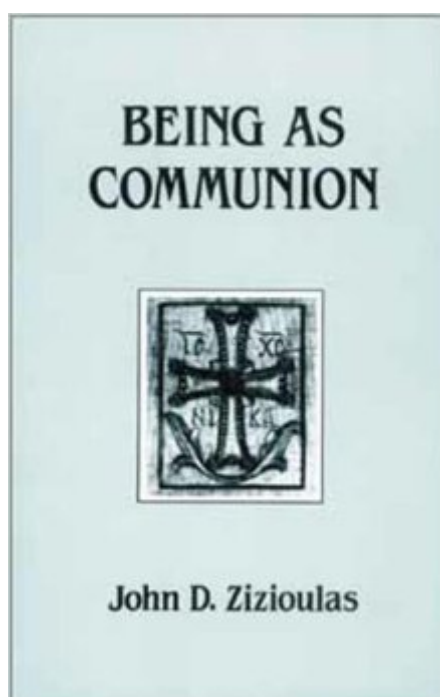


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# Being As Communion: Studies In Personhood And The Church (Contemporary Greek Theologians Series, No 4)



## Synopsis

The voice of John Zizioulas may turn out to be the fresh voice for which theology and especially ecclesiology have long been waiting