⁵ Communion and otherness are not only limited to ecclesial or sacramental manifestations. Zizioulas writes: “*On the contrary, communion and otherness are supposed to permeate and pervade our lives in their entirety. They are to become an attitude, an ethos, rather than an ethic and a set of principles.*”³¹⁶ Zizioulas applies the ascetic life, say, of the desert Fathers as a concrete example to explain the co-inherence of communion and otherness.

The desert Fathers provide an ontological ground for our attitude to the Other. They insist that the Other should be kept free from moral judgment and categorization: “*The Other is not identifiable ontologically in moral terms, for he or*

³¹¹ Ibid., 131.

³¹² Ibid., 76.

³¹³ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 101.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 83.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 106.

³¹⁶ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 81.

*she would cease to be truly Other if placed in class or category applicable to more than one entity. By being a person, the Other is by definition unique and therefore unclassifiable. Only in this way can one remain truly and absolutely, that is, ontologically, Other.*³¹⁷ Zizioulas emphasizes that this kind of attitude of the ascetic Fathers is not concerned with the inner psychological experience of the individual. Its ground is relational and ontological: *“one is truly oneself in so far as one is hypostasized in the Other while emptying oneself so that the Other may be hypostasized in oneself. This hypostasization constitutes the essence of communion: ‘it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.’”*³¹⁸ (Galatians 2.20) For the sake of others, they condemn themselves:

‘The beginning of salvation for everyone is to condemn himself’, is the very foundation of asceticism for the desert Fathers, such as Anthony, Arsenius, Ammos, Poimen, Theophilus, John Colovos, etc. The death of self is the condition for salvation. This condemnation of the Self is tied up with one’s positive attitude to the Other, with the liberation of the Other from his or her evil qualities. Therefore, the Other has priority over the self, he must not be judged; he must be stripped of his moral qualities; he must be simply himself and loved for who he is.³¹⁹

This ‘condemnation of the Self’ is the foundation for a positive attitude to the Other. However, how can desert Fathers deal with evil, which apparently exists in other people? In this situation, evil is not ignored or overlooked, but is passed from the Other to the Self. Zizioulas writes: *“The stories of such empathy with the Other’s sin which are retained in the lives of the desert Fathers are indeed striking and moving. One of the brothers does penance for the other’s sins, as if he had committed them himself...The personal cost in such cases is very high but it is paid gladly in a Christ-like manner.”*³²⁰ So we need to carry the Other’s burden or sin.

Moreover, Zizioulas confirms the righteousness of ascetic life by discussing an

³¹⁷ Ibid., 82.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 85.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 82-83.

³²⁰ Ibid., 82, see footnote 183.

issue: Does the ascetic ethos violate truth, when it transfers the evil of the other to one's innocent self? Zizioulas gives a twofold answer to this question. First, the theological justification is Christological: Christ became a curse for us (Galatians 3.13), so that we could become the righteousness of God (II Corinthians 5.21). For the desert Fathers, the ground of their activity is the Christology of *kenosis*: “*Behind the ethos of self-condemnation for the sake of the Other lies the Christology of kenosis.*”³²¹ They develop the theology of ascetic *kenosis*: the entire giving over of the I to the other and receiving of the other in his or her fullness. Therefore, self-condemnation should be understood under a principle: the Other having primacy over the Self.³²² Their purpose is not to develop their subjectivity but the giving up of the Self to the Other, an expression of *kenosis*.

Second, it involves an ethical question. Ethics operates with a classification of human beings as either good or evil; the ascetic ethos presented above proceeds with the assumption that all human beings participate in the fall and are sinful. For example, Jesus declared the accusers of the adulterous woman incompetent to pass judgment on her: ‘let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her’ (John 8.7). According to the ethical principles, the Other is so identified with his or her qualities that he or she appears to be affected ontologically by these qualities. When someone commits adultery or murder, we tend to say that he or she is an adulterer or a murderer. But God in Christ forgives our sin by removing them (Acts 3. 19; Romans 4. 7-8, 11, 27; etc.). Christ can remove our sin by bearing our sins in his body on the tree, i.e., he dies and rises for us. This means that evil cannot be identified with the evil-doer. Ascetic life which bears the evil of the other testifies to this truth, which is affirmed by the sacrificial love of Christ.

³²¹ Ibid., 83.

³²² Ibid., 84.

Furthermore, this does not mean forgiveness is a merely psychological matter—a sheer forgetting, not a removing of sin—which is not what Christian forgiveness means.³²³ Even when it is said that God no longer ‘remembers’ our sins, the meaning is not psychological but ontological, since whatever God does not ‘remember’ ceases to exist (Hebrews 10.4). Thus, the Christian ethos of otherness does not allow for the acceptance or the rejection of the Other on the basis of his or her qualities, natural or moral, but on the simple basis of each person’s ontological particularity and integrity. Therefore, transferring evil from the Other to an innocent self is not violating truth.

This model of communion is undergirded by a metaphysical principle: the priority of the Other over the Self. Zizioulas’ understanding of communion is grounded in Maximus’ thought: “*All this is grounded by Maximus in the Incarnation, which for him is the mystery of love. Both the negative aspect of ascetic life, that is the uprooting of self-love, and its positive goal, which consists in the attainment of virtues and theosis, involve the priority of the Other over the Self.*”³²⁴ This kind of view of communion suggests that otherness implies demoralization or a-moralization of human life.³²⁵ This, of course, does not mean the encouragement of immoralities, but means that the worth of human life cannot be assessed only from the moral perspective. In this way, it preserves one’s personal uniqueness and dignity, regardless of one’s moral achievements.

While I think the metaphysical principle concerning the priority of the Other over the Self is insightful, it may not be sufficient for a full understanding of the concept of communion with others. I will discuss this issue in chapter seven.

³²³ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 86.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

4.3 Transformation of the relationship with the Other

As I discuss above, Zizioulas' understanding of communion with the Other is operated under a metaphysical principle of the Other as having primacy over the Self. The Other may be hypostasized in oneself and hypostasization constitutes the essence of communion. It means that the purpose of this kind of communion is to let the Other be the Other. Therefore, a communion in otherness provides a possibility for us to build up personal relations in a community.

4.3.1 Negligence of the Other

In the last chapter, I criticize the individualist concept of person in the Western tradition. The theological and philosophical anthropology has characteristically been framed as the question of the self rather than the question of the other. The other has been ignored. From a perspective of epistemology, the Other has to be reduced to something for the self to recognize. Since Descartes discovers the *cogito*, the external world and other people have always been a source of philosophical difficulty. It is because the philosophers find that it is not easy to explain how I can really be certain of the existence of the external world and other minds. The Other has been brought under the domination and subjugation of the I.³²⁶

The ignoring of the Other is also affected by the moralizing of philosophy, which is heavily criticized by Nietzsche. He blames that since Plato, philosophy has been dominated by morality. Even in Plato's predecessors, moral interpretations play a decisive role.³²⁷ The moral 'good' is the highest idea which is also a metaphysical category:

This means that moral judgments are torn from their conditionality, in which they have grown

³²⁶ Bo-Myung Seo, *A Critique of Western Theological Anthropology: Understanding Human Beings in a Third World Context* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 88.

³²⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1968), 222.

and alone possess any meaning, from their Greek and Greek-political ground and soil, to be denaturalized under the pretense of sublimation. The great concepts “good” and “just” are severed from the presuppositions to which they belong and, as liberated “ideas,” become objects of dialectic. One looks for truth in them, one takes them for entities or signs of entities: one invents a world where they are at home, where they originate—In summa: the mischief has already reached its climax in Plato—And then one had need to invent the abstractly perfect man as well: good, just, wise, a dialectician.³²⁸

Since morality (or the social instinct mentioned by Nietzsche below) is largely a social thing, this leads to a serious consequence: the individual existence has been overlooked. Friedrich Nietzsche condemns that every individual was sacrificed and served as a tool: *“As the social instinct resting on the valuation that the single individual is of little account, but all individuals together are of very great account provided they constitute a community with a common feeling and a common conscience...My idea: goals are lacking and these must be individuals’! We observe how things are everywhere...Go into the street and you encounter lots of ‘slaves’.”*

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4.3.2 The self prior to the Other

To use Levinas’ words, it is to reduce the Other into something of the Same: *“Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being.”*³³⁰ Zizioulas believes that in Western philosophical history, the priority of the self over the other is the dominant belief. *“When Parmenides declared ‘being’ to be identical with ‘knowing’, ontology and epistemology became dependent on each other. This led ancient Greek philosophy to what Levinas called the idea of ‘sameness’, which he described as totalitarian*

³²⁸ Ibid., 234-235.

³²⁹ Ibid., 154.

³³⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979), 43.

ontology.”³³¹

Rosenzweig reflects on the problem of German Idealism, and he claims that the emphasis on essence can be traced from the philosophy of Thales to Hegel: they try to find the essence of the world by reducing everything to thought.³³² It influences the relationship between men directly. As said by Levinas: “*If it claims to integrate myself and the other within an impersonal spirit this alleged integration is cruelty and injustice, that is, ignores the other. History as a relationship between men ignores a position of the I before the other in which the other remains transcendent with respect to me.*”³³³ This amounts to stripping the Other of his or her otherness or humanity. Professor Seo points out: “*The idea that to be human is to be a subject is distinctively a modern achievement, and as such it is largely responsible for making modern Western thought as a whole a history of thinking about the I.*”³³⁴ While I do not entirely deny the significance of this “modern achievement,” I also need to point out that the consequence of this “achievement” is often the impersonal treatment of others, which is indeed prevalent in “modern” society.

4.3.3 An impersonal relationship

The human being as biological hypostasis is limited by biological nature. He is often afraid of the others and continuously defends himself against the encroachment of his subjectivity by the others. The relations of the members of society are largely functional. Every person is basically identified with his function in the society, e.g., being a doctor, a teacher, etc. Such relations are not relations of persons as persons, but only as workers. They are relations of the functions which

³³¹ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 43.

³³² Franz Rosenzweig, *His Life and Thought*, ed. Nahum Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 179-231.

³³³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, 52.

³³⁴ Bo-Myung Seo, *A Critique of Western Theological Anthropology: Understanding Human Beings in a Third World Context* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 82.

different persons perform in the cooperative association. The bonds of relation between individuals which constitute them are impersonal. Each isolated individual uses all his capacity to secure his own satisfaction and to preserve his own life. However, these egocentric individuals are still rational beings in terms of the instrumental reason.

A society which is constituted by isolated individuals can only be held together by a common purpose, such as economic prosperity of the society. Moreover, the social order is mainly maintained by a common obedience to law. As said by John Macmurray: *“This yields a mechanical concept of society. Its components are atomic units, inherently isolated or unrelated, and ideally equal. The units are dynamic; they are units of energy. There is nothing in them to hold them together. They are united in a whole by an external force which counteracts the tendency of their individual energies to repel one another.”*³³⁵

4.3.4 The necessity of renewing understanding of personhood in theology

Professor Seo thinks that the notions of subjectivity have been bound up not only with the way of thinking about the subject but also with the global project of subjection such as the West’s project of colonial expansion and domination in the modern period. This kind of project has been heavily criticized by liberation theology, which thinks that we need to listen to the voices of the poor and the oppressed who witness the contradictions of contemporary civilization. One major reflection in theologies of liberation concerns theological anthropology: they wish to redefine the concept of human person to overcome the problems of oppression and systemic poverty. This means that the understanding of human being conceived as self and subjectivity should be changed. Min agrees with Gutierrez’s search for

³³⁵ John Macmurray, *Person in Relation*, 137.

the 'creation of a new man' and says that the self is "*not the isolated and individualistic self, but the self conscious of itself as a member of an interdependent humanity and therefore in solidarity with others.*"³³⁶

There are criteria for judging a theological anthropology: whether its understanding of the human person is adequate to "*the normative tradition of Christian faith and the task of theology to interpret that tradition in view of the central crisis of the time.*"³³⁷ According to these criteria, many modern theological anthropologies are inadequate because they tend to be asocial and ahistorical and refer exclusively or mainly to individual inwardness and individual transcendence.³³⁸

In the Augustinian tradition, personhood has been understood in terms of consciousness and its internal distinctions. Thus, it does not essentially involve an ontological relationship with others: "*The journey of the soul toward God is a journey inward. The process by which the soul comes to the deepest knowledge of itself and of its God is introspection and self-reflection. This makes the social, communal, toward-another character of personhood rather difficult to see.*"³³⁹ Because nature is the principle of personhood, Western theology did not develop an anthropology which teaches Christians to respect and cherish otherness. The relationship with others is also subsumed under general truths. Yannaras criticizes clearly: "*If we relate the image of God to nature and not to the personal distinctiveness of man, then morality, truth and authenticity of existence, is something predetermined by nature and essential necessity for man.*"³⁴⁰ This is

³³⁶ Anselm Min, *Dialectic of Salvation: Issues in Theology of Liberation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 93.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 165.

³³⁸ See Bo-Myung Seo, *A Critique of Western Theological Anthropology: Understanding Human Beings in a Third World Context* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 51.

³³⁹ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us*, 247.

³⁴⁰ Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 26.

exacerbated by our tendency to regard truth as objective propositions, something impersonal.

It can be traced back to Plato's axiological idealism which identifies being with the 'idea of the Good.'³⁴¹ According to Yannaras, the approaches and systematic theories which provide the framework of an axiological ontology and ethics influence the rationalistic synthesis of Roman Catholic scholasticism and the whole of Western thought. The standard of good or virtue is based on the rules of logic or reason. The consequence is that human individuality is subordinated to the authority of an impersonal absolute reason. Because of the identification of morality with being or ontology, the idea of morality is also absolutized intellectually as the idea of an 'absolute good'. In this manner Roman Catholicism has laid the foundation for the rationalism and subjectivist ethics of modern European culture. But it lacks the truth of the personhood and leads to some misery:

When the truth of the person is undervalued or ignored in the realm of theology, this inevitably results in the creation of a legalistic, external system of ethics...When intellectual and conventional categories replace ontological truth and revelation in Christian theology, then in the historical life of the Church, too, the problem of salvation is obscured by a shadow that torments mankind, that of a 'law' which leads to nowhere.³⁴²

Under such legalistic systems, it is difficult for Christians to build up a spiritual relationship with others. Moreover, both Catholic and Protestant churches claim that they have the 'right to evangelize'. Sometimes evangelism degenerates into the 'war for souls,' both in a metaphorical sense and a literal sense. As a result, proselytism becomes a terrible caricature of evangelism.³⁴³ When legalistic standards become extreme or absolutized, it may even lead to cruel actions in the

³⁴¹ See, for example, Plato, *Republic* 7:517 bc.

³⁴² Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 26-27.

³⁴³ Elizabeth H. Prodromou, "International Religious Freedom and the Challenge of Proselytism", in Aristotle Papanikolaou and Elizabeth H. Prodromou eds., *Thinking through Faith: New Perspectives from Orthodox Christian Scholars* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 271-272.

name of the “Good,” such as the famous Donatists,³⁴⁴ the Crusades,³⁴⁵ the persecution of the Anabaptists,³⁴⁶ or even the United States’ attacking Iraq (even if the purpose is alleged to be justice).³⁴⁷ All of these unfortunate developments resulted in negative effects for the image and reputation of the Church, which is now not infrequently regarded as the enemy of human rights and the pluralistic society. These events also sow seeds of hostility between different religions and cultures which cannot be reconciled for many generations. As Elizabeth Prodromou points out: “Christianity faces a direct challenge in its contribution toward new ways of interpreting human right”³⁴⁸ in modern religiously pluralistic world. It seems that we also need to renew our understanding of human personhood.

4.3.5 A personal relationship

According to Zizioulas, the authentic person or hypostasis is the ecclesial existence. As I have described in chapter three (section 3.3.3.), the Eucharist means a relationship between us and God. This relationship determines our relationship with all human persons and other creatures. It transcends the ontological necessity or biological limitation and treats the other as authentic person and lets the other free.

Generally speaking, in Western theology, the purpose of salvation is for our

³⁴⁴ In 3th century, the Donatists were rigorists, holding that the church must be a church of ‘saints’, not ‘sinners’, and that sacraments, such as baptism, administered by *traditores* were invalid. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donatism>

³⁴⁵ In 1096-1291, the Crusades were a series of religious expeditionary wars blessed by the Pope and the Catholic Church, with the stated goal of restoring Christian access to the holy places in and near Jerusalem. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crusades>

³⁴⁶ In the 1520’s and 1530’s the Anabaptists were radical, violent revolutionaries in the name of love, equality and spirituality; and the Reformers persecuted the Anabaptists. See http://www.frontline.org.za/articles/were_anabaptists_persecuted_for%20faith.htm

³⁴⁷ On 20 Mar 2003, The United States launched a thundering bomb and missile attack on Baghdad. This started an all-out war to drive Saddam Hussein from power and disarm Iraq.

³⁴⁸ Elizabeth H. Prodromou, “International Religious Freedom and the Challenge of Proselytism”, in Aristotle Papanikolaou and Elizabeth H. Prodromou eds., *Thinking through Faith: New Perspective from Orthodox Christian Scholars* (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008), 269.

sanctification: “*God’s purpose in doing everything that He did in the Old Testament is ultimately our sanctification. His purpose when He ‘sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law’ (Galatians 4:4) was still our sanctification. When Christ went to the death of the cross, the object was our perfection, as it was in the giving of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, everything God has done about us and our salvation has as its end and object our sanctification.*”³⁴⁹ In contrast with the West, Christos Yannaras explains the emphasis in Orthodox tradition: “*Man was created to become a partaker in the personal mode of existence which is the life of God—to become a partaker in the freedom of love which is true life.*”³⁵⁰

When we insist that the purpose of humans is sanctification, we often understand the concept of sanctification in the sense of ethics. As Charles Hodge says: “*All men instinctively judge a man for what he is. If he is good they so regard him. If he is bad, they pronounce him to be bad. This judgment is just as inevitable or necessary as that he is tall or short, learned or unlearned...This is the principle on which we judge ourselves, and on which men universally judge each other.*”³⁵¹ A relationship with the living God is often ignored. A personal relationship with other persons may be lacking too. Christos Yannaras claims: “*When the truth of the person is underrated or ignored in the realm of theology, this inevitably leads to the creation of a legal, external ethic. Man’s ethos or morality ceases to relate to the truth of the person, to the dynamic event of true life and its existential realization.*”³⁵² Ethics alone cannot manifest a relationship with the living God. Only by moving away from legalistic norms can we encounter the living God. As Grec Ogden writes: “*Starved for an internal reality, the Christian life moved away from being defined in*

³⁴⁹ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 200.

³⁵⁰ Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality* (New York, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 19.

³⁵¹ Charles Hodge, *Systemtic Theology*, Vol. III, 190.

³⁵² Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 153.

terms of the ethical norms that the institutional church represented and toward an encounter with the living Christ.”³⁵³ The Bible teaches us to live according to the Holy Spirit, (Romans 8. 4) The Spirit reveals the Lordship of Christ to Christians. “For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.” (Romans 14. 9)

When we are not satisfied with the other’s differences, we can have two kinds of attitude. First, we should receive a sinner in Christ and pray for him or her, and give a chance for him or her to repent. Second, we will not forgive until the sinner repents according to our standard of sanctification. There is a very real possibility for the second attitude, in light of a standard of *Westminster Confession of Faith with Scripture Proofs*:

It is the duty of each one to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for pardon (and whoever confesses his sins, prays for forgiveness, and forsakes those sins shall find mercy). Similarly, anyone who has scandalized a brother, or the church of Christ, ought to be willing by private or public confession, and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended, who are then to be reconciled to him and receive him in love.³⁵⁴

This emphasis on universal moral principles manifests the tendencies towards intellectualism and moralism.³⁵⁵ However, if we wish to build up an ontological or personal relationship with others, we need to separate the action of sin from the sinner. The distinction is clear in the Bible: “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good...bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.” (Romans 12. 9; 14) If someone does not separate the love for sinner and the hatred of sin, it is impossible to speak of seeing the sinner from the perspective of God, and to promote a relationship of love through the work of the Holy Spirit.

³⁵³ Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 18.

³⁵⁴ See *Westminster Confession of Faith with Scripture Proofs* 15:6. It is a Reformed confession of faith, in the Calvinist theological tradition.

³⁵⁵ See Christos Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, 208-209 and *passim*.

The classical example in the Bible is “a sinful woman forgiven” in the Gospel of Luke. When the sinful woman weeps, and anoints Jesus with the ointment, the Pharisee who had invited Jesus judges the woman in his heart: “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner.”(Luke 7. 39) Jesus says to him: “Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.” (Luke 7. 47) In this scene, we can see two kinds of attitude to the woman. For the Pharisee, his standard of the moral law hinders him from seeing the woman from the perspective of God. He cannot transcend the limitation of his experiences. So he cannot understand the action of the sinful woman, and treat the sinner from the sight of Jesus.

Based on the ontology of personhood, person is defined by otherness in relationship. It will change the mode of existence of the isolated individual when we are considering and experiencing persons in relation. The Trinitarian mode of existence is a mode of personal experience. “*We are in right relationship to ourselves when we accept that our origin, existence and destiny belong not to ourselves but to God... We were created for the purpose of glorifying God by means of the whole network of our relationships.*”³⁵⁶ Therefore, Trinity is symbolic of community. Society originates from the family. The family is a basic community in which the habit of cooperation is learned. The personal life in the family will transcend self-interest. The habit of cooperation in society which is the family beyond its boundaries will change the relationship of the isolated individuals: from a moral or legal relationship to an ontological relationship. The ultimate source which maintains the society is the personal life rather than the morals or law.

³⁵⁶ John Macmurray, *Person in Relation*, 347.

It does not mean that we need to abolish law or morality. What is required is a transformed understanding of morality. Yannaras writes: “*Morality is not an anhypostatic concept but a personal predicate. It is the measure of reference to a mode of existence ‘according to truth,’ this is to say, to a personal mode of existence.*”³⁵⁷ Its implication is that personal life is our ultimate purpose, and our understanding of morality needs to be related to this ultimate purpose. The salvation of God is to restore our communion with God and other people. We live in a community and we are members of the community. We have an ontological relationship with others. LaCugna understands the *arche* of God as personal life. She articulates precisely the relationship between ontology and ethics: “*From the perspective of a revitalized Trinitarian theology of God, the idea of the arche of God is not the enemy of mutuality, equality, and a nonhierarchical social order, but its only sure foundation!*”³⁵⁸ In other words, a personal life, properly understood, far from being the enemy of morality, can in fact provide the foundation for morality.

4.4 Critique of Levinas’ concept of otherness without communion

When the ‘Other’ is brought to the centre of philosophy as a primary concept, it means a departure from the consciousness-centred philosophy of Western thought. Zizioulas takes Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas as examples of this departure and relates their thought to the patristic understanding of otherness.

For Buber, the other and I have equal primordially: “*The I exists only through the relationship with the Thou.*”³⁵⁹ The dialogical situation “*is not to be grasped on*

³⁵⁷ Christos Yannaras, *Persons and Eros*, trans. Norman Russell (Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 285.

³⁵⁸ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us*, 399.

³⁵⁹ See M. Buber, ‘What is Man?’ in *Between Man and Man*, trans. R.G. Smith (London: Collins, 1954), 205.

*the basis of the ontic of personal existence, or of that of two personal existences, but of that which has its being between them and transcends both.*³⁶⁰ Buber claims that “‘Between’ is not an auxiliary construction, but the real place and bearer of what happens between men.”³⁶¹ Zizioulas regards Buber’s concept of ‘Between’ as the ultimate ontological category.³⁶² Furthermore, the I-Thou and I-It relationship have been decided by an attitude either of the I-Thou or of the I-It kind.³⁶³ This implicitly makes the Other depend on the intention of the I, who can turn it either into an I-Thou or into an I-It relationship. Zizioulas believes that I does not exist because of ‘the relationship with the Thou’, but because of the ‘Thou’. Therefore, Zizioulas queries Buber: “*in the final analysis, does this not imply recognition of the primacy of the I over the Other?*”³⁶⁴ It means that for Zizioulas, Buber’s notion of personhood still cannot provide an ontological ground for otherness in contrast with Zizioulas’ concept of personhood.

Zizioulas thinks that Levinas is closer to the patristic understanding of otherness than any other philosophers: “*For Levinas, the Other is not constituted by the Self (Husserl, etc.), nor by relationality as such (Buber), but rather is absolute alterity, which cannot be derived, engendered or constituted on the basis of anything other than itself.*”³⁶⁵ It affirms the constitutive character of the Other in ontology.³⁶⁶

Zizioulas assigns a high value to Levinas’ concept of otherness:

Levinas’ attempt to liberate western philosophy from the primacy of consciousness, from the reduction of the particular to the general, from grasping, comprehending, controlling and using being by the human mind is most remarkable indeed. It brings us closer than any other philosophy to the Greek patristic view of otherness as irreducible to the universal, and of consciousness as belonging to the universal rather than to the particular, at least with regard to

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 204.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 203.

³⁶² John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 47.

³⁶³ M. Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1970), 53-54.

³⁶⁴ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 47.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 48.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 48.

the Holy Trinity.³⁶⁷

At the same time, Zizioulas criticizes Levinas' concept of otherness without communion. But he does not give a more detailed analysis. I will try to integrate Levinas' concept of otherness with the notion of communion from Zizioulas' perspective of ontology of personhood.

4.4.1 The 'otherness' as metaphysical desire in the thought of Levinas

Levinas criticizes the 'I' prior to the other in Western traditional philosophy. He builds his philosophy on the starting point of the other: "*Since the Other looks at me, I am responsible for him, without even having taken on responsibility in his regard; his responsibility is incumbent on me...responsibility is initially a for the Other.*"³⁶⁸ Rather unlike the common ethics in traditional Western philosophy, Levinas's ethical priority is affirmed without recourse to moral principles. It asserts the priority of the other person over being, or essence. The other constitutes a dimension of transcendence: "*To my mind the Infinite comes in the signifyingness of the face. The face signifies the Infinite.*"³⁶⁹ The desire for the invisible is called the metaphysical desire. For Levinas, the metaphysical desire tends toward the *absolutely other*. The absolutely other "*is understood as the alterity of the Other and of the Most-High. The very dimension of height is opened up by metaphysical Desire.*"³⁷⁰

Not only desire for the alterity or otherness of the Other is emphasized, but also the otherness of 'I'. For Levinas, the character of 'I' as self-consciousness or subjectivity amounts to sameness. When I meet the face of the other in the Infinite,

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 49.

³⁶⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1982), 96.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 105.

³⁷⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979), 35.

a being for myself has been suspended. This means that the Other is prior to me or the Other has priority over my consciousness. As Pierre Hayat puts in his preface to *Alterity and Transcendence*: “*The face of the other is the locus of transcendence in that it calls into question the ‘I’ in its existence as a being for itself.*”³⁷¹ Therefore, the identity of I has been reformed when I meet others: “*The I is not a being that always remains the same, but is the being whose existing consists in identifying itself, in recovering its identity throughout all that happens to it. It is the primal identity, the primordial work of identification.*”³⁷² It means that the subjectivity of I has been terminated through the idea of the Infinite and otherness, because the metaphysical desire for the Infinite or the other is beyond the capacity of the ‘I’ as self-consciousness.³⁷³ “*The analysis of the idea of Infinity, to which we gain access only starting from an I, will be terminated with the surpassing of the subjective.*”³⁷⁴

4.4.2 A relationship between I and the Other without communion

Levinas calls the relation with the Infinite metaphysical. He thinks it is prior to theology and ontology:³⁷⁵ “*It would be false to qualify it as theological. It is prior to the negative or affirmative proposition; it first institutes language, where neither the no nor the yes is the first word. The description of this relation is the central issue of the present research.*”³⁷⁶ This kind of relation is not the relation which is formed through the idea of sameness. Levinas regards the relation with the Infinite as ‘a relation without relation’: “*For the relation between the being here below and the transcendent being that results in no community of concept or totality—a*

³⁷¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, trans. Michael B. Smith (London: the Athlone press, 1999), Xiv.

³⁷² Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, 36.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 51.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

relation without relation—we reserve the term religion.”³⁷⁷

The relationship between the Other and ‘I’ cannot be resolved into a higher unity. The presupposition of the constitution of the Other is separation or distance. “*The alterity, the radical heterogeneity of the other, is possible, only if the Other is other with respect to a term whose essence is to remain at the point of departure...A term can remain absolutely at the point of departure of relationship only as I*”.³⁷⁸ The purpose of separation is the breach of totality: “*Thus the metaphysician and the other can not be totalized. The metaphysician is absolutely separated.*”³⁷⁹

Firstly, the being of the Other is not constituted by relation: “*It is necessary that a being, though it is a part of a whole, derive its being from itself and not from its frontiers (not from its definition), exist independently, depend neither on relations that designate its place within Being nor on the recognition that the Other would bring it.*”³⁸⁰

Secondly, Levinas regards the happiness in life as the enjoyment of solitude. Again the concern is the breach of the totality: “*The breach of the totality that is accomplished by the enjoyment of solitude-or the solitude of enjoyment—is radical.*”³⁸¹

Life is love of life, a relation with contents that are not my being but more dear than my being: thinking, eating, sleeping, reading, working, warming oneself in the sun. Distinct from my substance but constituting it, these contents make up the worth of my life... The reality of life is already on the level of happiness, and in this sense beyond ontology...happiness is accomplishment.³⁸²

Levinas criticizes both Western philosophy and religion: “*Religion subtends this formal totality.*”³⁸³ In Levinas’ metaphysical dimension, or in a final and absolute

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 80.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 36.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 35.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 61.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 119.

³⁸² Ibid., 112-113.

³⁸³ Ibid., 81.

vision, metaphysics precedes ontology.³⁸⁴ Therefore, for Levinas, the metaphysical or personal relation cannot be found in theology, because theology amounts to some propositions. For Levinas, ontology reduces the other to sameness.³⁸⁵ It means that Levinas understands ontology in the sense of substance. The separation and transcendence are the themes of his book *Totality and Infinity*. Only separation guarantees the being of the Other.

Zizioulas criticizes Levinas' concept of otherness without communion: "Levinas rejects the idea of communion, because he finds in it a threat to otherness by the same and the general, a subjection of otherness to unity...Levinas himself insists on separation and distance as alternative ideas to that of relationship."³⁸⁶ The reason seems to be that Levinas wants to reject the kind of communion which contributes to some form of totalizing reduction bordering on violence. So in fact it is not necessary for Levinas' theory to oppose Zizioulas' notion of communion. However, Zizioulas does not clearly distinguish two kinds of communion when he criticizes Levinas. I will analyze a theological concept of communion which can integrate the idea of otherness in Levinas' theory.

4.4.3 A kind of communion not threatening otherness

Levinas rejects the idea of communion, because he is afraid of a threat to otherness by the same and the general, and a subjection of otherness to unity. But not all communions will threaten otherness. We can distinguish two kinds of communion and two kinds of *eros* in order to reconstruct the concept of otherness in communion. "*Eros is a movement, an ekstasis, from one being to another.*"³⁸⁷ This

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 43.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 42.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 48.

³⁸⁷ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 70.

can be found in nature itself, as the ancient Greeks and modern romanticism have described. It is an *ekstasis* of the self and an expression and fulfillment of nature's inherent energies. This kind of *eros* does not stem from the Other and is not ultimately destined to the Other. However, there is another kind of *eros*. Zizioulas writes: "*For eros to be a true expression of otherness in a personal sense, it must be not simply ecstatic but also and above all hypostatic: it must be caused by the free movement of a particular being and have as its ultimate destination another particular being.*"³⁸⁸

Zizioulas contrasts these two kinds of *eros* in Platonism and in the patristic understanding. In the case of *eros* as presented by Plato, the other is not a constitutive ontological factor, because love is attracted irresistibly by the good and the beautiful which are ideas. Thus the concrete particular is used as a means to an end, and finally sacrificed for the sake of the idea. This means that though the erotic movement appears to be related to one particular being, this being is not unique in an absolute sense. In contrast, *eros*, described by St Maximus as a movement of *ekstasis*, is constantly intensified and does not stop until the loving one "has become entire in the whole of the beloved one and is embraced by the whole, willingly accepting in freedom the saving circumscription".³⁸⁹ Zizioulas thinks that *eros* is described here as a free movement from a free being to another free being. Communion is its final destination. In this ultimate state of *eros* as 'embrace' or 'circumscription', the two beings still retain their ontological integrity. This movement is driven by a purpose different from a natural one: "*The cause and the ultimate purpose of the erotic movement in this case is nothing else (e.g., nature, ideal, or even the relationship of love itself) than the concrete Other, in whom the*

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 71.

³⁸⁹ See John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 72.

erotic movement stops and rests.”³⁹⁰

These two kinds of *eros* are naturally connected to two kinds of love. The doctrine of love as an ontological concept is explained clearly by Zizioulas through distinguishing the natural love from the love of God:

The love with which human beings love God really is uncreated...it is not part of their nature. (‘Not that we should love God, but that He loved us’, I John 4.10). And human beings as natures can of course love, but this love is always connected with some necessity (the biological, moral or aesthetic attraction of the good)...The way in which the true uncreated (i.e., free) love also becomes the love of human beings, of creatures, is not through its becoming part of their nature, part of the nature of the creature (this would have abolished the difference between the natures of the created and the uncreated) but through its entering into relationship with God, through its becoming enhypostasized in the relationship between the Father and the Son. This is done by the hypostasis-person of the Son of God, who by his Incarnation and subsequently through baptism in the Holy Spirit brings human beings freely into this relationship, giving them in this way a new identity different from that which nature gives them through their biological birth. For anyone to love God, then, is a matter of relationship (of personhood) and not of nature...Thus God loves us not through our nature (or through His nature) but through a person ([that of] Christ) and only in this way—through this person—can we love him in turn.³⁹¹

Zizioulas’ doctrine of love embodies a truth of personhood rather than a substantialist truth. The purpose of Zizioulas’ distinction of two kinds of *eros* is to emphasize that the uniquely loved being is a hypostasis or person rather than an idea. Therefore, Zizioulas says: “*Christ is the unique Other, the one in and through whom all other beings are loved, not in a psychological but an ontological sense, since it is in him that everything exists (Colossians 1. 16) and acquires its particular identity.*”³⁹²

4.4.4 A personal Christology breaking down totality

Levinas assails the logocentrism of Western thought. In this regard, Zizioulas is

³⁹⁰ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 72.

³⁹¹ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 277-278.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 75.

his ally because his personalism should be helpful for overcoming the totality of Logocentrism. First of all, we need a theological revolution which must not consider Christ primarily as a system of totality or a theory, but he is always considered as a person.³⁹³ Therefore, this involves a renewal of Christology.

(a) Christ does not simply stand vis-à-vis each man, but constitutes the ontological ground of every man. This means that Christ does not represent an individualized and fragmented human nature, but represents humanity as a whole. Individualism is a perversion of personhood and a falsification of true humanity in accordance with this kind of Christology. Zizioulas criticizes an ethical Christology which offers Christ as a model for imitation. Christology could not be of any help to anthropology if it only offered Christ as the victim for the sins of humanity in a substitutionary manner. Atonement understood in this way would not really affect the human person's being ontologically. Such a Christology may answer man's needs for forgiveness (in a legal sense) but does not really touch man's being. The key for anthropology is the 'de-individualized' Christ and man: "*In order that Christology may be relevant to anthropology, it must 'de-individualize' Christ, so that every man may be 'de-individualized' too, and personhood may be restored.*"³⁹⁴

(b) Christology is pneumatologically conditioned in its very roots. It was in the Spirit that the de-individualization of Christ's humanity became possible. The Spirit is not simply an assistant to the individual in reaching Christ, but he is also participating in Christ.

It is a dead doctrine enforced upon the people's minds by dogmaticians if it is offered outside the anthropology of personhood. According to the Bible, the Son is

³⁹³ Roger Burggraeve ed., *The Awakening to the Other: A Provocative Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas* (Leuven; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2008), 142.

³⁹⁴ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 244.

the unique *hypostasis* of the Father (Hebrews 1.3). This uniquely loved being is a hypostasis which hypostasizes other beings. It does not exclude other particular beings, and in fact it establishes their otherness in and through communion. It gives them an identity, a hypostasis of their own. The Son of God is the true Other who affirms Others. The restoration of personhood in Christology leads to both communion and otherness.

4.4.5 A Trinitarian model for the coexistence of otherness and communion

According to the ontology of personhood, i.e., personhood precedes essence; the doctrine of the Trinity gives us some revelation concerning our existence. The Cappadocians locate the real distinctiveness of Father, Son, and Spirit in terms of its relation of origin, and describe the uniqueness of each as personhood (hypostasis). Hypostasis meant any concrete existing being in Greek philosophy. As long as hypostasis and *ousia* were used interchangeably in Trinitarian theology, theology will be built on the ground of totality and crystallized into a system. Therefore, the individual is not apprehended in its otherness but in its generality. The relation with the other is accomplished only through some ideas which an I learns from the Bible. I cannot escape from egocentrism. However, when hypostasis is identified with personhood, it means that the ultimate reality is personhood rather than substance. This is a departure from Greek cosmology, making a personal God who is love and freedom, rather than some impersonal principles, the Ultimate. Only this new ontology could save theology from the control of classical Greek philosophy.

According to the Cappadocians, God the Father is the cause of everything and God the Father is the source of otherness. In terms of the personal originating principle, God the Father begets the Son and brings forth the Spirit and ultimately also the world. Every particular exists in communion with others. “*Since a person*

is defined by relation of origin, the divine persons are never thought of as separate from other, as discrete individuals."³⁹⁵ The Trinitarian mode of existence is "*the highest, most perfect realization of personhood and communion: being-for-another and from-another, or love itself.*"³⁹⁶ The Trinitarian communion is the personal expression and concrete existence of God. It is different from the unity of the divine substance which is the starting point of Augustine's theology. Because personhood manifests a being as being-in-relation, not being-in-itself, it can escape the concept of personhood as consciousness. The communion among persons will uphold the essential equality of persons. It is not a movement within the sameness.³⁹⁷

Because Levinas' theory does not depend on the Trinitarian God, but on one Infinite, it is difficult for him to integrate the notions of communion with otherness. However, the ontology of personhood grounded in Trinitarian theology is able to combine personal communion with otherness.

³⁹⁵ Cathrine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us*, 246.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, 47.

Part III

Critical Assessment of Zizioulas'

Ontology of Personhood

Chapter Five

Critique of substantialist view of God from the perspective of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood

In Trinitarian theology, the unity of God can be grounded on either the Person of the Father or the *ousia* of three persons. The developmental directions are different between Eastern, Greek-speaking church Fathers and those in the Latin-speaking West. The Catholic approach begins with the unity of the divine nature and then attempts to explain the reality of the three persons. The Greek take the reverse route. They begin with the three persons, emphatically with the person of the Father, and then try to account for the divine unity.³⁹⁸

In the West, the contributions of St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) became a benchmark and source for those who followed. Rahner criticizes this typical Western approach to the doctrine of God in his work, *the Trinity*, and he proposes a return to the Greek patristic and biblical identification of God's being with the Father rather than the divine *ousia*.³⁹⁹ The Western idea of God causes at least three problems in Trinitarian theology from the perspective of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood:

the **first** is the separation of the *oikonomia* and *theologia* in the doctrine of God;

the **second** is the problem of the *Filioque*;

the **third** is that unity precedes diversity logically or ontologically in God.

Zizioulas discusses the second issue systematically, but only mentions an opinion on the first question without much discussion,⁴⁰⁰ and he talks of the third

³⁹⁸ Philip A Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God* (Michigan/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 36.

³⁹⁹ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (London: Burns & Oates), 58.

⁴⁰⁰ Zizioulas focuses on the issue of *Filioque*. When he mentions the relation between 'economic' and 'immanent', it is a critique of the view of Rahner (the economic Trinity is the same as the immanent Trinity). He does not discuss the separation of the *oikonomia* and *theologia* in the doctrine

question in some fragments of his books. This chapter will attempt to evaluate these problems based on Zizioulas' ontology of personhood, and describes the theological and philosophical significance of his ontology.

5.1 Western substantialist view of God

Ever since Tertullian, the Christian Trinity has always been depicted in the West through the general concept of the divine substance: *una substantia, tres personae*, i.e., one divine substance is constituted as three individual divine persons; the three persons are different from one another, but they are one in their common divine substance. For Tertullian, God is from all eternity One, but not alone. Because Tertullian, like many others, never succeeds in defining his concept of being, it is Augustine who gave the Western tradition its mature form.⁴⁰¹ Thus we will start from the Trinitarian theology of Augustine.

Because Augustine did not assimilate the achievement of the Cappadocians on the doctrine of God, for him the ontological principle of God is the one divine substance. Zizioulas criticizes that this interpretation prevails in Western theology and unfortunately entered into modern Orthodox dogmatics.⁴⁰² Therefore, it is important for him to bring up again the theological ontology of the Cappadocians. In this section we will focus on the major Latin Christian thinkers who contribute to the doctrine of the Trinity and raise questions for them.

5.1.1 Augustine (354-430): God as absolute being

For Augustine (354-430), God is by his essence pure actuality of being and

of God in Western theology. See John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 201-202.

⁴⁰¹ Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press), 132-134.

⁴⁰² John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 40.

therefore cannot be conceived of as being with potency; he is above all simple and perfect. In his book *De Trinitate*, Augustine introduces his famous psychological analogies to the Trinity: the mind (*mens*), its knowing, and its love; later this gives way in turn to memory, knowledge, and love of self (*memoria sui, intelligentia sui, voluntas sui*).⁴⁰³ In Book 10, Augustine moves to an even higher image: memory, understanding, and will (*memoria sui, intelligentia sui, voluntas sui*). In the psychological triads, memory means more than recall, something more like one's perpetual sense of identity and presence to oneself; and self-knowledge is the key to knowledge of God. Augustine writes, "*When [the soul] seeks to know itself, it already knows that it is seeking itself.*"⁴⁰⁴ Memory, understanding, and will are not three substances but one substance. And each faculty exhibits the characteristics both of substance and of relation. He writes: "*For not only is each [faculty] comprehended by each one, but all are also comprehended by each one. For I remember that I have memory, understanding and will; and I understand that I understand, will and remember; and I will that I will, remember and understand; and at the same time I remember my whole memory, understanding and will.*"⁴⁰⁵ Augustine understands Trinity in terms of the categories of interiority and conscious psychological experience.

Augustine distinguishes the concept of person from nature. **Person is "something singular and individual" in contrast with the nature which is held in common.**⁴⁰⁶ Concerning the distinction of the three persons, Augustine did not follow the conceptual revolution of the Cappadocians. The direct reason given by Augustine is the problem of translation: "*The Greeks also have another word,*

⁴⁰³ See Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P., ed. John E. Rotelle (Brooklyn, N. Y.: New City Press, 1991), IX, 4, 273.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., Augustine, *The Trinity*, X, 5, 291.

⁴⁰⁵ Augustine, *The Trinity*, X, 18, 298-299.

⁴⁰⁶ Augustine, *The Trinity* VII, 11, 229.

*hypostasis, but they make a distinction that is rather obscure to me between ousia and hypostasis, so that most of our people who treat of these matters in Greek are accustomed to say **mia ousia, treis hypostaseis**.*”⁴⁰⁷ For the problem is that *ousia* is translated into Latin as *substantia* (English ‘substance’, ‘essence’) which is not distinguishable in Latin from *hypostasis* (literally, ‘standing under). Then Augustine translates the three *hypostaseis* as “*three substances or persons*.”⁴⁰⁸ He is not having a clear notion of ‘person’: “*Yet when you ask ‘three what?’ human speech labors under a great dearth of words. So we say three persons, not in order to say that precisely, but in order not be reduced to silence.*”⁴⁰⁹

Besides the linguistic usage, Gunton explains the other reason why Augustine appears not to understand the Cappadoican conceptual revolution. Augustine asks a different kind of question from that asked by the Cappadocians: “*not, what kind of being is this, that God is to be found in the relations of Father, Son and Spirit? But, what kind of sense can be made of the apparent logical oddity of the threeness of the one God in terms of Aristotelian subject-predicate logic? The one God is the substance, being single and unchanging. There is no problem there in terms of the philosophical tradition.*”⁴¹⁰

In Augustine’s Trinitarian theology, **person is not without its relational aspect; relationality is located within the divine essence.** As William Hill notes that “*the fullest implications of Augustine’s thought are that God is one ‘person’ within whose divine consciousness there is a threefold self-relatedness.*”⁴¹¹ This will influence Augustine’s anthropology directly to be one of **individual consciousness** and its internal differentiations. Therefore, God would in fact be one person rather

⁴⁰⁷ Augustine, *The Trinity* V. 10, 196.

⁴⁰⁸ Augustine, *The Trinity* VII. 9, 227.

⁴⁰⁹ Augustine, *The Trinity* V. 10, 196.

⁴¹⁰ Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 40-41.

⁴¹¹ William Hill, *The Three-Personed God: the Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington: University Press of America, 1983), 61.

than three persons as propounded in the theology of the Cappadocians.

5.1.2 Boethius (480-524): one *ousia* and three substances

Boethius (480-525) was one of the most influential thinkers of the early medieval period and wrote at least four philosophical-theological treatises on the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Jesus Christ. He interpreted the Augustinian tradition of Trinitarian thought which sought to use Aristotelian categories to explain it. Boethius tended to make greater use of speculation than did the early church Fathers. This is because the medieval mind of the Latin West made little distinction between philosophy and theology.⁴¹²

Boethius summarizes the Trinitarian discussion: “*there is one ousia or ousiosis, i.e., one essence or subsistence of the Godhead, but three hypostaseis, that is three substances.*”⁴¹³ Similarly, Boethius cannot understand the connotation of person in Greek and he applies the substance to be predicated of God. While Augustine adopted person as a better term than substances, the concept of ‘person’ is almost completely absent in Boethius’ Trinitarian thought. Boethius’ discussion turns on the treatment of relations.⁴¹⁴

Boethius’ concept of ‘relation’ is articulated in terms of Aristotle’s categories, i.e., substance and nine kinds of accident. As Rolnick comments, “*Although Boethius declares the predication of God is unique and requires important changes from our normal way of putting things, his count in De Trinitate IV begins with a listing of Aristotle’s categories and never gets too far beyond them.*”⁴¹⁵ Relation is a logical concept in Boethius’ Trinitarian thought: “*it is evident that these terms are relative,*

⁴¹² See Roger E. Olson and Christopher A. Hall, *The Trinity*, 51.

⁴¹³ See Philip A Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God* (Michigan/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 42.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

for the Father is someone's Father, the Son is someone's Son, the Spirit is someone's Spirit. Hence not even Trinity is predicated substantially of God."⁴¹⁶ It shows that Boethius did not explicate the diversity of the three persons ontologically.

Though Boethius did not develop a concept of person in Trinitarian thought clearly, he defined person in Christological terms. The view of person will be understood from the relation of person and nature through Christological debates: "*For one thing is clear, namely that nature is a substrate of person, and that person cannot be predicated apart from nature.*"⁴¹⁷ According to Aristotle's primary and second substances, Boethius sees primary substances, i.e., the particulars as persons. **Boethius defines 'person' as an 'individual substance of a rational nature'**. The 'individual substance' is a whole, distinguished from others but undivided in itself. It has been applied widely in subsequent anthropology.

5.1.3 Thomas Aquinas (1225-74): God as the subsistent being

Thomas Aquinas (1226-1274) represents the central ethos of Latin theology. In regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, Aquinas followed Augustine which makes the divine essence the starting point. Aquinas affirmed that God is a substance: simplicity or oneness, truth, goodness or perfection. For Aquinas, the unifying divine nature is a rational-intellectual essence, i.e., an eternal mind without temporal thought. God is both intellect and love. An intellectual nature requires some degree of multiplicity in the same way that love does. The intellectual love of the Father produces the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Trinity, it is a movement from sheer simplicity to multiplicity.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁶ Boethius, *De trinitate*, 37; see also Philip A Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*, 43.

⁴¹⁷ Boethius, *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium* 83; see also Philip A Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*, 37.

⁴¹⁸ See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God: A Global Introduction* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 96.

In the book *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas says that a divine person signifies a relation as subsisting, that is, a hypostasis subsisting in the divine nature.⁴¹⁹ Concerning the relations of the persons to the divine substance, Thomas discusses in *Summa Theologiae* I, 39-42. He thinks that pure ‘essence’ is the form of the persons. According to the form rendering a thing what it is, the persons are decided by the essence of God. The divine person is understood in terms of relation. *“However, a relation is in God not as an accidental entity in a subject, but it is the divine nature itself, therefore it is something subsisting just as the divine nature is. Consequently just as Godhead is God, so God’s Fatherhood is God the Father who is a divine person. Hence ‘divine person’ signifies relation as something subsisting. That is, as substance which is a hypostasis subsisting in the divine nature, though what is subsisting in the divine nature is nothing other than the divine nature.”*⁴²⁰

The person for Aquinas is an individualized substance. **Aquinas’s metaphysical or ontological analysis begins with a discussion of substance as the basis of individuality. The particular and individual are found in rational substances capable of self-determination.**⁴²¹ As Aquinas contends, the term ‘individual’ is included in the definition of the person to signify a special mode of subsistence proper to particular things or substances.⁴²² This question which concerns the anthropology of Aquinas will be discussed in chapter six: *Critique of Western concept of personhood.*

5.2 Critique from the perspective of the ontology of personhood

In the effort to describe the Latin Trinitarian traditions with the categories of

⁴¹⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, Q. 29, a, 4.

⁴²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. Ia.29. 4

⁴²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, Q. 29, a.1.

⁴²² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, Q. 29, a. 1, a.3.

essence and person, I will analyze the consequences caused by the Western traditional Trinitarian theology.

5.2.1 Separation of the *oikonomia* and *theologia* in Western substantialist approach to Trinity

There is an inner connection between *theologia* and essence, *oikonomia* and person. *Theologia* in the general sense is the doctrine of God considered in Godself. *Oikonomia* is used for the action of God in the world in the doctrine of the Incarnation. The correspondent English conventional expressions are the economic and immanent Trinity.

The word *oikonomia* is from *oikonomeo*. Its secular meaning is of administering and managing goods or a household, or overseeing an office according to some plan or design.⁴²³ In New Testament, the word has at least two kinds of meaning. Firstly, it means a steward (*oikonomos*) of God. For example, Paul calls himself a servant of Christ and steward of God (1 Corinthians 4. 1); the bishop is called God's *oikonomos*: "*A bishop, as God's steward (oikonomos), must be blameless.*" (Titus 1.7) Secondly, it is used to mean the plan of salvation, or how God administers God's plan. **In Eph. 1:9-10 economy refers to the mystery of God's benevolent will or plan of salvation hidden from all eternity:** "*With all wisdom and insight God has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan (oikonomia) for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.*" (Ephesians 1.9-10)

The term *oikonomia* was used broadly in the early church. According to the book *God for Us*, there are three basic meanings. Firstly, *oikonomia* means God's

⁴²³ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 24.

providential plan, dispensation, or ordering of the cosmos. Secondly, by the end of the third century, *oikonomia* is narrowly understood as a synonym for Incarnation. Thirdly, *oikonomia* means the “*proportion and the coordination of constituent element,*” as in the distribution or “economizing” of godhead among the divine persons. Before Arius, the flexible meaning of *oikonomia* supported a general subordinationism of Jesus to God.⁴²⁴

For some theologians, the separation of *oikonomia* and *theologia* means a priority of *theologia* over *oikonomia* or nature over person: “*The basic difference between Greek and Latin theology is often said to be that Greek theology emphasizes person over nature, Trinity over unity, whereas Latin theology emphasizes nature over person, unity over Trinity.*”⁴²⁵ It will lead to some serious issues such as its irrelevance for the practice of faith. Zizioulas seldom raises this question. Catherine LaCugna provides a precise criticism of substantialist theologians who separate the immanent Trinity from the economic Trinity.

First of all, Augustine’s approach leads to the breach between *oikonomia* and *theologia*, as it is analyzed by Catherine Mowry LaCugna: “*Augustine’s principle, which follows logically from the starting point in the divine unity instead of the economy of salvation, tends to blur any real distinctions among the divine persons and thereby formalizes in Latin theology the breach between oikonomia and theologia.*”⁴²⁶

Along with the separation of *theologia* and *oikonomia*, Augustine influences the direction of Christian theology in the West. Catherine LaCugna comments: “*The doctrine of the Trinity gradually would be understood to be the exposition of the relations of God in se, with scarce concerning God’s acts in salvation history. After*

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 25-26.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 96-97.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 99.

Augustine, in the period of scholasticism, ontological relationships among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit would be viewed independently of the Incarnation and sending of the Spirit."⁴²⁷ Karl Rahner criticizes Aquinas and scholasticism in general for developing a doctrine of the Trinity which excludes the activity of the persons in the economy of salvation. In *The Trinity* Rahner writes:

This separation (in the *Summa theologiae* of the treatises on the One God and On the Triune) took place for the first time in St. Thomas...here the first topic under study is not God the Father as the unoriginate origin of divinity and reality, but as the essence common to all three persons. Such is the method which has prevailed ever since. **Thus the treatise of the Trinity locks itself in even more splendid isolation**, with the ensuing danger that the religious mind finds it devoid of interest. As a result the treatise becomes quite philosophical and abstract and refers hardly at all to salvation history.⁴²⁸

During the sixteenth century some new reflections on the Trinity begun by Luther and Zwingli created the freedom to challenge Christian traditions. The anti-Trinitarian movements from Spain and Italy and other parts of Europe attempted to persuade Protestants to throw off traditional Catholic doctrines of salvation, sacraments and the Trinity. **One of the reasons is its irrelevance to the practice of faith.** Martin Luther and John Calvin reoriented theology toward the experience of salvation which involves the economy of Trinity in order to avoid 'the irrelevance to the practice of faith'.⁴²⁹

5.2.2 Divergence between East and West in dealing with *oikonomia* and *theologia*

In late fourth century, in Cappadocian theology, there is a clear distinction between *oikonomia* and *theologia*. The Cappadocians connects *oikonomia* with the

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 81.

⁴²⁸ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (London: Burns & Oates, 1986), 16-17.

⁴²⁹ Cf. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us*, 144.

human nature of Christ,⁴³⁰ while *theologia* is connected with His divine nature.

They distinguish between *oikonomia* and *theologia*:

What is lofty you are to apply to the Godhead, and to that nature in him which is superior to sufferings and to the body; but all that is lowly to the composite condition of him who for your sake has been made of no account, is made flesh, and to say it even better, is made human and who thereafter was exalted for your sake. By this you will abandon that which is carnal and vulgar about these dogmas, in order to learn to be more sublime and to ascend with his Godhead, so that you may not remain among visible things but may be elevated in order to be among spiritual things, and so that you may comprehend that which is said of the [divine] nature and that which is said of the economy [human nature].⁴³¹

Because the doctrine of God could not be separated from salvation history or economy, the Cappadocians use the concept of person (hypostasis) to express the being of God. The concept of person can unite two natures. This is a ground for the Christology of Chalcedon (451 A.D.): the union of two natures took place in the person of Christ. The person is the ultimate identity. God exists eternally as Father, Son, Spirit, **and this eternal life is what is given in the redemption.** The Trinitarian theology of the Cappadocians brought about important changes in the Christian doctrine of God. For the Cappadocians, 'Theology' is not limited on the level of *ousia*. As I describe the ontological revolution in chapter one, the Cappadocian formula, *mia ousia, treis hypostaseis*, manifests a precise distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis*. A theological distinction but not existential separation is based on the hypostasis or person as an ontological category. The divine *ousia* exists hypostatically and there is no *ousia* apart from the hypostasis. It manifests a unity of *oikonomia* and *theologia*. Therefore, **the relationship between *oikonomia* and *theologia* is dialectical according to the Trinitarian ontology of personhood.**

Zizioulas expresses the relation between *theologia* and *oikonomia* in the light of

⁴³⁰ Basil, *C. Eun.* II, 3 (29, 577A); see also Catherine, *God for Us*, 39.

⁴³¹ Gregory Nazianzus, *Theological Orations*, 29. 18.

the Cappadocian view: they stressed more than any of the ancient Fathers the distinction, not separation, between *theologia* and *oikonomia*:

It is, therefore, essentially nothing other than a device created by the Greek Fathers to safeguard the absolute transcendence of God without alienating Him from the world: the Economy must not be understood as implying a loss of God's transcendence, an abolition of all difference between the immanent and the economic Trinity; at the same time, God's transcendence must be understood as a true involvement of the very being of God in creation.⁴³²

Therefore, the Eastern ontology of personhood overcomes the problem caused by the separation of *oikonomia* and *theologia* through regarding the person (hypostasis) as an ontological category.

Why Western theology takes a way which is different from that of East? The most fundamental reason is that Augustine's Trinitarian theology orients itself to the analysis of human consciousness as the method for understanding the Trinity. It is different from Eastern Greek theology which affirms the ontological distinction of three persons. Today, a renaissance of the doctrine of the Trinity is taking place. The representative axiom is Rahner's formulation on the identity of the economic and immanent Trinity: "*The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity.*"⁴³³ Against the deductive approach of Augustine or Thomas Aquinas, Rahner takes the economy of salvation as the only valid starting point for knowledge of God. Rahner develops a model of personal God as the theological starting point: "*We say: 'of God,' and we do not presuppose thereby a 'Latin' theology of the Trinity (as contrasted with the Greek one), but the biblical theology of the Trinity (hence, in a sense, the Greek one). Here God is the 'Father,' that is, the simply unoriginate God.*"⁴³⁴

Similarly, Zizioulas puts forward the question: is the economic Trinity the same

⁴³² John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 202.

⁴³³ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, 22.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

as the immanent Trinity? He regards that most Western theologians in our time call for a positive answer, e.g., K. Barth, J. Moltmann and K. Rahner, but Zizioulas thinks that the matter is not so simple. He approves of Y. Congar's criticism of Rahner's position: "*the economic Trinity...reveals the immanent Trinity—but does it reveal it entirely? There is always a limit to this revelation.*"⁴³⁵

5.2.3 Western substantialist approach causing the problem of *Filioque*

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been one of the thorniest problems in theology. Zizioulas provides an acute criticism of Western *Filioque* from the perspective of his ontology of personhood.

There are two traditions, Eastern and Western, to understand the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Father: "*the idea of the monarchy of the Father is the sole 'principle' in God's Trinitarian being promoted by the Greek Fathers, and St. Augustine expresses that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father 'principaliter' [first and original cause]*"⁴³⁶

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (commonly called the Nicene Creed) of the Second Ecumenical Council states that the Holy Spirit proceeds 'from the Father', without additions of any kind, such as 'and the Son' or 'alone': "*Καί ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος τοῦ Ἁγίου, τοῦ κύριου, τοῦ ζωοποιόν, τοῦ ἐκ τοῦ Ὑπατροῦς ἐκπορευόμενον*" ("*And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, from the Father proceeding*").

Filioque ['*And (from) the Son*'] means that the Latin text now in use in the Western Church speaks of the Holy Spirit as proceeding 'from the Father and the Son'. *Filioque* is an addition to the creed of the Second Ecumenical Council as early as the 8th century. It was accepted by the popes only in 1014, and is rejected

⁴³⁵ Y. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Seabury Press; London: G. Chapman, 1983) III, 16; see also John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 201.

⁴³⁶ John Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 41-42.

by the Eastern Church. The *Filioque* has been an ongoing source of conflict between the East and the West, contributing in part to the East-West Schism of 1054 and proving to be an obstacle to attempts to reunify the two sides.⁴³⁷

Zizioulas discusses this issue in his book *Communion and Otherness* in accordance with the theology of the Constantinople Council (A.D.381) on the Holy Spirit. Zizioulas points out what he regards as the main issues lying behind the *Filioque* problem. He further discusses this problem in his book *The One and the Many* according to the document of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. I will introduce his main ideas on this issue.

For Zizioulas, the problem of the *Filioque* involves the view of God: “*the real issue behind the Filioque concerns the question whether the ultimate ontological category in theology is the person or substance.*”⁴³⁸ Zizioulas asserts that the reason of the Western interpretation lies in the assumption that the ontological principle of God or the unity of God is not founded on the person but on the divine substance. This is a misinterpretation of the Greek Patristic theology of the Trinity, says Zizioulas, “*Among the Greek Fathers the unity of God, the one God, and the ontological ‘principle’ or ‘cause’ of the being and life of God does not consist in the one substance of God but in the hypostasis, that is, the person of the Father.*”⁴³⁹ If the ultimate ontological category is not the hypostasis of the Father alone, then if two hypostases are ultimate ontological categories at the same time this would result in two gods. The Father is the only cause of the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit. From this view, the East opposes the *Filioque* which has been insisted by the West because the West identifies the ontological principle of God with His substance rather than the person of the Father.

⁴³⁷ See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filioque>

⁴³⁸ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 196.

⁴³⁹ John Zizioulas, *Being As Communion*, 40.

5.2.4 Zizioulas' reiteration of the Cappadocian notion of the Son's mediation in the procession of the Spirit

There are some efforts for theologians to solve the question of *Filioque*. Zizioulas cites the view of Y. Congar: “*the Western interpretation of the Filioque, based on the theology of St Augustine, does not necessarily reject or exclude the thesis that the Father is the only cause of divine existence in the holy Trinity.*”⁴⁴⁰ But for Zizioulas, the issue of *Filioque* cannot be resolved by the term ‘*principaliter*’ of Augustine. Zizioulas queries: “*Does the expression ‘principaliter’ necessarily preclude making the Son a kind of secondary cause in the ontological emergence of the Spirit?*”⁴⁴¹ Zizioulas argues that the expression ‘*principaliter*’ does not necessarily preclude making the Son a kind of secondary cause in the ontological emergence of the Spirit, for the *Filioque* means two sources of the Spirit’s personal existence. The Father may be called the first and original cause (*principaliter*), while the Son may be regarded as secondary (not *principaliter*) cause, but still a ‘cause’ albeit not ‘*principaliter*’.

For Zizioulas, it is important to distinguish the idea of ‘cause’, ‘source’ and ‘principle’. “*The term ‘cause’, when applied to the Father, indicates a free, willing, and personal agent, whereas the language of ‘source’ or ‘principle’ can convey a more ‘natural’ and thus impersonal imagery. This point acquires crucial significance in the case of the Filioque issue.*”⁴⁴² Zizioulas evaluates that the Cappadocian idea of ‘cause’ was almost absent in Latin theological tradition, and this for him is the reason which leads to the problem of *Filioque*.

St. Gregory of Nyssa admits a ‘mediate’ role of the Son in the procession of the Spirit from the Father. Zizioulas concludes: “*The notion of ‘cause’ seems to be of*

⁴⁴⁰ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 197.

⁴⁴¹ John Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 42.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 42.

*special significance and importance in the Greek patristic argument concerning the Filioque. If Roman Catholic theology would be ready to admit that the Son in no way constitutes a 'cause' in the procession of the Spirit, this would bring the two traditions much closer to each other with regard to the **Filioque**.*"⁴⁴³ It is done with the help of the preposition *διὰ* (through) and the phrase 'through the Son' as St. Maximus and other patristic sources suggest.

Zizioulas regards that the *Filioque* at the level of the economy of God presents no difficulty to Eastern Orthodox theology, but the projection of this into the immanent Trinity creates great difficulties. Besides the understanding that the economy cannot be identified with immanent Trinity, the other reason for Zizioulas is that the doctrine of Holy Spirit should be formulated in the light of the theology of the Council of Constantinople. According to Zizioulas' description, the doctrine of Constantinople on the Holy Spirit involves three main theses:

- I. The Holy Spirit is God.
- II. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father.
- III. The Holy Spirit is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son.

These theses are to indicate that Holy Spirit has the same divinity with the Father and the Son. Zizioulas argues that the pneumatological doctrine of Constantinople is clear in these respects, and the *Filioque* is obviously an addition to the original Creed.

Zizioulas argues that patristic sources show that the Son in some sense 'mediates' in the procession of the Spirit. Zizioulas emphasizes that the 'mediation' could not be understood as another 'cause' in divine existence. That the Father remains the only cause is the philosophical and theological presuppositions with which the

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 43.

Cappadocians operate in theology, and they influence the Fathers of Constantinople precisely: “*between the Alexandrian (cyrillian) tendency to involve the role of the Son in the ousianic procession of the Spirit...and the Antiochene (Theodoretan) tendency to limit the role of the Son in the coming into being of the Spirit to the Economy, Gregory of Nyssa’s position seems to strike a middle road which does more justice to the intention of the Fathers of Constantinople.*”⁴⁴⁴ In the understanding of a mediating position of the Son in the eternal spiration of the Spirit, Zizioulas distinguishes Gregory’s position with that of Cyril: Gregory introduces the notion of ‘cause’ which he clearly reserves to the Father alone and put the Son and the Spirit on equal footing. Unlike Cyril, Gregory does not take the *ousianic* or ‘natural’ relation of the Spirit to God as one of the relationship with the Father. The Cappadocian Fathers, representing a third way between the Alexandrians and the Antiochenes, has not been fully appropriated by the West. Zizioulas analyzes the possible historical reasons at this point. “*These may have to do with the fact that the Council of Constantinople in 381 was exclusively an Eastern council, with no participation from the Western Church, although it was later formally recognized by it as an ecumenical council. It must also relate to the fact that Augustine’s theology dominated the West soon after the Cappadocians.*”⁴⁴⁵

Zizioulas points out that an interpretation of the Council’s teaching in light of Cappadocian theology will lead to the following conclusion: the phrase *ek tou Patros*,

- (a) does not exclude a mediating role of the Son in the procession of the Spirit,
- (b) does not allow for the Son to acquire the role of *aition* by being a mediator, and
- (c) does not allow any detachment of divine *ousia* from the Father (or from the other persons of

⁴⁴⁴ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 193.

⁴⁴⁵ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 124, see footnote, 39.

the Trinity): when we refer to *ousia* we do not refer in any way to something conceivable besides the persons, that is, we do not refer to an impersonal *ousia*.⁴⁴⁶

Through this conclusion, Zizioulas excludes any attempt to define the content of this mediation of the Son by making him some kind of secondary cause or by distinguishing between personal and *ousianic* levels of operation, for these are not from either Constantinople or the Cappadocians.⁴⁴⁷

Overall speaking, there are four kinds of expression about the procession of the Spirit:

- (a) Father is primary cause; Son secondary cause.
- (b) Father and Son both are the same causes on *ousianic* level.
- (c) Father is sole cause, Son has no role.
- (d) Father is sole cause; Son has a mediating role.

Zizioulas regards that the *Filioque* problem involves an absolute and indispensable existential truth, namely, the ontological ultimacy of the person of the Father. So he definitely rejects (a) and (b). However, for him, we can accept (d) instead of (c) in order to recognize the element of truth in the *Filioque* phrase.

5.2.5 Substantialism dictates that unity precedes diversity logically or ontologically in God

Ever since Tertullian, the Christian Trinity has always been depicted through the general concept of the divine substance: *una substantia-tres personae*, i.e., one divine substance is constituted as three individual divine persons; the three persons are different from one another, but they are one in their common divine substance. For Augustine and Thomas Aquinas this one, common, divine substance is counted

⁴⁴⁶ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 194-195.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 195.

as the foundation of the Trinitarian persons, and this substance was ontologically and logically primary in the formulation. Eastern theology criticizes this view for making essence or substance of God into a fourth category prior to the threeness of the Trinity. Furthermore, the psychological model for the Trinity is located ‘*inside the head of the one individual, in the structures of the mind’s intellectual love of itself*’.⁴⁴⁸ It influences theological anthropology directly, for the *imago Dei* has also been located in the human intellect and reason and this leads to an individualistic concept of human personhood. As Kaiser comments on Augustine: “*the complete dissociation of eternal intra-Trinitarian relations from ordinary human relations forced him into a rather static concept of deity, on the one hand, and an individualistic concept of humanity, on the other.*”⁴⁴⁹ It seems that the ontological revolution of personhood has not been accepted by Augustine. The Greek substantialist approach dominates Augustine’s Trinitarian theology and anthropology. Augustine’s influence continues to shape the thoughts of Boethius and Thomas Aquinas.

Since Aquinas, the article of faith on God has been shared in the treatise *De Deo uno* and the treatise *De Deo trino*. This two-fold division means that there is a God and that God is one, only after that comes the Trinity.

Trinitarian theology involves in its basic structure the problem of the relation between unity and diversity in the form of the ontological relation between the One and the Many. The faith in ‘one’ God who is at the same time ‘three,’ i.e. ‘many,’ implies that unity and diversity coincide in God’s very being. The question whether unity precedes diversity logically or ontologically in God is of crucial importance. Medieval theology succumbed to the logic of essentialism or substantialism, which inherited from classical Greek thought, and gave priority in dogmatics to the chapter ‘*De Deo uno*’, which received precedence over that of ‘*De Deo Trino*.’ God, logically speaking, is first ‘one’ and then ‘many.’ This theological monism is the equivalent to

⁴⁴⁸ Colin Gunton, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 94; see also Paul M. Collins, *Trinitarian Theology: West and East*, 120.

⁴⁴⁹ C. B. Kaiser, *The Doctrine of God: An Historical Survey* (London: Crossway Books, 1982), 81; see also Paul M. Collins, *Trinitarian Theology: West and East*, 120.

the philosophical monism that characterized ancient Greek thought from the Pre-Socratics to Neoplatonism.⁴⁵⁰

In Barth's theology, God is the subject of his own being and his own revelation. Barth emphasizes one personal God to replace a static concept of God in traditional substantialist language. However, on the relationship between 'one and many', it is still the same as the substantialist approach. As Collins comments: "*Thus, while Barth is rooted in the tradition of the West, he makes significant moves towards the tradition of the East...[However], Barth does not develop an explicit ontology of the particular (hypostasis) in the same way as the Eastern tradition does.*"⁴⁵¹ Logically speaking, the lordship of God still precedes the Trinity.

Although the Trinitarian mainstream of Western tradition is based on the analogy of the human soul or mind, there is an alternative social analogy of the Trinity too. The representative is Richard of St Victor, Hugh's student, who shared his teacher's approach to emphasize the distinctive works in the Trinity in the eleventh century. Richard found a personalist orientation in Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity. In his book *De Trinitate*, he argues that the doctrine of the Trinity could not possibly be understood in relation to a single isolated individual person.⁴⁵² The divine persons are distinguished by their relations of love. **The unity of essence is required by the perfect love between persons.** His precondition is that "*perfect love is always directed toward what is distinct from and in some sense outside the self. Self-love is imperfect love. God's love must be perfect and not in any way dependent upon the creation. Thus, God's love must be other-directed within God himself.*"⁴⁵³

Concerning Richard's concept of personhood, different comments have been cited by Collins in his book. For example, O'Donnell affirms that "*Richard*

⁴⁵⁰ John Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 336.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁴⁵² Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God: A Global Introduction* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 98.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 98

preserves the Boethian accent upon substantiality but he complements this idea with that of relationality.”⁴⁵⁴ In contrast, T. F. Torrance argues that Richard’s concept of person is against that of Boethius and it is “*derived ontologically from the doctrine of the Trinity*.”⁴⁵⁵ Moltmann argues that one’s existence is understood in the light of another, and this ‘another’ can be explained on two levels: the divine nature and the other persons: “*it is true that in the first place he related this other to the divine nature. But it can be related to the other Persons too*”;⁴⁵⁶ Collins argues that Richard’s theology is founded on a social model of the Trinity, but Richard’s concept of personhood is still related to Boethius’ definition of personhood.⁴⁵⁷

It is not easy to understand Richard’s idea because his book *On the Trinity* has never been fully translated into modern English. There are different views about the starting point of his Trinitarian theology. Kärkkäinen concludes that “*Richard began with the persons of the Father, Son, and Spirit and with human persons in community*.”⁴⁵⁸ But William Hill concludes that Richard’s *On the Trinity* “*begins with God in the oneness of his nature, but stresses love as the most distinctive and identifying trait of that nature*.”⁴⁵⁹ Anyway, Richard’s idea of sociality in God has been enthusiastically accepted among thinkers as diverse as liberation theologians, feminists, and Jürgen Moltmann.⁴⁶⁰

In the nineteenth century, the social analogy of the Trinity was used by those who wish to modify or challenge the psychological model of Idealist understanding of the Absolute, such as Hartshorne⁴⁶¹, Joseph Bracken⁴⁶², and Rahner.⁴⁶³ Rahner’s

⁴⁵⁴ O’Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 101; See also Paul M. Collins, *Trinitarian Theology: West and East*, 138.

⁴⁵⁵ T. F. Torrance, *Theological Science* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 306.

⁴⁵⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 173.

⁴⁵⁷ Paul M. Collins, *Trinitarian Theology: West and East*, 138.

⁴⁵⁸ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 98

⁴⁵⁹ William, J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God*, 78.

⁴⁶⁰ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 99.

⁴⁶¹ For an exposition of Hartshorne’s understanding see C. E. Gunton, *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978),

dependence upon the concept of the Absolute Subject of Hegelian thought does not necessarily sustain the psychological model like Augustine does. Rahner describes the Trinity in the divine self-revelation as threefoldness rather than oneness.⁴⁶⁴ Rahner criticizes that the psychological model leads to an understanding of the Godhead as ‘absolute identity’.⁴⁶⁵

But questions arise in relation to the social analogy too, especially **because there is a tendency to ascribe self-consciousness to each of the three divine persons.** Collins comments that those who have worked with either model had sought to relate consciousness to both the threeness and the oneness of the Godhead, with concepts such as intersubjectivity, interpersonality, and shared consciousness.⁴⁶⁶ Though Barth and Rahner realized that the psychological model had not expressed the revealed knowledge of the Godhead, yet as Collins criticizes: “*In their terminology for threefoldness and in their concept of the deity as Subject, both have failed to escape from the predominating influence of the Western conceptuality of the core ego.*”⁴⁶⁷ I will criticize the understanding of person as self-consciousness in chapter six.

As we see above, in Latin theology of the Augustine-Boethius-Thomas line and its heirs today, the unity of God lies in the divine substance or the absolute subject shared by the three persons. Then persons and relations have been formulated in terms of the attributes such as oneness and simplicity. One God is a divine substance or the absolute subject. This approach gives priority to ‘unity’ over

75-76.

⁴⁶² J. Bracken, *The Triune Symbol: Persons, Process, and Community* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), 48-57.

⁴⁶³ See Paul M. Collins, *Trinitarian Theology: West and East*, 152-154.

⁴⁶⁴ Rahner, *The Trinity*, 106; see also Paul M. Collins, *Trinitarian Theology: West and East*, 154.

⁴⁶⁵ Rahner, *The Trinity*, 117.

⁴⁶⁶ Paul M. Collins, *Trinitarian Theology: West and East*, 154.

⁴⁶⁷ Paul M. Collins, *Trinitarian Theology: West and East*, 155-156.

‘diversity’.⁴⁶⁸ The key reason is that the concept of otherness is not regarded as an ontological category. As Zizioulas comments: “*In classical and modern Western theology, the person never played the role of an ultimate ontological category, due to the tendency to place the person of the Father under the ontological priority of the ‘one God’, that is of divinity in general.*”⁴⁶⁹

5.3 Theological and philosophical significance of the ontology of personhood

For Zizioulas, the ontology of personhood is not only a response to various heretical ideas of their time. It also produces “*a philosophical landmark, a revolution in Greek philosophy.*”⁴⁷⁰ It is an ontological revolution which assumes that ‘person’ is prior to ‘substance’ in Trinitarian ontology. In philosophy, “*to give ontological primacy to the person would mean to undo the fundamental principles with which Greek philosophy had operated since its inception, (i.e., One).*”⁴⁷¹ Let us further examine this issue from four aspects.

Firstly, ‘One God’ is God the Father rather than one substance, “*that is, of the self-existent and in the final analysis individualistic being.*”⁴⁷² Gregory of Nazianzus rejects Plato’s notion which speaks of God as a crater: this crater overflows with goodness and love by a process of natural or substantial and necessary generation of existence. Gregory departs from the Athanasian idea of the ‘fertile substance of God’ too. He does not see the generation of the Son or the spiration of the Spirit in such terms as a way of substantial growth. He insists with the rest of the Cappadocians that the Father is the cause of divine existence and the

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us*, 248.

⁴⁶⁹ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 198

⁴⁷⁰ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 36.

⁴⁷¹ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 164.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 162.

three-personed God create the world jointly. Thus, 'One God' is not understood in a Platonic or Aristotelian sense. The one *arche* (origin or cause) in God came to be understood in terms of origination of being. By stressing the role of the Father as the cause of divine being, **generation and spiration are not necessary but free.** God the Father is the '*willing one*',⁴⁷³ the only cause of divine existence.

Secondly, the Cappadocian Fathers challenged classical Greek thought through their Trinitarian theology: true being or the ultimate metaphysical or ontological state is to be found in God, i.e., the 'One' and the 'Many' exist simultaneously in God. The premise is that the person has to be given ontological primacy in philosophy.⁴⁷⁴ God in Trinity involves simultaneously the 'One' and the 'Many'. Ancient Greek thought ever since pre-Socratic philosophers and up to Neoplatonism tended to give priority to the 'One' over the 'Many'. For example, in Plato's Eternal Ideas, all reality is one, with finite beings as manifestations of the absolute One. The particular person never has an ontological role. Neoplatonism had identified the 'One' with God himself. One emanates Many of a degrading nature, so that the return to the 'One' through the recollection of the soul was thought to be the purpose and aim of all existence. Philo links classical Platonism and Neoplatonism and argues that God is the only 'One' because he is the only One who is truly 'alone'. The Cappadocians explain that the priority of nature over person, or of the 'One' over the 'Many' is due to the fact that human existence is a different existence from that of God, and the way of human existence should not decide or result in an ultimate metaphysical or ontological principle.

Thirdly, the Cappadocians "*gave to the person ontological priority, and thus freed existence from the logical necessity of substance.*"⁴⁷⁵ Zizioulas regards that

⁴⁷³ Gregory Naz., *Theol. Or.* 3.5-7.

⁴⁷⁴ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 163-164.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 165.

there is an ontological necessity in Greek worldview:

This ontological monism which characterizes Greek philosophy from its inception leads Greek thought to the concept of the cosmos, that is, of the harmonious relationship of existent things among themselves. Not even God can escape from this ontological unity and stand freely before the world, 'face to face' in dialogue with it. He too is bound by ontological necessity to the world and the world to him, either through the creation of Plato's *Timaeus* or through the Logos of the Stocis or through the 'emanations' of Plotinus' *Enneads*.⁴⁷⁶

The personal ontology traces the world back to an ontology outside the world, that is, a personal God who transcends the necessity of Greek cosmology and substantialism. Zizioulas asserts that the Cappadocians reversed the Greek ways of thinking, for the Trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers involved a philosophy in which the particular was not secondary to being or nature. Thus the particular is free in an ultimate sense.

Lastly, the particular person never has an ontological identity in classical Greek thought: "*What mattered ultimately was the unity or totality of being of which man was but a portion.*"⁴⁷⁷ Concerning the anthropological consequences of the ontology of personhood, I have discussed them in Chapter three and will discuss its critique of Western concept of personhood in the next chapter (Chapter Six).

⁴⁷⁶ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 29-30.

⁴⁷⁷ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 164.

Chapter Six

Critique of the Western concept of personhood from the perspective of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood

In Western traditional anthropology, 'personhood' is an individualist concept. Because nature or *ousia* express the general, personhood usually signifies the individual substance. Otherness is not an ontological concept. This is the substantialist approach which keeps substance at the forefoot. This kind of view of personhood can be traced to Augustine, Boethius, and Aquinas. From the perspective of a relational view of personhood, Zizioulas criticizes the Western concept of personhood. In this chapter, discussion will be divided into three sections: (1) Exposition of Augustine, Boethius, and Aquinas' concepts of personhood. (2) Criticism from the perspective of the ontology of personhood. (3) Analysis of Zizioulas' criticisms.

6.1 The concept of person in Western anthropology

6.1.1 Augustine (354-430): person as consciousness

The early Augustine constructs a Christian anthropology in a work written shortly after his conversion to Christianity: *The Catholic and Manichaeon Ways of Life* (composed between 388-390). In his response to the question 'what is man?' Augustine stresses that soul and body are essential components of human nature and emphasizes the superiority of the soul over the body. In one of his initial anthropological formulations, he defined the soul as "*a certain kind of substance sharing in reason, fitted to rule the body.*"⁴⁷⁸ His Christian anthropology is

⁴⁷⁸ Augustine, *De Quantitate Animae* 13, 22. Cf. Joseph Torchia, O.P., *Exploring Personhood: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Nature* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 115, 109-110.

developed within the Neoplatonic framework. Human nature presupposes a “harmonious union” of the inner man of the spirit and the outer man of the flesh. Augustine focuses on the mind or intellect, the highest part of our rational nature, as the bearer of God’s image. This reflects a distinct intellectualist emphasis.

The mature Augustine introduces the term *persona* into his anthropological lexicon. He sees that the composite unity of soul and body constitutes not only the human being but an individual person in his or her own right. It underscores a transition from talking about the general (what we all share in common) to a recognition of the uniqueness of each and every human being.⁴⁷⁹

Augustine finds the image of the triune God in the human person. His use of the psychological analogies in terms of our conscious experience of the mental acts of knowing and living was fundamentally based on the biblical understanding of the human person as created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). As we have stated in chapter five, Augustine’s failure to understand the Greek terminological consensus results in a failure to understand the conceptual revolution that terminology implies. For Augustine, the conception of ‘person’ in Trinity lacks an ontological grounding. He distinguishes person, which is “something singular and individual,” from nature which is held in common.⁴⁸⁰ Augustine appeals to psychological understanding as the model for the Trinity. This influences not only the doctrine of the Trinity, but also the understanding of the human person.⁴⁸¹

Augustine develops the concept of person in his book *Confessions*. Augustine has been reluctant to use ‘*persona*’, but he presents a phenomenology of human consciousness that has now become one of the central features of our contemporary

⁴⁷⁹ See Joseph Torchia, O.P., *Exploring Personhood: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Nature* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 113.

⁴⁸⁰ Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. (Brooklyn, N. Y.: New City Press, 1991), VII. 11, 229.

⁴⁸¹ Gunton, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 102; see also Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV. 15, 383.

notion of person. In many ways, to ask about human personhood is to ask himself: “*I became for myself a great question.*”⁴⁸² Thus, Augustine utilizes the method of introspective self-reflection to explore the freedom, intellect, feelings, desires, and love in human consciousness. The most significant characteristic of a person here is his or her self-consciousness.

6.1.2 Boethius (480-524): person as individual and rational substance

Boethius explains ‘person’ in terms of Aristotle’s category of substance: there are particular (Aristotle’s ‘primary’) and universal (Aristotle’s ‘secondary’) substances, only the particular substances can qualify as persons: “*person cannot anywhere be predicated of universals, but only of particulars and individuals, for there is no person of man as animal or a genus; only of Cicero, Plato, or other single individuals are single persons named.*”⁴⁸³ Thus, the concept of person focuses on the individual reality. Boethius’ definition of person is: “*The individual substance of a rational nature*”.⁴⁸⁴ An “individual substance” suggests that a person is a whole, distinguishable from others but undivided in itself. The “rational nature” distinguishes humans, God, and angel from all other sorts of individual substance. Therefore, the concept of person has been applied to man, God and angel, but we do not predicate person of a stone, tree, or horse. This definition has been formed in his Christological discussion. For Boethius, the correct understanding of Christology depends upon a clear understanding of nature and person.

Firstly, for Boethius, substance is prior to person. “*For one thing is clear, namely that nature is a substrate of person, and that person cannot be predicated apart*

⁴⁸² Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), IV. Iv. 9, 115.

⁴⁸³ Boethius, *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium*, 85; cf. Philip Rolnich, *Person, Grace, and God*, 38.

⁴⁸⁴ Boethius, *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium*, 85; cf. Philip Rolnich, *Person, Grace, and God*, 39.

from nature.”⁴⁸⁵ Indeed, person is properly predicated of substance: “*Since person cannot exist apart from nature and since natures are either substances or accidents and we see that person cannot consist in accidents, it therefore remains that person is properly predicated of substances.*”⁴⁸⁶

Secondly, the definition of the human person depends upon our understanding of the person of Christ. For Boethius, an analogy is present between human persons and the person of Christ. Against Nestorius, whom he understood as believing in the existence of two persons in Christ, Boethius insists that the reality of Christ is the reality of the union, i.e., the person unifies. In human persons, the union includes different components, such as the body, emotions, soul, thoughts, commitments, actions, and relationships.⁴⁸⁷

6.1.3 Thomas Aquinas (1225-74): person as a subsistent individual

Like Augustine, Aquinas refines the concept of human personhood in the course of theological discussion on the Trinity and the person of Jesus. As Joseph Torchia writes: “*Interesting, Aquinas’s most explicit discussion of personhood in the Summa Theologica does not emerge in his Treatise on Human Nature. Rather, it unfolds in the course of his treatment of the Trinity and his analysis of the relations between the Persons of the Trinity.*”⁴⁸⁸ For Aquinas, personhood means a unique individual. He distinguishes personhood from human nature: “*Person in any nature signifies what is distinct in that nature: thus in human nature it signifies this flesh, these bones, and this soul, which are the individuating principles of a man, and which, though not belonging to person in general, nevertheless do belong to the meaning*

⁴⁸⁵ Boethius, *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium* 83; cf. Philip Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*. 37.

⁴⁸⁶ Boethius, *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium* 83; cf. Philip Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*. 38.

⁴⁸⁷ See Philip Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*, 41.

⁴⁸⁸ Joseph Torchia, *Exploring Personhood: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Nature* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2008), 140.

of a particular human person.”⁴⁸⁹

Aquinas refines the definition of person along Boethius’s lines: “*A person is a subsistent individual in a rational nature.*”⁴⁹⁰ Therefore, Aquinas links the notion of individualized substance with the definition of the person. The term individual is included in the definition of the person to signify a special mode of subsistence proper to particular things or substance. In contrast with Boethius’s definition, Aquinas’ definition understands a subsistent reality in this way: “*What is composed of this form has the nature of ...person. For soul, flesh, and bone belong to the nature of man; whereas this soul, this flesh, and this bone belong to the nature of this man.*”⁴⁹¹ The subsistent reality is the primary sense of the human substance.

The significance of ‘subsistent reality’ can be understood through Aquinas’ definition of the composite of human beings. He defines humans as composites of the formal principle of the soul and the material substrate of the body. It presupposes a new metaphysical vision which focuses upon being or existence as the ultimate perfection of a given thing. In this respect, Aquinas moves beyond the limitations of the static essentialist ontology which dominates the anthropologies of Plato and Aristotle for Aquinas regards existent reality as a dynamic act.

For Aquinas, the human person is a dynamic being that actualizes the potentiality for certain operations unique to his or her own existence. The person has an intrinsic value and dignity because the person participates in a hierarchy of being in which God provides the first cause and final end of everything which exists. Persons possess a status by virtue of their relation to God as creatures in his image and likeness. The difference between persons and other creatures is that persons are able to internalize reality through their intellect and even grasp something of the

⁴⁸⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Ia, Q. 29, a. 4.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Ia, Q. 29, a. 3.

⁴⁹¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Ia, Q. 29, a. 2, ad.3.

infinite majesty of God.

Aquinas stresses the hypostatic union of God and man in Christ. The union is neither located in the divine or human nature, nor in some accidental attribute of the God-man. A union is “*mid-way, in a subsistence or hypostasis.*”⁴⁹² Therefore, there are two levels in Aquinas’ discussions of personhood. He defines personhood sometimes in terms of our individual uniqueness, and at other times in terms of our relation to the persons of God. A question naturally arises: is the concept of personhood an individual or relational concept? This answer must be addressed in terms of its metaphysical foundation. For Aquinas, the body is the individual principle of a man, and the human soul is the primary metaphysical principle of the essence of human nature. So on the whole, his concept of personhood is still an individualist concept.

6.2 Criticism from the perspective of the ontology of personhood

For Zizioulas, personhood is a relational concept which is contrasted with the Western individualist concept of ‘person’. According to the ontology of personhood, Zizioulas criticizes the Western view of person with regard to three aspects. I try to understand his opinions and put forward some criticisms.

6.2.1 Individualism in the view of personhood: there is no otherness and communion

For the ontology of communion, personhood is a gift coming from God; personhood is otherness in communion, and communion in otherness. By contrast, in the Western tradition, ‘personhood’ is an individualist concept. Zizioulas explains how personhood as consciousness was formed in the Western theological

⁴⁹² Ibid., IIIa, Q. 2, a. 6.

tradition. He writes:

With the help of a cross-fertilization between the Boethian and the Augustinian approaches to man, our Western philosophy and culture have formed a concept of man out of a combination of two basic components: rational individuality on the one hand and psychological experience and consciousness on the other. It was on the basis of this combination that Western thought arrived at the conception of the person as an individual and a personality, that is, a unit endowed with intellectual, psychological and moral qualities centred on the axis of consciousness.⁴⁹³

However, there is a distinction between modern understanding of self-consciousness and the classical Greek understanding.⁴⁹⁴ Zizioulas writes: “*The ancient Greeks did not operate in anthropology with the notion of subject, that is, of the self as thinking its own thoughts and as being conscious of itself and preoccupied with its own ‘intentions’.*”⁴⁹⁵ Zizioulas claims that the introspective way in Augustinian tradition has affected the Western mind and modern Orthodox through the confusion between ontology and psychology in our ordinary way of thinking, i.e., consciousness and subjectivity are treated as fundamental anthropological categories. These individualist concepts dominate our understanding and discourse of selfhood, and the human being is ultimately only an isolated self, a centre of consciousness which is essentially separated from other centres of consciousness. In fact, in the introspective tradition, how to prove the existence of other minds or other consciousness has become an epistemological conundrum. All these steer us away from a proper understanding of person as

⁴⁹³ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 211.

⁴⁹⁴ Socrates’ work is an important beginning of the individualistic legacy. Socrates’ individual self-independence from the community in which he lived set an important precedent for the way in which a person could conceive of himself or herself as a separate and distinct being. But his individualism was defined in terms of social roles. Modern philosophy has in fact developed a concept of the individual that is far more solitary than that created by Socrates and the Antiquity. The philosopher who first formulated the idea of this solitary self was Rene Descartes (1596-1650). He has become known as ‘the father of modern philosophy’. See website: <http://faculty.frostburg.edu/phil/forum/Descartes.htm> (KKM: but you have already discussed Descartes before. Sometime the order of your discussions can be more systematic & logical thought the problem here is not very great.)

⁴⁹⁵ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 46.

communion.⁴⁹⁶

The human being is ultimately a Self, a centre of consciousness in our ordinary way of thinking. The human person is generally defined by the ability to think of himself, and the person as the individual self-consciousness is basically incommunicable. The person and mind continues to be identified with each other in the modern view. In modern psychology, personhood can be understood as a self-conscious, free centre of action. This personhood is often understood further in terms of an individual personality.

Stanley J. Grenz also regards the idea of 'self' as a modern invention and agrees that it can be traced back to Augustine: "*The trajectory that gave rise to the modern self begins with Augustine. Building from the Greek dictum 'Know thyself,' Augustine transposed the focus of the search for self to the realm within.*"⁴⁹⁷ Augustine's emphasis on the inward journey, the quest for self-knowledge, also led to the concept of the self as the stable, abiding reality that constitutes the individual human being.

From the book of Augustine, we can find that he defines 'person' in terms of 'consciousness' or 'mind': "*Any single man, who is not called the image of God in terms of everything that belongs to his nature but only in terms of his mind is one person and is the image of the Trinity in his mind. But that Trinity he is the image of is nothing but wholly and simple Trinity...three persons of one being, not like any single man, just one person.*"⁴⁹⁸ There is the problem of an improper analogy used by Augustine between God and man. Augustine appeals to a psychological understanding as the model for the Trinity. A. C. Lloyd succinctly

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁹⁷ Stanley J. Grenz, 'The Social God and the Relational Self', in Richard Lints, Michael S. Horton and Mark R. Talbot ed., *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 71-72.

⁴⁹⁸ Augustine, *The Trinity* XV, 11, 403.

notes that Augustine “*did not accept the opportunity of making an analogy between the interior relationships of the Trinity and exterior or mutual relationships of human persons.*”⁴⁹⁹ Conversely, the model for the Trinity is based on a single human mind. Gunton argues, “[Augustine] cannot escape an individualistic concept of the person.”⁵⁰⁰

It produces huge influences on the whole Western philosophy and society: the individualist concept of the person is so pervasive in modern Western society. In the Christian tradition it is generally accepted that Augustine is the original protagonist of such a concept of personhood. It is transmitted into the Middle Ages through Boethius, and is accepted by Aquinas. It is also the expression of a substantialist understanding of personhood. It tends towards a view of the divine persons and the person of human as singular and isolated in an individualistic sense.

Augustine’s influence is not only confirmed to the churches. His psychological analogy of God and phenomenological analysis of human consciousness influences Descartes’ understanding of the human person as mind. The ‘Father of Modern Philosophy’, Descartes (1596-1650) writes: “*I am thinking, therefore I exist*” [*cogito ergo sum*]. The phrase became a fundamental element of Western philosophy, as it was perceived to provide a foundation for all knowledge. Much subsequent Western philosophy is a response to his writings. A transformation of the old ontological paradigm into a new subject-centered perspective lies at the core of both the Cartesian epistemological and Kantian transcendental turn. For Descartes, the real person is to be identified with thought, and therefore with ‘mind’. Mind is understood to be non-material. Kant’s philosophy further emphasizes the tendency of the ‘turn to the subject’, which presupposes a necessary relation

⁴⁹⁹ A. C. Lloyd, “On Augustine’s Concept of a Person,” in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. A. Markus (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Books, 1972), 204.

⁵⁰⁰ Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 95.

between personhood and subjectivity. Because the noumenal realm can never be the object of knowledge, philosophy is understood as several forms of the quest for self-knowledge: what can I know? (Metaphysics); what ought I do (Morals); what might I hope? (Religions).⁵⁰¹

Because of the analogy of being, this conception has been applied to God. In the traditional metaphysical language of the theologians, God is understood as the Supreme Substance. Later, under the impact of the Enlightenment, which understands human personhood as a subject of consciousness, the divine person is understood as the Absolute Subject in theology. For example, Barth affirms that God is subject only, never object.⁵⁰² God is known through an Event, i.e., the event of revelation. Indeed, God is himself the event of revelation because he is the subject (God reveals), the content (God reveals *himself*), and the very happening (God *reveals* himself).⁵⁰³ Revelation is necessarily Trinitarian:

The statement 'God is one in three modes of being, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' thus means that the one God, i.e., the one Lord, the one personal God, is what he is not in one mode only but—we appeal in support simply to the result of our analysis of the Biblical concept of revelation—in the mode of the Father, in the mode of the Son, in the mode of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁰⁴

God is one divine Person with three modes of existing. Barth understands person in the modern terms of self-consciousness and freedom and he fails to deal with the concept of hypostasis in terms of the 'relations of communion'.⁵⁰⁵ This approach to Trinitarian theology provides no justification for the independent existence of the Son and the Spirit as persons in the Trinity. Therefore, there exists only one Person and one subjectivity in Barth's Trinitarian theology, and Moltmann criticizes that Barth's theology is in fact rooted in the idealist tradition of the single self-conscious

⁵⁰¹ For example, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781); *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788); *Critique of Judgment* (1790).

⁵⁰² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, 438.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 339.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 413.

⁵⁰⁵ Paul M. Collins, *Trinitarian Theology: West and East*, 223.

divine subject.⁵⁰⁶ Gunton claims that Barth's usage of *tropos hyparxeos* keeps him enclosed in the Western tradition of the Trinity and personhood, rather than setting him in the Cappadocian tradition.⁵⁰⁷

Similarly, Rahner regards that it is difficult for us to use the modern meaning of person to understand the Trinity as three divine persons because this would suggest "three consciousnesses." Therefore, he uses "threefold subsistence in one consciousness" instead of "three persons":

But there are not three consciousnesses; rather, the one consciousness subsists in a threefold way. There is only one real consciousness in God, which is shared by Father, Son, and Spirit, by each in his own proper way. Hence the threefold subsistence is not qualified by three consciousnesses. The subsistence itself is as such not personal, if we understand this word in the modern sense.⁵⁰⁸

All types of Personalism, both in America and in Europe, as a philosophical movement have their common basis the concept of consciousness, on which they found the concept of the person. Boston's personalist Brightman defines person as "*a complex unity of consciousness, which identifies itself with its past self in memory, determines itself by its freedom, is purposive and value-seeking, private yet communicating, and potentially rational.*"⁵⁰⁹

Overall speaking, it seems correct for Zizioulas to criticize Augustine's and other philosophers' concept of personhood as an individualist concept. As a result, the question of theological and philosophical anthropology has characteristically been framed as the question of the self rather than the question of the other. This unbalanced perspective may well have contributed to the imbalance and undesirable consequences in our culture. I will discuss this issue in the next chapter.

⁵⁰⁶ Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 140.

⁵⁰⁷ Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 191.

⁵⁰⁸ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, 107.

⁵⁰⁹ E. S. Brightman, "Personalism," in V Perm ed., *A History of Philosophical Systems*, (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1950), 340.

6.2.2 Relationship between God and human as an impersonal union

Zizioulas thinks that the self as a kind of consciousness dominates Western anthropology. As pointed out above, it is Augustine who develops the relationship between man and God through his consciousness or even self-consciousness in *Confessions*.

Zizioulas distinguishes two kinds of relationship between God and man. The relationship between God and man can be expressed by two kinds of presence: the presence of the personal and the presence of a-personal beings. The purpose of the distinction is to criticize a relationship built upon our conscious reflection on the situation: “*The first indication that this presence is not a matter of psychology but of something far more fundamental and primordial is to be found in the fact that it does not rest upon conscious reflection but precedes it.*”⁵¹⁰ The presence of a-personal being is ultimately demonstrable through the intellect or sense perception. Zizioulas asserts that if we use this kind of model to understand the relationship between God and man, the relationship would become an a-personal reality.

Christos Yannaras explains these two kinds of relation even more clearly.

In other words, the Church does not identify the truth of being with God as an objective and abstract first cause of existence and life: God is not a vague supreme being, an impersonal essence which may be approached only through the intellect or the emotions. Nor is He a ‘prime mover’... The God of whom the Church has experience is the God who reveals Himself in history as personal existence, as distinctiveness and freedom. God is person, and He speaks with man ‘face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend’.⁵¹¹ (Exodus 33:11).

The priority of essence entails the priority of conceptual thought and therefore of the individual intellect over experience. God is not recognized primarily as personal intervention in history revealing the mode of divine existence, as personal experience of participation in this mode...God becomes an object of individual understanding, which implies an abstract and

⁵¹⁰ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 217.

⁵¹¹ Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 16-17.

impersonal 'supreme being' unrelated to experience and history.⁵¹²

Martin Buber also talks about two kinds of relationship: the I-Thou relationship and the I-It relationship. The I-It relationship is constantly turning the Other into an object. "*The I of the basic word I-You is different from that of the basic word I-it. The I of the basic word I-It appears as an ego and becomes consciousness of itself as a subject (of experience and use). The I of the basic word I-You appears as a person...Egos appear by setting themselves apart from other egos. Persons appear by entering relation to other persons.*"⁵¹³

Zizioulas argues this issue through an example offered by Sartre: I have an appointment in a café with a friend whose existence matters to me. But when I arrived there I cannot discover that this person is there. For me, the absent person precisely by not being there occupies the entire space-time context of the café. It is only after I reflect consciously on the situation that I know who 'is' and who 'is not' there. A distinction emerges between the presence of the personal and the presence of a-personal beings. "*Those who 'are' and those who 'are not' there are not particular beings in a personal sense: their identities are established not in communion and freedom but by their own boundaries or through those imposed by our own mind. Their presence is compelling for our minds and senses but not for our freedom; they can be turned into things, they can lose their uniqueness and finally be dispensed with.*"⁵¹⁴ In conclusion, understanding in terms of the presence of a-personal being would turn God into a natural object but this has nothing to do with the living God of the Bible and the worshipping Church. The personal divine-human relationship would also be distorted into 'object relations'.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹² Christos Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, trans. Peter Chamberas and Norman Russell (Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006), 34,

⁵¹³ Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1970), 111-112.

⁵¹⁴ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 217.

⁵¹⁵ Daniel J. Price, *Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 167.

A presence of a-personal beings appears to be based on the nature of things, that is to say, to something one simply has to recognize according to its nature. For example, according to Aquinas, the mind is conformed to God because it has God as its object: “*The divine image is noted in man according to the word conceived from the knowledge about God and the love derived from thence.*”⁵¹⁶ In contrast, the presence of personal beings is not established on the basis of a given ‘nature’ of the being but of love and freedom: “*in this case, ontology cannot ultimately take for granted the being of any being; it cannot attribute the ultimacy of being to a necessity inherent in the nature of a being; it can only attribute it to freedom and love, which thus become ontological notions par excellence. Being in this case owed its being to personhood and ultimately becomes identical with it.*”⁵¹⁷

Zizioulas uses the words of W. Pannenberg to argue:

A person whose being we could survey and whose every moment we could anticipate would thereby cease to be a person for us, and where human beings are falsely taken to be existent beings and treated as such, then their personality is treated with contempt. This is unfortunately possible, because human beings are in fact also existent beings. Their being as persons takes shape in their present bodily reality, and yet it remains invisible to one whose vision—unlike the vision of love or even that of hatred—looked only at what is existent in man.”⁵¹⁸

Zizioulas describes the presence of God in Eastern Church and theology by two key terms. One is *kenosis* (self-emptying). *Kenosis* and its manifestation as self-emptying are to be understood in their positive significance, the entire giving over of the I to the other, and the receiving of the other in his or her fullness. The other is *theosis*. “*Theosis, as a way of describing this unity in personhood, is, therefore, just the opposite of a divinization in which human nature ceases to be what it really is.*”⁵¹⁹ *Theosis* can be understood as the process whereby we become

⁵¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I. 93. 8c.

⁵¹⁷ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 218-9.

⁵¹⁸ W. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, vol. III, 1973, 112; see also John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 218, footnote 18.

⁵¹⁹ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 243.

‘partakers in Divine nature’. “I say, ‘You are gods’” (Psalms 82:6). This phrase from the Old Testament, quoted by our Lord Himself (John 10: 34), has deeply marked the spiritual imagination of Orthodoxy: “*In the Orthodox understanding Christianity signifies not merely an adherence to certain dogmas, not merely an exterior imitation of Christ through moral effort, but direct union with the living God, the total transformation of the human person by divine grace and glory—what the Greek Fathers termed ‘deification’ or ‘divinization’ (theosis, theopoiesis). In the words of St. Basil the Great, man is nothing less than a creature that has received the order to become god.*”⁵²⁰ The idea of *theosis* does not involve the absorption of the creation by the divine nature, that is, the loss of its otherness. Christ as the locus of salvation should not be understood as bringing about a *theosis* in which God would cease to be totally other than the creation. Chalcedon safeguards divine and human otherness by insisting that the two natures in Christ remained always ‘without confusion’. Thus, Christology sanctions otherness in a fundamental way.⁵²¹

While the Lutheran confessions tend to be skeptical of the idea of *theosis*, the Lutheran theologian Paul R. Hinlicky recognizes that they have in fact neglected the significance of the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*:

As a Lutheran, I want to say that the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* is simply true, that justification by faith theologically presupposes it in the same way that Paul the Apostle reasoned by analogy from the resurrection of the dead to the justification of the sinner...Lutherans are confused about justification today because they have neglected this presupposition, to wit, that the point of justification is to bring us into communion with God through Jesus Christ...In turn, the goal and content of salvation as *theosis* and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which that opens up for Lutheranism, clarifies the desperately muddled understanding of the relation of justification and sanctification in modern Lutheranism.⁵²²

⁵²⁰ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004), 17.

⁵²¹ See John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 37.

⁵²² Paul R. Hinlicky, “Theological Anthropology: Toward Integrating *Theosis* and Justification by

6.2.3 The problem of man as a moral issue rather than ontological one

According to Zizioulas, the problem of man in the Western theology is treated as a moral issue (often with legalistic understanding as well). He expresses this point of view by distinguishing the problems of Eastern and Western theologies:

Christ is 'the Saviour of the world' not because he sacrificed himself on the Cross, thereby wiping away the sins of the world, but because 'he is risen from the dead having trampled death by death'. The West (Catholic and Protestant) has viewed the problem of the world as a moral problem (transgression of a commandment and punishment) and has made of the Cross of Christ the epicenter of faith and worship. However, Orthodoxy continues to insist upon the Resurrection as the centre of its whole life precisely because it sees that the problem of the created is not moral but ontological; it is the problem of death.⁵²³

Christos Yannaras, an Orthodox theologian, also criticizes the Western juridical, legal understanding of man's relationship with God: "*Starting from such a concrete and existential concept of sin, the Orthodox tradition has refused to confine the whole of man's relationship with God within a juridical, legal framework; it has refused to see sin as the individual transgression of a given, impersonal code of behavior which simply produces psychological guilt.*"⁵²⁴

Although Zizioulas often criticizes the West for treating the problem of the human person as a moral issue rather than an ontological one, he does not always analyze the reasons clearly. From Zizioulas' books, I can only find one major reason: a logical inference from basic theological understanding (the meaning will be explained shortly). On the one hand, I will make use of the historical testimony i.e., the Western tendency towards moralism or legalistic understanding of faith, to defend Zizioulas' opinion. On the other hand, I will criticize Zizioulas' overly simplistic understanding of sin in Western theology only as an ethical concept.

Firstly, there is a logical inference: there is no ontological connection between

Faith," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34, no.1 (Winter 1997), 63.

⁵²³ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 261.

⁵²⁴ Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 35.

God and the world on the basis of nature or substance. So the relationship between God and creation is mainly construed in terms of ethics (because person is not an ontological category). In other words, it is difficult for those who hold a substantialist ontology and identify being with substance to call God's relationship with the world 'ontological'. Thus, in the West, the gap between God and creation has been filled mainly not by ontology but by ethics or psychology: communion between the Creator and creation has been conceived either in terms of obedience to God's commandments in Calvinism, or through some kind of 'religion of the heart' in Lutheranism.⁵²⁵ Zizioulas thinks that this approach is influenced by Greek philosophy and points out that it undermines Incarnation, that is, the hypostatic union between created and uncreated being.⁵²⁶

Secondly, it is right for Zizioulas to assert that there is a distinction between ontological and ethical understandings of doctrines. Sin as a moral issue is the most basic issue for man. However, many doctrines have been explained from an ethical perspective rather than an ontological perspective in Western theology. For example, sin is summarized as the transgression of God's law and commandment,⁵²⁷ and death is understood as a punishment introduced to creation and imposed upon man. Moreover, a legalistic understanding of confession means that if one confesses his or her sins, then this particular list of sins will be cancelled;⁵²⁸ the atonement means that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered the penalty of

⁵²⁵ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 20.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵²⁷ Cf. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Father, God the Son* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 185.

⁵²⁸ Aristotle Papanikolaou and Elizabeth H. Prodromou eds., *Thinking through Faith* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 219. According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, **confessionalization** is a recent concept employed by reformation historians to describe the parallel processes of 'confession-building' taking place in Europe between the peace of Augsburg (1555) and the Thirty Years' War (1618-1649). During this time prior to the Thirty Year's War, there was a nominal peace between the Protestant and Catholic confessions as both competed to establish their faith more firmly with the population of their respective areas. This confession-building occurred through 'social-disciplining,' as there was a stricter enforcement by the churches of their particular

the broken law vicariously, as the substitute for His people.⁵²⁹ In this way, salvation becomes totally objective because this vicarious death can happen regardless of people's subjective response to Christ. However, the model of penal substitution is inadequate to the images of rebirth, regeneration, creation of new man, etc. which also constitute essential parts of atonement, and these all lie on the level of ontology, that is, the transformation of human persons and their relationship with God and other persons. It means that a legalistic or moralistic understanding of sin and salvation is deficient because it lacks an ontological perspective.

In fact, although we cannot say that this is universally the case, it is arguable that Roman Catholic moral theology and Protestant Christian ethics by and large have manifested a tendency towards moralism. Moral theology is the name given by the Roman Catholic tradition to the theological discipline that deals with Christian life and action.⁵³⁰ An academic and systematic approach to moral theology began in the teaching of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas deals with the human response to God's gift and the moral life in the second Part of the *Summa theologiae*. But it is Alan of Lille (d. 1202) rather than Aquinas who separates out a discipline called 'moral theology'. Later academics developed moral theology through commentaries on the second part of the *Summa*, especially in the sixteenth-century.⁵³¹

We can take moral theology in the United States as an example. Moral theology was identified with what were called 'manuals of moral theology'. The manuals of moral theology owe their origin to the Council of Trent in sixteenth-century. The

rules for all aspects of life in both Protestant and Catholic areas. This had the consequence of creating distinctive confessional identities. For example, the TULIP of Calvinism: Total Depravity; Unconditional election; Limited or Definite Atonement; Irresistible of Grace; Perseverance of the Saints.

See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessionalization>

⁵²⁹ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Father; God the Son*, 317.

⁵³⁰ Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Moral Theology in the United States* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2008), xi.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

Council understood the sacrament of penance primarily in juridical terms. The priest acts as a judge to determine whether absolution is to be given or denied.⁵³² In the legal model of the manuals, conscience is the subjective norm of morality, whereas law constitutes the objective norm of morality.⁵³³ The approach of moral theology in the United States in the period before the 1960s was based on natural law. However, it can be seen that there are increasing dissatisfactions with the model of natural law even within the Catholic tradition. For example, the post-Vatican II period called for a more scriptural and theological approach to moral theology. It brought startling changes. Moral theology was no longer tied to one methodology. A pluralism of different methodological approaches now existed in this discipline. John Paul II emphasizes that truth is the ultimate foundation for moral living and moral theology. In this period, some moral theology even turns to give more emphasis on the person himself rather than the legalistic assessment of his act. So the understanding of sin has also been changed, and some argue that this signifies a return to a more Biblical understanding. After all, the concept of sin in Genesis is more than just an act of disobedience because sin also involves a breaking of the covenantal relationship with God.⁵³⁴

Traditional Protestant theological ethics also manifests the same tendency towards moralism. As Stanley Hauerwas writes:

Protestant theological ethics has tended to shape its conception of the moral life around the metaphor of command. The Christian's obligation, in the light of this metaphor, is obedience to the law and performance of the will of God. The object of the moral life is not to grow but to be repeatedly ready to obey each new command...it has generally been assumed that God's

⁵³² Ibid., 2. In the same book, we can find some examples: Stephen Badin, an early missionary in Kentucky, spent most of his days in these pastoral visits hearing confessions. (p.11) In the seminary, the emphasis was on moral theology. Diocesan seminarians had more instruction in moral theology than they had in dogmatic theology. (p.12) Aloysius Sabetti (1839-98), author of a manual of moral theology, sees morality primarily in terms of obedience to law. (p.19)

⁵³³ Ibid., 181.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 184.

relation to man is fundamentally to be understood in terms of command and obedience.⁵³⁵

This kind of obedience is explained mainly ethically without reference to the metaphysical ground. For example, justification by faith may suggest that our righteousness is built only upon the legal transaction between God and Christ: Christ's death has paid for us our debt to God, and hence we are *deemed* righteous and justified. However, Matti Kärkkäinen reflects: "*Yet in order for the righteousness to be genuine, a new obedience is called for, not just a 'legal fiction.'* But it is only through *'the example of Christ and by his gracious gift of the Holy Spirit [that] this achievement of righteousness has become a new possibility for believers.'*"⁵³⁶

Greg Ogden criticizes that American Christian life after World War II had been reduced to the ethical level: "*A generation ago the Christian life was conceived of as a life of ethical respectability expressed through the support of the institution of the Church... Going to the church was as American as apple pie, since the church provided the moral glue for the community and national spirit.*"⁵³⁷ Will Herberg describes that in the fifties (after World War II), to be an American meant to identify with one of these religious traditions. In this period, going to church did not generally mean that people are having a vital, living encounter with Christ. Even church people may only have a kind of institutional faith. This kind of Christianity cannot manifest the genuine faith in Christ—repenting, receiving forgiveness, and living a new life under Christ's lordship.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁵ Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1984). 2.

⁵³⁶ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004), 130. The citing in it belongs to Hinlicky, "Theological Anthropology," 58.

⁵³⁷ Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 17.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

6.3 Analysis of Zizioulas' criticisms

We can analyze Zizioulas' criticisms of Augustine with regard to three aspects, and evaluate Zizioulas' criticism of the problem of the world merely as a moral problem in Catholic and Protestant traditions.

Firstly, since I agree that the concept of person is a relational concept, Augustine's definition of person is indeed too individualistic. It embodies a distinction: "*In the Greek idea, ecstasies, the toward-another, is primary; in the Latin, self-possession is primary.*"⁵³⁹

Secondly, however, Zizioulas' critique may be a bit excessive when he regards Augustine' concept of consciousness only as I-it relationship: "*Consciousness is not only a manifestation of the priority of the I; it is always at the same time consciousness of something, that is, a process of turning the Other into an object.*"⁵⁴⁰ We have to point out that in our cognition, turning the Other into an object *to some degree* is almost inescapable, and this in itself cannot be regarded as evil. The crucial matter is whether we ONLY treat the Other as an object. If so, this would turn into an undesirable kind of I-it relationship. Even Buber himself does not deny the value of I-it relationship *as such*.

Moreover, when Zizioulas criticizes Augustine's influence on the Western concept of person, he does not distinguish Augustine's concept of consciousness from those of other philosophers, such as Descartes. In fact, Augustine' concept of 'consciousness' does not only involve a psychological consciousness always turning towards itself. Instead, his consciousness is oriented toward God, a corollary from the understanding of the human person as the image of God. In his *The Trinity*, Augustine presents more than twenty triadic psychological analogies

⁵³⁹ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us*, 287.

⁵⁴⁰ Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation*, 48.

for exploration. The purpose of exploring these analogies is to love God: “*Now this Trinity of the mind is God’s image, not because the mind remembers, understands and loves itself; but because it has the power also to remember, understand and love its Maker*”⁵⁴¹ In his *Confessions*, the whole person stands in relation to God as a rational creature. Augustine’s Trinitarian theology inspires his vision of humans in a contemplative union with their creator. Augustine does put some emphasis on a personal relationship between the human person and God: “*You stood me face to face with myself,*” he prays, “*so that I might see how foul I was.*”⁵⁴² All the reflection of Augustine is treated under the category of ‘illumination’. For Augustine’s illumination theory of cognition, illumination witnesses a relationship between God and the human person:

The mind needs to be enlightened by light from outside itself, so that it can participate in truth, because it is not itself the nature of truth. You will light my lamp, Lord (*Confessions*, IV. Xv 25); None other than you is teacher of the truth, wherever and from whatever source it is manifest (V. vi.10);

You hear nothing true from me which you have not first told me (X. ii. 2).

Truth, when did you ever fail to walk with me, teaching me what to avoid and what to seek...Without you I could discern none of these things (X. xl.65)

All in all, to know the truth, the mind needs to be enlightened ‘from outside itself’. This is Augustine’s famous ‘illumination theory’. This theory remained popular among Christian philosophers for most of the Middle Ages. For example, thirteenth-century Franciscans, led by figures such as Bonaventure (c.1217–1274) and Matthew of Aquasparta (c.1237–1302), gave the theory a detailed and systematic defense. Nevertheless, this line of thinking came to look increasingly old-fashioned as the thirteenth century progressed. The growing influence of Aristotle’s theory of cognition, as developed in particular by the Dominican friars

⁵⁴¹ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV, 15.

⁵⁴² Augustine, *Confessions* VIII, 7.16; see also Joseph Torchia, *Exploring Personhood: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Nature* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008) 115.

Albert the Great (c.1200–1280) and his student, Thomas Aquinas (c.1225–1274), led to a belief that human beings might be able to achieve certain knowledge despite the changeability of mind and matter. It was the Franciscan John Duns Scotus, more than anyone else, who put an end to the theory of divine illumination.

It is obvious that later philosophers understand illumination theory only as a means of cognition. Therefore, the discussion focuses on whether the human mind is capable of achieving certain knowledge. This development is influenced by the Greek view of truth and it ignores the ontological level of the communion between God and the human person. It falls into a complete abstractionism. I will criticize this in chapter seven. Here my emphasis is that Augustine's illumination theory is not only a theory of cognition. At the same time, there is an ontological ground in this kind of cognition: because God is a living God entering into relationship with human persons, a human person can communicate with Him. In other words, Augustine's *Confessions* also contains elements of the 'I-Thou relationship'. There is indeed a use of introspection, but this is based on illumination, which is further dependent on a personal relation with God.

To sum up, the so called individualist consciousness in Augustine is also the reflection of his meeting with a living God. Though Augustine does not define person as a relational concept, in his whole faith, we can find an ontological ground for this kind of relational understanding. It simply means that there is a gap between Augustine's definition of the term of 'person' and the full content of his faith experience. As we have stated in part one, in *The Trinity* Augustine explores the possibility of understanding person by way of relationship, but he ultimately turns again to link person with substance: "*But it is ridiculous that substance should be predicated by way of relationship; every single thing that is...subsists with*

reference to itself".⁵⁴³

So Augustine's shortcomings may be attributed to the limitations of the available terminology and concepts at that time rather than to his relationship with God. Philip A. Rolnick comments: "*Standing near the beginning of the great Greek distinction between ousia and hypostasis, he [Augustine] is understandably unclear about how persona, which is being used to translate hypostasis, is not then equivalent to substantia.*"⁵⁴⁴ Simply looking at the logical consequences of Augustine's terms, Zizioulas concludes that this kind of relationship between God and man is impersonal. In fact, in both Augustine's theology and that of Aquinas, there are personal relationship between God and man. In other words, this is a flaw of their theory or there may be internal inconsistencies in their theological systems. These may still have led to undesirable consequences, especially when these concepts have been increasingly divorced from their original theological contexts as the Western society becomes more and more secular. However, we can have a more sympathetic understanding of Augustine's theology, and do not need to simply identify Augustine's concept of consciousness with that of Descartes and other philosophers.

Thirdly, despite the validity of Zizioulas' criticisms in some aspects, Zizioulas may have exaggerated his point when he alleges that the whole Catholic and Protestant traditions have viewed the problem of the world merely as a moral problem. For example, the views of 'Original Sin' and 'total depravity' are not merely ethical categories. It can be proved by the theological disputes between Augustine and Pelagius. There are two elements in Augustine's doctrine of sin: the one metaphysical or philosophical and the other moral or religious. The

⁵⁴³ Augustine, *The Trinity* VII. 9, 227.

⁵⁴⁴ Philip A. Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God* (Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 32.

metaphysical element in Augustine's doctrine of sin arose from his controversy with the Manicheans. Manes teaches that sin was a substance. Augustine defines evil as the privation of good (which is identified with being), and metaphysically it belongs not to the category of being, but to the category of nothingness. Thus, although sin in some sense exists, we need not say that God is sin's author (even if God is the Creator of everything). The above controversy shows that theologians have considered the ontological status of sin long time ago.

In the early part of the fifth Century, Augustine formulates the doctrine of total depravity when he protests against Pelagius' views. Augustine strongly held that fallen man was utterly incapable of any good works and was thus completely dependent on the divine grace for salvation. The reason was that Augustine believed that Original Sin was passed down the generations through the very act of sexual intercourse. Original Sin made it impossible for humans to do good on their own account, because it degraded both their moral capacity and their willpower. Only through God's grace could humans achieve salvation. Pelagius (probably A. D. 354-after 418), a British monk and contemporary of Augustine, reacted against Augustine's views on grace and determinism. Because he taught that man retained natural goodness and emphasized free will, he denied original sin and affirmed unhindered human free will. Again, these debates show that the understanding of sin in traditional Western theology is inseparable from the ontological understanding of the human person.

On the other hand, Zizioulas understands the concept of sin merely from a moral perspective which I will criticize in chapter seven.

To sum up, although Zizioulas' critique of the Western traditions is to some extent valid, his understanding of sin in Western theology seems to be inadequate. He has also neglected the fact that many Western theologians have in fact realized

the problems of moralism and legalism, and have tried to correct it. For Catholic theology, as we have stated, the tendency of theology is changing in the post-Vatican II period. As for reformed theology, recently Richard Gaffin gives an inaugural lecture demonstrating the relationship between biblical and systematic theology through the doctrine of union with Christ. It presents a challenge to the old line of moralistic theology. It is the consequence of a debate in Protestant theology:

The recent blog exchanges concerning the relationship between justification and sanctification, along with the role of union with Christ in each, is part of a larger ongoing discussion of which some may be unaware. Certainly this is not true for those writing the posts, but the general reader may not have noticed what has developed into a debate particularly over the past five years.⁵⁴⁵

The response from Reformed circles defending the doctrine of justification has, generally speaking, followed two lines. One response has continued to place greater emphasis on the priority of justification for the entire structure of salvation and makes this legal dimension the basis for all other benefits of redemption. However, the other response does assert the central role of union with Christ as the overarching principle in redemption. This has certainly transformed the traditional legalistic understanding into a more ontological understanding.⁵⁴⁶

In fact, Mannermaa School claims that Luther's view of justification differs from the official Lutheran doctrine as expounded in the confessional books of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches.⁵⁴⁷ Forensic justification is typical of Lutheran theology.⁵⁴⁸ However, for Luther himself, justification is not a forensic term but

⁵⁴⁵ Richard Gaffin, "Biblical Theology and the Westminster Standards." WTJ65 (2003): 165-79. cf. <http://historiasalutis.com/2011/08/20/a-guide-to-recent-discussions-on-justification-and-sanctification>

⁵⁴⁶ It comes from a site. Many books and articles which discuss 'union with Christ' have been introduced on this website in recent years:

<http://historiasalutis.com/2011/08/20/a-guide-to-recent-discussions-on-justification-and-sanctification>

⁵⁴⁷ In Europe, since the 1970s a 'new quest for Luther's theology' has emerged mainly at the University of Helsinki, initiated by Tuomo Mannermaa and his students. See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004), 37.

⁵⁴⁸ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Minnesota:

rather a matter of Christ abiding in the heart of the believer in a ‘real-ontic’ way; *theosis* (union with Christ) is one of the images Luther used to describe salvation.⁵⁴⁹

Since this school emphasizes Christ’s person, we can say that the emphasis on the personal truth is already present in Luther’s theology. It is unfortunate that his followers (the Lutherans) have largely forgotten this genuinely “Lutheran” truth.

When the Protestant tradition maintains the indispensability of the ‘union with Christ’ now, it means that they emphasize an ontological dimension in the Christian doctrines. It may become a bridge for the dialogues between Eastern theology and Western theology. However, although Zizioulas may have exaggerated a bit in his zealous critique of the Western traditions, he has still provided challenging questions for the West: whether they have really sufficiently changed their largely substantialist approach to anthropology to avoid all its problematic implications or consequences, and whether they have developed an adequate way to present an ontological analysis of theological anthropology. In all these aspects, Zizioulas’ critique is still relevant.

Liturgical Press, 2004), 52.

⁵⁴⁹ See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004), 38. These findings have been rapidly introduced into ecumenical conversations, first between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Finnish Lutheran Church, and then into the international Orthodox-Lutheran dialogues.

Chapter Seven

Contributions and criticism of Zizioulas'

ontology of personhood

Zizioulas' personal ontology provides a powerful criticism of substantialist views of God and the human person. However, there are some flaws in Zizioulas' personal ontology. For example, the most important concepts of 'sin', 'justice' or 'righteousness' are overlooked by Zizioulas. For Zizioulas, 'sin' and 'justice' are ethical categories. Therefore, 'sin' has not been regarded as an important concept for the understanding of salvation.

Many theologians agree with the ontology of personhood without criticisms, and others criticize Zizioulas but provide no further analysis. In this chapter, I will analyze both the contribution and the flaw of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood. The contribution at least includes three points: reconstructing a theological ontology; building up a personal knowledge for Christianity; the view that salvation first concerns hypostasis' transformation rather than human nature. My criticism mainly involves that Zizioulas' ontology of personhood ignores the concepts of sin and justice. His ontology of personhood also does not have sufficient social concern.

7.1 Contributions of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood

Zizioulas reinterprets the ontological concept of person or hypostasis in terms of the Cappadocian Trinitarian theology. It replaces the meaning of person in the modern individualist notions. Thus he reconstructs a theological ontology: the ontology of personhood in contrast with traditional Latin substantialism. It will bring theological reflection to the whole Western substantialist system

7.1.1 Reconstructing a theological ontology as a new approach to theological study

Since Thomas Aquinas pursues theology as an academic discipline, his outlooks continue to influence many branches of the church today. In fact, Western traditional theologians try to imitate the methods of natural or physical science to study theology. They tend to leave application in the hands of ministers and pastors. It produces a result: the detachment of traditional academically-oriented theology from Christian life. In Western traditional theology, systematic theology covers a vast array of more or less theoretical or abstract subjects. “Christian living or personal spirituality” is attributed to the division of practical theology.

Through introducing the Trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian, Zizioulas develops a theological ontology: the ontology of personhood, i.e., the priority of person over substance. Zizioulas’ ontology of personhood provides a different approach for our study of Christian doctrine. The concept of personhood is an ontological category which can run through theoretical theology and practical theology. There is a deep reflection on Christian doctrines in Zizioulas’ theology. According to “*God is not alone and God exists in communion*”,⁵⁵⁰ and the being of God as the personhood of Father, Zizioulas reframes his Trinitarian theology which is different from Western substantialist view of God. Zizioulas’ ontology of personhood provides an ontological foundation for the human person’s identity. Such a concept of personhood is based on the early Christian concept of divine persons understood as relational entities. It is a new concept of personhood which is different from the understanding of person as a center of consciousness. It means that personal identity can not be found through nature because nature always points to the general; it is ‘personhood’ that safeguards uniqueness and absolute

⁵⁵⁰ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 166.

particularity. Zizioulas insists the ontology of personhood and gives Christian doctrine a personal interpretation. From this starting point, it will change our epistemology,⁵⁵¹ soteriology, spirituality⁵⁵² and so forth. I will provide a simple analysis.

7.1.2 A personal knowledge or epistemology for Christianity

Zizioulas' personal ontology is mainly conceived as a corrective for substantialism. He believes that truth is not identified with the objective or intellectual system of theology: "*Christian theology is the expression of the experience of the living Church, rather than of intellectual perception or the logical arrangement of propositions.*"⁵⁵³ Therefore, through the ontology of personhood, the understanding of Christianity signifies not merely an adherence to certain dogmas, not merely on exterior imitation of Christ's moral effort, but direct union with the living God, the total transformation of the human person by divine grace and glory—what the Greek Fathers terms 'deification' or 'divinization' (*theosis*) in the words of St. Basil.⁵⁵⁴

He regards the emphasis on 'propositional truth' as the consequence of substantialism. His efforts are to show that true knowledge is not a kind of knowledge of the essence or the nature of things, but of how they are connected within the communion-event.⁵⁵⁵ When Zizioulas criticizes substantialism, he is also

⁵⁵¹ The substantialist approach brings some objective knowledge of God and man. However, only a personal approach helps us set up a personal knowledge. Zizioulas said that it would be wrong to present dogmas as unconnected with the essence of our life. "Theology does not have the obligation only to describe dogmas, presenting the form they took in the past. It also has a duty to interpret them, so that it becomes apparent how and why our existence depends on them." See John Zizioulas, *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today*, ed., Fr. Gregory Edwards (California: Sebastian Press, 2010), 18.

⁵⁵² The tendency to approach spirituality is not through the intellect or knowledge but through the personal union.

⁵⁵³ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 3.

⁵⁵⁴ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification*, 46.

⁵⁵⁵ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 106.

introducing a new kind of epistemology. Since Zizioulas' emphasis is on ontology, he does not provide a systematic presentation of this new epistemology. So I want to provide some further analysis here because it is an important issue in theology.

The Greeks saw abstraction as an indispensable and valuable tool in the search for knowledge. Thales concluded that water was the essence of everything. Therefore, water is the highest abstraction. Following Thales, many Greek philosophers reached their worldview by abstract reasoning. Therefore, abstraction was the way to knowledge, even knowledge of concrete realities. Apart from the 'specifics', various things have something in common in their being. However, when we think about 'being-in general', the features of individual things have been ignored. Moreover, the rationalists' chief concern is certainty. They believe that only if knowledge is not derived from sense-experience, it will not be distorted by human subjectivity. The rationalist's goal is to establish a body of knowledge that is totally free from the uncertainties of sense-experience and subjectivity. Personal knowledge has no place in this kind of system.

Some theologians are not secular rationalists, and their starting point is the revelation of the Bible. However, they have the same view of truth as that of the secular rationalists: truth is identified with objective knowledge. So they build up a system of 'propositional revelation' and 'revealed doctrine'. The knowledge of God is regarded as 'intellectual knowledge'. Knowledge in the 'intellectual' sense is often defined as 'justified, true belief.' For these theologians, the knowledge of God also involves justified true belief which is grounded in God's clear revelation of himself in nature, man, and the Bible. This kind of knowledge always involves a subject who knows an object according to some standard or criterion. It seems that the rationalism of non-Christian thinking has also influenced the Christian thought. Similarly, this kind of religious epistemology does not leave room for personal

knowledge.

For example, John Frame, a reformed theologian, points out the limitations when the abstractionist method is applied to theology. John Frame writes: “*Theology, too, chafed under the constraints of abstractionist methodology. After all, Scripture means above all to tell us something very specific, not general truths about being-as-such but about the Lord, the living God, about specific historical events in which God saved us from sin, about our own character, decisions, actions, attitudes, and so forth.*”⁵⁵⁶ John Frame mentions three perspectives of knowledge: the normative perspective, the situational perspective and the existential perspective: “*Under the normative perspective we asked, is this belief consistent with the laws of thought? Under the situational perspective the question was, is my belief in accord with objective reality? Now we come to the existential perspective in which we ask, can I live with this belief?*”⁵⁵⁷ Frame also points out the intimate connection of epistemology with ethics:

I suggested earlier that epistemology could be understood as a subdivision of ethics. Knowing is knowing what we ought to believe. To justify our knowledge is to establish the presence of that ethical ‘ought’. And once that ‘ought’ is established, we must apply it to all the rest of life (the applications are the meaning!). All of our decisions should be reconciled with what we know to be true. We must live in truth, walk in truth, do the truth. Knowledge, therefore, is an ethically responsible orientation of the person to his experience. To know is to respond rightly to the evidence and norms available to us.⁵⁵⁸

It looks as if Frame’s understanding of epistemology already departs from the intellectualist tradition quite a lot. However, the core of knowledge, for him, is still ‘belief’ (“Knowing is knowing what we ought to believe.”) Moreover, although his three perspectives include an existential perspective, they still do not ascend to the ontological level. In short, his framework is still under the spell of ‘substantialism’.

⁵⁵⁶ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1987), 175.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

Abstractionism has been suspected by the Greek Sophists and skeptics, medieval nominalists and modern empiricists. Søren Kierkegaard opposed Hegel's system because it was unable to account for human individuality. 'Phenomenologist' and 'existentialist' philosophers sought to describe concrete knowledge in Kierkegaard's way. Anti-abstractionism was in fact quite pervasive in modern philosophy. It distinguished between the 'abstract', 'objective' knowledge discovered by the sciences and the concrete knowledge of nontheoretical experience.

For example, John Macmurray distinguishes philosophical knowledge from scientific knowledge. He writes: "*Two types of knowledge we possess, and may seek systematically to extend, of the world of persons. The one is our knowledge of persons as persons: the other our knowledge of persons as objects. The first depends upon and expresses a personal attitude to the other person, the second an impersonal attitude.*"⁵⁵⁹ Thus Macmurray distinguishes two kinds of concept involving human being. Firstly, the concept 'man' is a general class concept. It is constituted by the impersonal attitude of the observer. It is related to an objective or scientific knowledge of man which we can obtain without entering into personal relations. Secondly, the concept of 'the personal' is not about an isolated individual; neither is it an exclusive concept. We obtain this kind of knowledge in personal relations. However, for Macmurray, these two types of knowledge are not mutually exclusive: "*A knowledge of the personal must include an objective knowledge of man, and the work of the anthropological sciences is justified and is, in principle, correct, though of course it may be mistaken in detail.*"⁵⁶⁰ Both refer to the same human beings. If the two types of knowledge were apparently in contradiction with

⁵⁵⁹ John Macmurray, *Persons in Relation* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1970), 37.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

one another, the reason must be that we regard the scientific account as a complete and absolute account. So it entails the rejection of the personal conception. Unfortunately, we will then commit an error. *“The error lies in our failure to understand the special character of scientific knowledge, and so not in our science but in our philosophy of the personal. It is, in fact, the result of a false valuation of the objective attitude, which makes it normative for all possible attitudes.”*⁵⁶¹

Macmurray promotes a personalist philosophy as a corrective to philosophical objectivism. Similarly, we find that the same error has happened in our theology when we regard the objective knowledge of God and man as a complete and absolute account of reality. In fact, it is doubtful whether there has been a truly ontological and personal conception in Western traditional theology. In most of the time, objective knowledge was regarded as a complete and absolute account, and not as a true account of the aspect of realities. This kind of framework will depersonalize both God and man.

Since the change of philosophical climate will influence theology, anti-abstractionism also becomes more prominent in contemporary theology. For example, liberal theologians dislike ‘propositional revelation’ and ‘revealed doctrine’, which are formulated in terms of abstractionism.⁵⁶² God, for them, could not be known by way of essence. *“Thus we have had an era of ‘theologies of’ this and that: theologies of hope, liberation, personal encounter, Word of God, crisis, reconciliation, covenant, feeling, history, kingdom of God, existential self-understanding, and so forth.”*⁵⁶³ In the ‘introduction’, I talk about ‘the necessity of reconstructing a theological ontology’, because a change in ontology

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁶² For example, Schleiermacher, the father of modern liberal theology, argued that no doctrine can be accepted “unless it is connected with [Christ’s] redeeming causality and can be traced to the original impression made by his existence.” F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1928), 125.

⁵⁶³ John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 177.

will bring about the change in epistemology. There is now a greater tendency for theologians to put emphasis on a personal God instead of on a traditional conception of substance in the 20th century. For example, Carl Henry uses one chapter to describe ‘Divine Revelation as Personal’.⁵⁶⁴ For McGrath, evangelicalism needs to focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ, and to affirm that all must be based upon Christ, not simply as a source of ideas, but as the foundation of every aspect of the Christian life: “The evangelical passion for truth is expressed partly in its focus on the person of Christ, in that Jesus Christ is the truth.”⁵⁶⁵

Among all anti-abstractionists, Zizioulas is an important figure. However, his emphasis is not on epistemology but on ontology. He reconstructs a new theological ontology which is quite distinct from the Western substantialist ontology. As Alan Torrance comments:

Here we see the extent to which Zizioulas breaks with theological approaches operating from a ‘revelation model’ and consistently redefines the theological enterprise from the perspective of a ‘communion model’—a model which sustains (and presupposes) a commonality of personhood between God and humanity. In doing this Zizioulas does a great deal to take theology beyond the obsession with epistemological concerns which has characterized so much theology since the Enlightenment—even, as Colin Gunton suggests, Karl Barth’s theology.⁵⁶⁶

The ‘communion model’ will transform our knowledge of God from an objective systematic theology to a kind of personal knowledge. For Zizioulas, his personal theology is based on the Eucharist experience. Zizioulas puts forward an ontological scheme which provides support for the concrete individual and

⁵⁶⁴ Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, Vol. II (Texas: Word Book, Publisher, 1976), 151.

⁵⁶⁵ Alister E. McGrath, *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (England: Apollos, 1996), 27.

⁵⁶⁶ Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation*, 299-300. Gunton writes: “Karl Barth saw himself primarily as standing before the God made known-revealed—in Scripture, and as is well known, his preoccupation with revelation gave to his theology a strongly epistemic drive, which at the same time showed him to be working in some way in the context of, although also against, the Enlightenment.” *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 4-5.

integrates knowledge into life according to this kind of ontological theology. He realizes that knowledge and communion are identical. In other words, knowledge and life are identical.⁵⁶⁷ LaCugna claims: “indeed, authentically theological knowledge is that which comes about as a result of union with God.”⁵⁶⁸ Alan Torrance writes: “Supremely important is [Zizioulas’] establishing the primacy of communion over revelation and affirmation of the integral relationship between truth and communion.”⁵⁶⁹ An ontology of personhood means that no truth is outside personal life.

Based on the ontology of personhood, a personal knowledge can be attained through a personal relationship and religious experience. In fact, personal knowledge is the primary kind of knowledge we find in the Bible. Thus we can interpret all concepts of theology from the perspective of relationship though Zizioulas does not exactly say this. For example, sin can be explained through a more relational understanding than an ethical one alone. When we introduce sin from this starting point, it will help us avoid the tendency towards legalism.

At the same time, the personal attitude helps us enter into personal relation with God and others and treat them as persons. Thus, the relationship between God and man is not merely an ethical relationship, but an ontological as well as existential relationship. It also shows that faith transcends ethics.⁵⁷⁰ Under the objectivist idea

⁵⁶⁷ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 81.

⁵⁶⁸ Catherine LaCugna, *God for Us*, 348.

⁵⁶⁹ Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation*, 304.

⁵⁷⁰ Kierkegaard provides a famous argument for why faith transcends ethic in his book *Fear and Trembling*. There is a paradox between the ethical expression and the religious expression when Kierkegaard describes the story of Abraham, who was told by God to ascend Mount Moriah to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, (Genesis 22: 2-14) for it is impossible that Abraham don't love his only son. Here Kierkegaard points out a very important problem about the relationship between faith and ethics. Kierkegaard raises three problems. The first deals with the possibility of a teleological suspension of the ethical. The second questions the existence of an absolute duty to God. The third asks whether it is ethically defensible for Abraham to conceal his undertaking from Sarah, from Eliezer, and from Isaac. In the first problem, Kierkegaard defines ethics as the universal, as applying to all at all times. The ethical is the *telos*, of everything outside itself and there is no *telos* beyond the

of truth, it is difficult for Christians to distinguish the ethical from the ontological relationship between God and man, because Christians only emphasize the obedience to the Word of God. However, according to the ontology of personhood, the goal of knowledge is to establish a personal relationship between God and man which is an ontological expression instead of a kind of belief.

It seems that Zizioulas' ontological theology is similar to evangelicalism because both emphasize the personal relationship between God and man. However, Zizioulas' starting point is the three persons of the Triune God. He does not focus only on the person of Christ like evangelicalism often does. Thus there is more room for Zizioulas' Trinitarian theology to apply to the community than evangelicalism has.

One issue is important: whether Zizioulas abandons the objective Word of the Bible when he claims that truth is personal or subjective. Zizioulas does not exclude the objectivity of the Bible. He distinguishes two terms: Doctrine (Dogma) and *kerygma*. In terms of different objects, Zizioulas points out the dogma or the teaching of the Church is related to worship, but proclamation (*kerygma*) is the preaching to all the world. *"While kerygma exists in order that it can proclaim the truth to those outside the Church, which does of course involve arguing with them about what is true...Dogma is the doctrine that, through its councils, the Church confesses as the truth that brings salvation for every human being. This truth brings*

ethical. Concerning the relationship between ethics and religion, there are two possibilities: either the ethical is harmonious with the eternal salvation or the ethical clashes with the religious. In most cases there is no conflict between the two aspects, but not always. When somebody faces a collision between these two ultimates, the question emerges: which one is higher? That is to say, which is the ultimate end deserving to be given precedence? Kierkegaard defines faith as the single individual standing in an absolute relation to the absolute: "Faith is precisely the paradox that the single individual is higher than the universal, is justified before it, not as inferior to it but as superior... that it is the single individual who, after being subordinate as the single individual to the universal, now by means of the universal becomes the single individual who as the single individual is superior, that the single individual as the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute." Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. and eds. Howard V. Hong and Edna H Hong (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), 54.

*us into particular relationships with one another, and it brings the Church into a particular relationship with God and with the world.”⁵⁷¹ Thus there are two kinds of knowledge according to Zizioulas, but truth is not constituted by objective propositions, but by personal relationship: “*But truth is not a matter of objective, logical proposals, but of personal relationships between God, man and the world. We do not come to know truth simply through intellectual assent to the proposition that God is triune. It is only when we are drawn into the life of God, which is triune, and through it receives our entire existence and identity, that we have real knowledge.*”⁵⁷²*

7.1.3 Salvation concerning foremostly hypostasis rather than human nature

The salvation involves a transformation of the mode of existence from biological to ecclesial hypostasis which is described in chapter four. The change is indeed ontological and existential, not in the sense that one kind of being becomes another kind of being (fruit becomes bread), but in the sense that the new person involves a new being-in-relation. It is different from the traditional Western understanding of salvation. Generally speaking, the Western understanding of new life involves the change of the human nature: a transformation from evil to good.

The substantialists approach man from the viewpoint of his ‘substance’ and try to understand him by drawing the limits between divine and human nature.⁵⁷³ When the perfect human nature rather than the personhood is the ultimate ground for the being of humans, naturally people understand the essence of salvation as a transformation of human nature. Take Calvin as an example. For Calvin, Adam is a rational being who represents the *Imago Dei* before the Fall. He possesses a perfect

⁵⁷¹ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 6.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁵⁷³ Calvin, *Comm. on Rom.* 7:14.

nature which is the end of man. Eventually, man will receive an entirely new nature in faith. Calvin writes:

According to Paul, spiritual regeneration is nothing else than the restoration of the same image (Col. 3:10; and Eph. 4: 23). That he made this image consist in ‘righteousness and true holiness’ is by the figure *synechdoche*, for though this is the chief part, it is not the whole of God’s image. Therefore by this word the perfection of our whole nature is designated, as it appeared when Adam was endued with a right judgment, had affection in harmony with reason, had all his senses sound and well-regulated, and truly excelled in everything good.⁵⁷⁴

For Calvin, the purpose of Christ is to help us to be men who recover perfect human nature as Adam does before the Fall. As T. F. Torrance writes: “*In some sense, Calvin thought of Christ as bearing the image of God in virtue of His human nature in addition to the fact that He was the image of God in the sense of the eternal Word.*”⁵⁷⁵ Christian new life is identified with a perfect human nature. It means that the change is from a corrupt human nature to a perfect human nature. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes: “*Now we are concerned more about the power and the pollution of sin—‘renews his whole nature in the image of God and enables him to perform good works’.*”⁵⁷⁶

If we see human nature as a ground of human existence, there is a possibility to divinize human nature through the perfect human nature of Jesus. For example: as Martyn Lloyd-Jones criticizes some substantialists:

Some people seem to think that once men and women are born again, the activity of God in them ceases. Because God has given them a new nature, they say, they have nothing to do now but to exercise the new nature, and they do that by reading the Scriptures and understanding and applying them. In connection with their sanctification they do everything themselves.⁵⁷⁷

For some substantialists, a puzzling question arises: if the nature of man has been changed, why does man continue to sin after regeneration? Therefore, it is difficult

⁵⁷⁴ Calvin, *Comm. on Gen.* 1. 26.

⁵⁷⁵ T. F. Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1977), 60.

⁵⁷⁶ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 195.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

for us to accept the sinful reality of ourselves and others. If we expect an entirely new nature after believing, we will be very disappointed because we still often find ourselves sinning. Since it is difficult for us to accept this conflict, we may become hypocrites who want to cover up our sin.

In contrast with above approach, if we express the meaning of salvation in terms of hypostasis or personhood, it means that we regard the living relationship with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit as an ontological and existential issue. The transformation of human nature depends on the transformation of hypostasis or person: *“No transformation in nature is possible outside the sphere of its personal realization, since nature only exists in persons, and once it becomes existentially independent of the life of personal distinctiveness and freedom it is inevitably led into corruption and death.”*⁵⁷⁸

It will affect our attitude toward other persons directly. Because the ultimate ground is personhood rather than human nature, we should not treat persons in terms of their qualities. We can distinguish one’s personhood from his behavior. It is important for us to understand the qualities possessed by each person, but we should not identify different persons by means of those qualities.

7.2 Criticisms and defenses of Zizioulas’ ontology of personhood

7.2.1 Is Zizioulas’ ontology of personhood philosophical rather than theological?

The most serious criticism of Zizioulas’ ontology of person is that his theological ontology is taken from philosophy rather than theology. For example, two Greek scholars, Panagopoulos and Agouridis, accuse Zizioulas of attributing to the Fathers ideas that he has in reality imported from philosophical personalism and

⁵⁷⁸ Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, 144.

existentialism.⁵⁷⁹ Papanikolaou writes: “*Criticism of John Zizioulas’ 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.*”⁵⁸⁰ Behr claims that Zizioulas’ theology is a ‘philosophical’ and ‘existential’ attempt ‘to construct a metaphysical system’ which has for its aim the description of ‘ultimate structures of ‘reality’, the elaboration of a ‘fundamental ontology’. As such it cannot be, properly speaking, considered as ‘orthodox theology’, but is rather ‘an odd mixture of metaphysics and mythology’.⁵⁸¹

The dogmatic formulae of the Church are not abstract, detachable statements which we can use to construct a metaphysical system responding to our existential or philosophical concerns. Of course, theological reflection became ever more abstract, but the point of such ongoing reflection is not to describe ultimate structures of ‘reality’, to elaborate a fundamental ontology, whether of ‘Being’ or ‘communion’ (or both), which then tends to function as if it constitutes the content of the revelation itself. We must be very careful not to substitute the explanation for that which it seeks to explain. The aim of such theological reflection was and is to articulate as precisely as possible, in the face of perceived aberrations, the canon of truth, so as to preserve the undisturbed image of the Christ presented in the Scriptures.⁵⁸²

Similarly, Louth criticizes that Zizioulas’s ground of theology is ‘personalist and existentialist ontology’.⁵⁸³ Following this, Zizioulas’ thought is rejected as nineteenth-and twentieth-century ‘personalist’ and/or ‘existentialist’ philosophical thought.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁷⁹ See Norman Russell, “Modern Greek theologians and Greek Fathers,” *Philosophy and Theology*, 18 (1):77-92 (2006). See John Panagopoulos, “Ontology of Theology of Person” (in Greek), *Synaxis*, Vol. 13-14 (1985), 63-79; 35-47; and Savas Agourides, “Can the Persons of the Trinity form the Basis for Personalistic Understandings of the Human Being?” (in Greek), *Synaxis*, Vol. 33 (1990), 67-78.

⁵⁸⁰ Aristotle Papanikolaou, “Is John Zizioulas an Existentialist in Disguise? Response to Lucian Turcescu,” *Modern Theology* 20:4/2004, ISSN 0266-7177 (Print); ISSN 1468-0025 (Online), 601.

⁵⁸¹ John Behr, ‘The Trinitarian Being of the Church,’ *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 48.1/2004: 67-68.

⁵⁸² John Behr, ‘Faithfulness and Creativity’, in *Abba*, 159-77, at 176; See Douglas H. Knight ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Person and the Church*, 45.

⁵⁸³ Andrew Louth, *John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 51.

⁵⁸⁴ Alan Brown, ‘On the Criticism of Being as Communion in Anglophone Orthodox Theology’, in Douglas H. Knight ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, 40.

In chapter two (section 2.2.1), I have introduced that Lucian Turcescu criticizes Zizioulas for using nineteenth and twentieth century ideas to understand the Cappadocians. Turcescu insists that personhood is a concept about the individual.

In reply, Zizioulas admits that modern philosophy does influence his thinking but he claims that it does not determine it. Zizioulas argues that the criticism above does not really go to the root of things because it remains on the superficial level of associations in terminology. Zizioulas responds to the criticism from two aspects. Firstly, his ontology of personhood is not identical to philosophical personalism. *“Personalism as a philosophical movement has its roots in the understanding of person introduced in the West by Augustine and formulated by Boethius in his well-known definition ‘a person is the individual substance of the rational nature’.* *This was the starting point of the whole of Western personalistic thought, through Descartes and the Enlightenment to the first American personalists in the twentieth century.”*⁵⁸⁵ For all types of personalism, both in America and in Europe, their common basis is to understand the concept of person as ‘consciousness’. Secondly, Zizioulas distinguishes his personalism from that of M. Buber, G. Marcel and others who treat communion or relationship as an ontological concept: *“The concept of communion ... [becomes] a third concept between nature and person...The person is conceived of within communion or as a result of it. Thus the person is subordinated to the generality of relationship—communion. This point perhaps misleads many people into confusing my views with those of that sort of personalism.”*⁵⁸⁶ For Zizioulas, personhood is a primary concept and it is not subordinated to relationship. The more detailed argument has been presented in

⁵⁸⁵ John Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 20.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

chapter two (section 2.4.2) when I distinguish the ontology of relationality from the ontology of personhood.

I agree with Zizioulas' response, because the whole theology of Zizioulas is based on the personhood of Trinity, but other versions of philosophical personalism hardly make use of the Trinitarian theology. Therefore, Zizioulas' ontology of personhood is different from the philosophical personalism.

7.2.2 Defenses of Zizioulas' personal ontology

Many theologians' articles were collected by Douglas H. Knight in the book *The Theology of Zizioulas*. The essays are mainly reflecting on the relationship between the individual and the community and the very nature of God. They on the whole defend Zizioulas' ontology. Colin Gunton, in "Person and Particularity,"⁵⁸⁷ defends Zizioulas' theological concept of person. He thinks that Zizioulas traces the roots of Western culture back to the thought of Augustine and Boethius which provides an explanation for the individualistic tendency in which the other is regarded as a threat.

Douglas Farrow, in 'Person and Nature: The Necessity-Freedom Dialectic in John Zizioulas',⁵⁸⁸ suggests that John Zizioulas presented an ontology of personhood, an ontology which has at its heart what even the most optimistic existentialism does not, that is, a concept of freedom through love: freedom through being as an act of *koinonia* (communion) with God in which all necessity is transcended.

Papanikolaou, in his book *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and*

⁵⁸⁷ Colin Gunton, 'Person and Particularity', in Douglas Knight ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, 97-108.

⁵⁸⁸ Douglas Farrow, 'Person and Nature: The Necessity-Freedom Dialectic in John Zizioulas', in Douglas Knight ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, 109-124.

Divine-Human Communion, critically analyzes the implications of Zizioulas' reworking of the patristic category of hypostasis. His criticism mainly concerns the monarchy of the Father. However, he still praises Zizioulas for suggesting a paradigm shift in contemporary Eastern Orthodox theology insofar as it prioritizes *hypostasis* over *energies* for expressing the realism of divine-human communion.⁵⁸⁹

Patricia A. Fox contrast Zizioulas' Trinitarian theology with Elizabeth Johnson's in her book *God as Communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson, and the Retrieval of the Symbol of the Triune God*. She agrees that Zizioulas' idea: "is a concept that springs from an ontology of person that has its roots in Greek patristic theology."⁵⁹⁰ She introduces Zizioulas' concept of person as "difference in communion" without criticism.⁵⁹¹

However, Zizioulas has some important supporters. For example, Gunton scarcely criticizes Zizioulas' anthropology.⁵⁹² But, Gunton mentions a little problem about soteriology:

And yet much Orthodox theology fails adequately to encompass the deep fallenness of the human condition, attested as that is both by Scripture's emphasis on the cross as the centre of the awesome process and the manifest need of fallen man for redemption. In a word, by failing to take adequate account of the bondage of the will, Eastern theologians, among them John Zizioulas, can appear to ascribe to the human capacity more than is justified apart from redemption.⁵⁹³

It seems that he realizes the defect of Zizioulas' anthropology but he does not provide a deep analysis.

⁵⁸⁹ Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 25.

⁵⁹⁰ Patricia A. Fox, *God as Communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson, and the Retrieval of the Symbol of the Triune God* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 32.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁵⁹² Gunton, Colin E. "Trinity, Ontology and Anthropology: Towards a Renewal of the Doctrine of the Imago Dei", In C. Schwobel and C. Gunton eds., *Persons Divine and Human* (Edinburgh: T&T. Clark, 1991), 47-64.

⁵⁹³ Colin Gunton, "Persons and Particularity", in Douglas H. Knight ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, 104.

Farrow points out that Zizioulas does not explain a difficulty: how the personal existence of God can be applied to the being of humans in view of the different essences of God and man: “*But this distinction between God’s nature or substance and his ‘personal life’ or ‘personal existence’ is itself problematic; indeed it is not clear how Zizioulas can make such a distinction, or that we should follow him in doing so. And it becomes even more problematic if the latter is abstracted in such a way as to make it strictly transferable to human beings.*”⁵⁹⁴ Farrow questions Zizioulas but he does not elaborate further this line of criticism.

Alan Brown introduces the realization of the new hypostatic mode of existence through love without criticism. “*Thus, so hypostasized, man is able to transcend the relationships of biological existence through a love which loves ‘not because the laws of biology oblige [it] to’... Such love—precisely in its non-exclusiveness—transcends all fallen individualism, and expresses rather a ‘catholic mode of existence’, which expresses not a ‘mutually exclusive portion’ of being, but rather being as ‘a single whole...without division’.*”⁵⁹⁵

7.3 My criticism: lack of proper doctrines of justice and sin in Zizioulas’ ontology of personhood

Despite Zizioulas denies that he is anti-essence,⁵⁹⁶ it is still true that the concept of essence is largely lacking in Zizioulas’ Trinitarian theology (see chapter two). It

⁵⁹⁴ Douglas Farrow, ‘Person and Nature: The Necessity-Freedom Dialectic’, in Douglas H. Knight ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, 119.

⁵⁹⁵ Alan Brown, ‘On the Criticism of Being as Communion in Anglophone Orthodox Theology’, in Douglas H. Knight ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, 64.

⁵⁹⁶ Zizioulas defends himself when a Greek theologian criticizes him: “I have stressed repeatedly that the person cannot be conceived of without the essence, and the essence of God cannot be conceived of ‘in a naked state,’ without the person. In consequence, the charge of being ‘anti-essence’ is not applicable to me, and the statement that ‘the only divine essence of God is His existence’ is a complete distortion of my position.” Zizioulas takes the concept of ‘love’ as an example: “Love in this sense is common to the three Persons, meaning that it relates to the essence or nature of God”. See John Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, 22.

influences Zizioulas' anthropology directly, i.e., the concepts of 'justice' and 'sin' are missing in his soteriology. As a result, Zizioulas' theology seems to ignore some of the crucial elements of the Bible. In fact, justice and sin can be explained from an ontological and relational perspective. It means that they are not only concepts of ethics.

7.3.1 Sin only as an ethical concept for Zizioulas

In chapter three (section 3.3), I discuss two modes of existence: biological and ecclesial hypostasis. Salvation means a transformation from biological to ecclesial hypostasis. Soteriology first deals with an ontological issue. According to Zizioulas, the ontological problem for human persons is death: "*Orthodoxy continues to insist upon the Resurrection as the centre of its whole life precisely because it sees that the problem of the created is not moral but ontological; it is the problem of the existence (and not the beauty) of the world, the problem of death.*"⁵⁹⁷ Death is a state of life which is caused by the rupture between being and communion. So salvation means a reconciliation of relationship: "*In order to continue in existence, and overcome his limits and the eventual dissolution that they bring, the creature has to be in relationship with the uncreated God.*"⁵⁹⁸ The process of salvation is how Jesus brings the world back to a living relationship with God.

For Zizioulas, sin is an ethical problem. In Zizioulas' viewpoint, ethics involves human action or activity. Zizioulas applies the view of Bourke: ethics is "*the philosophical study of voluntary human action, with the purpose of determining what types of activity are good, right, and to be done...what the ethicist aims at,*

⁵⁹⁷ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 261.

⁵⁹⁸ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 98.

then, is a reflective, well-considered, and reasonable set of conclusions concerning the kinds of voluntary activities that may be judged good or suitable or evil and unsuitable...”⁵⁹⁹ Ethics operates on the basis of the polarity between good and evil.

He observes that the “*West (Catholic and Protestant) has viewed the problem of the world as a moral problem (transgression of a commandment and punishment) and has made of the Cross of Christ the epicenter of faith and worship.*”⁶⁰⁰

However, Zizioulas thinks that ‘sin’ is not the reason for the necessity of the atonement, and sin is not one of the fundamental categories of soteriology. In fact, the necessity of salvation is not based on the sin of man, but death. The purpose of salvation is the union between the created and the uncreated rather than the individual sanctification which is emphasized by Western theologians. Here Zizioulas’ theology manifests the general tendency of Orthodox theology. “*The joy of the resurrection—that is the key-note of the Eastern Church’s whole outlook upon the world.*”⁶⁰¹

Naturally Zizioulas avoids the Cross as the center of salvation. Gunton writes: “*Confession of sin does indeed bulk large in Eastern liturgy, but appears to have little structural effect on Orthodox theology. It may be the case that Western soteriology sometimes suffers by comparison with that of the East in failing to make enough of the ontological coefficients of salvation.*”⁶⁰²

7.3.2 Sin as an ontological problem and a relational conception

It is wrong for Zizioulas to understand sin only as a moral concept. He needs a

⁵⁹⁹ V. J. Bourke, ‘Ethics’, *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., 2003, vol. 5, p. 388f. Cf. John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 81-82, footnote, 180.

⁶⁰⁰ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 261.

⁶⁰¹ Nicholas Arseniev, *Mysticism and the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1979), 17.

⁶⁰² Colin Gunton, ‘Persons and Particularity’, in Douglas H. Knight ed., *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, 104.

relational or ontological understanding of 'sin' among persons too.

In Zizioulas' writing, he does not distinguish the concept of 'sin' in its different levels. We should affirm that 'sin' is not only a moral conception. In Western theology, the idea of sin or evil is essential for understanding human nature. It is not only treated as a category of ethics. There is metaphysical understanding of the concept of sin which I have argued in chapter six (section 6.2.3) through Augustine's theology.

According to an Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Lossky, evil is not an essentialist concept, but a personalist one: "*It thus appears as an illness, as a parasite existing only by virtue of the nature he lives off. More precisely, it is a state of the will of this nature; it is a fallen will with regard to God. Evil is revolt against God, that is to say, a personal attitude. The exact vision of evil is thus not essentialist but personalist.*"⁶⁰³

Kierkegaard also interprets sin from the existential perspective:

The very concept in which Christianity differs most crucially in kind from paganism is: sin, the doctrine of sin. And so, quite consistently, Christianity also assumes that neither paganism nor the natural man know what sin is; yes, it assumes there must be a revelation from God to reveal what sin is. It is not the case, as superficial reflection supposes, that the doctrine of the atonement is what distinguishes paganism and Christianity qualitatively. No, the beginning has to be made far deeper, with sin, with the doctrine of sin, which is also what Christianity does.⁶⁰⁴

Christos Yannaras claims that sin is a mode of existence contrary to authentic existence. It means separation from being and exclusion from life. The restoration to the fullness of life and existence can take place only if man undergoes an existential change.⁶⁰⁵ Therefore, sin is not essential to our nature, because in God's creation there is nothing which is hypostatically and naturally evil. "*Sin is a failure,*

⁶⁰³ Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Ian and Ihita Kesarcodi-Watson (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 80.

⁶⁰⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, ed. S. Kierkegaard (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 122.

⁶⁰⁵ Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 35-37.

a failure as to existence and life: it is the failure of persons to realize their existential 'end', to confirm and conserve the uniqueness of their hypostasis through love."⁶⁰⁶

Bultmann has a wonderful analysis of the human condition under sin: 'I' and 'my flesh' can be equated. The true self of a man is thereby dissociating itself from this self that has fallen victim to flesh. *"This inner dividedness means that man himself destroys his true self. In his self-reliant will to be himself, a will that comes to light in 'desire' at the encounter with the 'commandment,' he loses his self, and 'sin' becomes the active subject within him (Romans 7:9).*"⁶⁰⁷ It implies that sin is a loss of being. Sin manifests an inner relation with self and with God. Therefore, although Paul emphasizes the moral good or evil, he does not separate moral action from the being of humans.

According to the existentialist theologian John Macquarrie, sin involves not only ethics. He says: *"[Sin] implies not only moral evil but alienation from God...Sin in the New Testament is an ontical conception—it describes not only a possibility for man but his actual condition.*"⁶⁰⁸ He uses an illustration to clarify this concept. When Paul says that 'all have sinned' (Romans 3:23), he is making an ontical statement: the entity which we call man has fallen into the condition which we call sin, and that this is true of all men. This ontical statement can only be properly understood if it is clarified ontologically.⁶⁰⁹

All in all, from the existential perspective, sin means rejecting a relationship with God. Though sin lacks an essence, it manifests itself as a broken relationship with God. However, Zizioulas' treatment of sin lacks an ontological personalist

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., 34.

⁶⁰⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (Tübingen: SCM Press Ltd. 1952), 245.

⁶⁰⁸ John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology*, 103.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., 30.

dimension. It seems that he has excessively separated ethical problems and ontological issues. This is a fatal weakness of Zizioulas' theology. From a perspective of the individual, human incapability under the power of sin is not emphasized by Zizioulas. From the perspective of community, this mistake will lead us to overlook the responsibility for the serious consequence of sin, because Zizioulas regards sin as only a moral problem and Christians, according to him, should focus instead on the relationship with God, i.e., an ontological problem. I will elaborate further below.

7.3.3 Divine-human communion lacking the idea of justice

Facing Zizioulas' writing *Being as Communion*, many theologians praise his view. For example, Alan Torrance writes: "That opened up the profound anthropological implications of the intra-divine communion and our being brought 'economically' to participate within it by the Spirit and in and through the priesthood of Christ."⁶¹⁰ However, few critics ask Zizioulas: "what kind of divine-human communion is it?"

The core of the Orthodox theological tradition is divine-human communion: "*It is a central axiom or thinking about God, Christ, theological anthropology, ecclesiology and epistemology. Lossky, Yannaras and Zizioulas share the consensus that divine-human communion could not be otherwise expressed than through the concept of personhood*".⁶¹¹ For Lossky, true knowledge of God is not propositional, but mystical knowledge which goes beyond reason without denying it.⁶¹² The

⁶¹⁰ Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation*, 305.

⁶¹¹ Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Personhood and its exponents in twentieth-century Orthodox theology", in Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 233.

⁶¹² Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1976), 38-39.

purpose of theology is to guide the believer towards an experience of divine-human communion. For Yannaras, in the experience of union with God, the knowledge of God is an 'erotic affair' and the 'gift of an erotic relationship'.⁶¹³ For Zizioulas, the divine-human communion is an *ecstatic* event in which the human person transcends the limitation of finite nature towards an eternal communion with God.

Zizioulas regards 'love' as a representation of freedom: "Love is identified with ontological freedom."⁶¹⁴ 'Righteousness' and 'holy' are not included in the implication of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood, because Zizioulas understands these concepts as ethical principles. He even suggests that this ethical principle is in tension with the teachings of Christ:

It follows from this that the Christian ethos of otherness cannot be based on ethical principles such as justice and the pursuit of happiness...But in fact the idea of justice is absent from Christ's teaching in a way that is provocative to all ethics since Aristotle: he likens God to the householder who paid the labourers in his vineyard the same amount whether they had worked one hour or twelve hours (Mt. 20. 1-16); this is the same God who 'sends rain on the just and on the unjust' (Mt. 5. 45), and loves the sinner equally or more than the righteous. (Mt. 9.13; Lk. 18. 9-14 etc.)⁶¹⁵

When Zizioulas says that 'the idea of justice is absent from Christ's teaching', he understands the concept of justice on the ethical level in terms of the philosophy of Aristotle. He is afraid of justice being understood as ontological and ethical principles. However, he does not have a sufficiently deep understanding of the concept of justice, and his examples are incomplete. For example, we can take 'the parable of the unforgiving servant' as an example: "Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you? And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his

⁶¹³ Christos Yannaras, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite*, ed. A. Louth (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2005), 86.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶¹⁵ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 86.

entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.” (Matthew 18.32-35) From this story, we can find that the justice of God is accompanied by mercy and grace. In other words, there is a presupposition for Justice: God’s grace. The purpose of God is to bring us back to him. Therefore, the action of God cannot be judged only by an ethical principle of justice in the sense of philosophy. However, it does not mean that there is no view of justice in the Bible.

As I have argued in chapter six, influenced by Maximus the Confessor, Zizioulas insists on an ontological principle when he understands the communion with the Other: the Other is prior to the Self. The ascetic life is a good example: “*This theological justification of ascetic self-emptying for the sake of the Other is deeply rooted in patristic thought, particularly in that of St Maximus the Confessor. Maximus locates the roots of evil in self-love.*”⁶¹⁶ This model of communion implies demoralization or a-moralization of human life.⁶¹⁷ It provides an ontological ground for the existence of the Other. However, this ontological principle is not enough for us to understand the existence of a society, because this kind of understanding of communion lacks a view of justice.

In fact, justice is not only an ethical category, but also a relational or ontological concept, i.e., justice means a right relationship. In other words, justice is manifested through a kind of relationship. As Levinas writes: “*Justice consists in recognizing in the Other my master.*”⁶¹⁸ Zizioulas’ principle does not involve the issue of equality when the relationship is limited by I-Thou. However, since we live in plural relationships, what happens if this principle conflicts with the third party? As

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., 84.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 82.

⁶¹⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ. Press, 1969), 72.

Levinas writes: *“If proximity ordered to me only the other alone, there would not have been any problem.”*⁶¹⁹ Levinas suggests the necessity of moving from the realm of ethics to that of justice which is guided by impartiality and universal principles, because of the notion of the ‘third’. The character of this kind of justice is equality. All in all, justice as right relationship exists between two persons and between more than two persons. Diogenes Allen insists: *“In Christianity, however, justice must always be considered, even when you deal with those who are weaker. You must always take others into account; not as a matter of mercy, but as a matter of justice, for there is an absolute equality between people. People are not equal in earthly ways, but our absolute equality is not based on earthly matters.”*⁶²⁰

According to the Bible, righteousness and justice have both the ontological content and the ethical dimension which are grounded in the existence of God: *“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne.”* (Psalms 89:14). *“Righteousness art Thou, O Lord, and upright are Thy judgment* (Psalms 119: 137) Brakel defines the righteousness of God: *“The righteousness of God can be considered either in and of itself as referring to the justness, perfection, and holiness of the character of God; or in view of its manifestation toward the creature. As such the righteousness or justice of God consists in giving each his worthy due, either by punishment or reward.”*⁶²¹

For Luther, justice is a relational concept. He distinguishes two kinds of righteousness, namely the righteousness of Christ and the righteousness of the human being. They form an indivisible entity. Christ is accepted by faith, and then

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., 32.

⁶²⁰ Diogenes Allen, “Christian Values in a Post-Christian Context,” in Fredric B. Burnham ed., *Postmodern Theology: Christian Faith in a Pluralist World* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1989), 29.

⁶²¹ Wilhelmus á Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, chapter Three. See [http://www.davidcox.com.mx/library/B/Brakel%20-%20Christian's%20Reasonable%20Service%20\(Systematic%20Theology\).pdf](http://www.davidcox.com.mx/library/B/Brakel%20-%20Christian's%20Reasonable%20Service%20(Systematic%20Theology).pdf)

the righteousness of Christ is infused into the human heart.⁶²² “But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us.” (Galatians 5:5) Thus, righteousness is both an ontological and a relational concept: “*To be righteous means making just, setting a person in a right relationship with God and with others. Even when justification requires individual response, it is not merely individualistic; it is integrally related to God’s saving purposes for the covenant community and to the coming of the kingdom of God. Righteousness is a relational concept and has implications for both divine-human and human-human relationships.*”⁶²³

Therefore, a communion with God should include the meaning of justice. When Zizioulas’ understanding of ‘justice’ or ‘righteousness’ are not on an ontological level, the idea of justice cannot provide an ontological foundation for us to understand society. I will further analyze the problem from the social dimension.

7.3.4 Detachment from the injustice of reality

According to the ontology of Zizioulas, only an ontological concept of love can be the ground of ethics. Because ‘justice’ is not on the ontological level, our attitude towards others can only be ‘love’. His theological ontology limits in the scope of Church’s involvement.⁶²⁴ That ‘the Other prior to the self’ as an ontological principle cannot provide an adequate ground for the social structure, because of the lack of the notion of ‘justice’. So this kind of theology runs the risk of becoming detached from the injustice of reality. Zizioulas writes:

Obviously, this kind of ethos would be inapplicable in a justly, that is, morally, organized society. It would be inconceivable to regulate social life on such a basis, for there would be no

⁶²² Martin Luther, *Weimarer Ausgabe* (Latin original of Luther’s works) 2, 146, 29-30; 36; 12-16, 32-35. See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification*, 53-54.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁶²⁴ From the theme of Zizioulas’ book *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, we can know his scope.

room for law and order if this attitude to the Other were to become a principle of ethics. Societies are organized on the assumption that evil can be controlled only if it is somehow identified with the evil-doer, for it is not evil as such but the person who commits the evil act that can be the subject of law. Given that justice is a fundamental principle of ethics and law, any transference of moral responsibility for an evil act from the person who committed it to someone else would be totally unethical.⁶²⁵

LaCugna criticizes: “*This critique of the social dimension of personhood is missing from Zizioulas’ thought.*”⁶²⁶ For LaCugna, salvation is not only involving an individual, but also a community in a relationship:

Living as persons in communion, in right relationship, is the meaning of salvation and the ideal of Christian faith. God is interactive, neither solitary nor isolated. Human beings are created in the image of the relational God and gradually are being perfected in that image, making more and more real the communion of all creatures with one another. The doctrine of the Trinity stresses the relational character of personhood over and against the reduction of personhood to individual self-consciousness and also emphasizes the uniqueness and integrity of personhood over and against the reduction of personhood to a product of social relations. Thus it can serve as a critique of cultural norms of personhood, whether that of ‘rugged individualism’ or ‘me first’ morality, as well as patterns of inequality based on gender, race, ability, and so forth.⁶²⁷

LaCugna takes feminist theology and Latin American liberation theology as examples: “*Both types of theology typically appeal to the Latin doctrine of the Trinity to support a vision of authentic human community structured according to the divine community, characterized by equality, mutuality, and reciprocity among persons.*”⁶²⁸

Zizioulas’ Trinitarian theology and anthropology does not tend to provide an ontological basis for social justice. It manifests a theological ethos of the East: “*In the East, the cross of Christ is envisaged not so much as the punishment of the just one, which ‘satisfies’ transcendent Justice requiring a retribution for human beings’ sin...The point was not to satisfy a legal requirement, but to vanquish*

⁶²⁵ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 87.

⁶²⁶ Cathrine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us*, 266.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, 266.

death.”⁶²⁹ It also reflects a tendency of Greek theology: “*Greek theology is weighted toward an ontology of oikonomia, yet it tends to take refuge in the unknowable, unspecifiable divine essence (Theologia), thereby having less to say in the end about the pattern of relationships among persons in the oikonomia.*”⁶³⁰ This type of theology which lacks the perspective of righteousness might lead to serious consequence in the community and society. We may consider the religious situation of Russia in the 20th century. There is an emphasis on mystical nature in Russian religion. Julius Hecker describes their religious life:

Holy Russia, dotted with churches, sacred shrines, and monasteries, is perpetually worshipping. Every day has its saint. The churches are always open and there are always people devoutly kneeling, bowing, and crossing themselves before richly decorated shrines and altars. In the streets of pre-war Russia men and women would stop piously to cross themselves at the sight of an ikon, a shrine, a church, or a funeral procession, and whisper their ‘*Gospody Pomiluy*’ (Lord, be merciful!).⁶³¹

There are no emphasis on the concepts of righteousness and social justice in the existence of the particular and the community. In the 20th century, The Church in Russia had no ability to resist the Bolshevik Communist party. The government was controlled by the Bolsheviks which were staunch materialists and atheists. Religion was to them ‘opiate of the people’. The church remained deaf to the spiritual needs of the age. “*The Church actually stood aside in this struggle for truth and the welfare of humanity. The upper hierarchs had taken sides with the enemies of the people.*”⁶³² They did not care about social justice and people’s troubles. Father Gregory Petroff, a priest living at that time, was a remarkable man with a clear prophetic vision. He provides a good analysis of their theology and Church:

We have to-day, after nineteen centuries of preaching, individual Christians, separate persons, but no Christianity; there is no Christian legislation; our customs and morals are no longer

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 22.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 288.

⁶³¹ Julius F. Hecker, *Religion under the Soviets* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1927), 2.

⁶³² Ibid., 85-86.

Christian; there exists no Christian government. It is strange to speak of the Christian world. The mutual relations of the various people are altogether contrary to the spirit of the gospel; the most Christian states maintain millions of men for mass butcheries, sometimes of their neighbors and sometimes of their own citizens... God was reasoned about without being introduced into life itself.⁶³³

⁶³³ Ibid., 166-167.

Conclusion

I have explored Zizioulas' ontology of personhood in this dissertation.

In Part I, I introduced the background and the source of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood according to the change of the concept of person in the theological history. I stressed the important significance of this change which renews Christians' thinking by a clear contrast between Greek substantialism and the Cappadocian Fathers' personalism. The change is not only a theological necessity, but also a historical reality. The ontological revolution has influenced the creed of Constantinople and Chalcedonian Christology. As Protestant Christians, we believe these creeds, but we have not noticed the ontological meaning. In other words, our thinking remains in the substantialist framework. Therefore, we have not grasped the meaning of personhood according to the Greek Fathers. Furthermore, we cannot set up a view of the living or personal God to replace a substantial view of God which is influenced by Greek substantialism; neither can we build up a Christian anthropology which excludes the influence of Greek philosophy. The most important issue of Greek philosophy which influences Christianity is Greek idea of truth. Theological argument takes root in the view of truth. Therefore, Zizioulas traced his idea of truth to the Eucharist theology of Ignatius and Irenaeus, which identify truth with life. Based on this, there is a possibility of the ontological revolution which identifies hypostasis with personhood for the Cappadocians. The great significance of this ontological revolution is that dogmatism will be reasonably criticized.

In chapter two, I argued that Zizioulas' ontology of personhood is not wholly identified with that of the Cappadocians. Some critics believe that Zizioulas misunderstood the Cappadocian concept of divine person. However, when we

contrast Zizioulas' ontological concept of personhood with the approach of substantialism, it is easy to tell the difference between Zizioulas' ontological concept and the Cappadocians'. Therefore, we say that it is not a misunderstanding but a difference.

Zizioulas sets up his own theological ontology exclusive of the concept of *ousia*, which is different from the substantialist theology. Meanwhile, Zizioulas distinguishes himself from the ontology of relationality. For the ontology of relationality, Zizioulas believes that the ultimate element of decision is Self rather than the Other. When he compares his ontology with the ontology of relationality, Zizioulas puts more emphasis on the priority of the Other.

In chapter three of Part II, I analyzed two types of existence according to Zizioulas' understanding: biological hypostasis and ecclesial hypostasis. The Western traditional way takes a different approach to understand the human being in terms of a being-in-itself or being-by-itself. The authentic personhood is decided by the person of God the Father and Christ is the way to person existence. Therefore, the anthropology must be constructed by the relationship with God. The personhood of God the Father generates personal otherness and communion. It is the ontological foundation for the theological anthropology.

In chapter four, I explored that personal otherness and communion directly renew the understanding of personhood in Western theology, which simultaneously transforms the relationships among human beings from impersonal relationships to personal relationships. This kind of understanding provides the possibility for us to ponder over that the problem of the poor and the oppressed is not ethical but ontological. The suffering of the others connects our existence with our responsibility according to the ontological perspective rather than the ethical perspective. It transcends Levinas' philosophy which involves the Other.

In Part III, I assessed the significance of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood by contrast with the Western substantialist view of God and the human person. Substantialist view of God and anthropology are not directly related to Christian life or existence, especially the individualist understanding in the concept of person since Augustine brings a huge problem which does not include the otherness and communion. In other words, the individual dignity should not be respected in theological history which has been dominated by substantialism. When Zizioulas traced the person's identity to God, this condition started to be changed, for the particular was raised to the level of ontological primacy. Each particular is affirmed as unique and irreplaceable by the others. This kind of ontological identity determines that our attitude to the other cannot depend on the quality of the other. A substantialist understanding of human person cannot accommodate the particular in an ultimate or primary way. Based on this, Zizioulas made a great contribution to explain personal identity through the person of God. Human identity and equality are not only the categories of the contemporary humanism, but also the theology which can be found in patristic thought. In the ultimate sense, Christian life can be comprehended on the ontological level. I believe that Zizioulas' ontology of personhood is a better theological approach which can remedy the flaws of substantialist theology. It integrates the academic with life orientations. Zizioulas provides a good foundation for further study for theological anthropology.

On the other hand, there are some shortcomings in Zizioulas' ontology of personhood. The real defect of Zizioulas' ontology of personhood lies in his anthropology: lack of the consciousness of sin and the notion of justice. Zizioulas places the concepts of sin and justice on the ethical level. It is his failure not to explain the concept of sin and justice ontologically. At the same time his understanding of the concept of sin in Western theology is inadequate.

Therefore, according to Zizioulas' ontology of personhood, only love and the principle of 'the Other prior to the Self' can provide an ontological foundation for human moral action. However, the principle of 'the Other prior to the Self' alone is not an adequate ontological ground or ethical principle for the existence of a society. Therefore, he has nothing positive to contribute to the understanding of the Christian community or the social problems like injustice. This is one of the weakest points in Zizioulas' ontology of personhood.

However, despite these defects, the rich reflections of John Zizioulas clearly break away from the individualism of Western framework. In fact, I argue that from Zizioulas' ontology of personhood itself, when properly understood and articulated, we can also develop a critical attitude towards our existence in a society, because all of us have an equal worth which is based on a relationship with God. It means that person as relation-to-another is rightly regarded as the basic given of existence, as well as a foundation for our experience and identity. Along this line, we can have a thought foundation on which to develop a more adequate kind of ontological theology. Not only that it can be used to critique the concrete shape of the social order, it can also be used for cultural criticism and the rebuilding of a new relationship in the community. Of course, this thesis can only hint at all these. This is a task for the future.

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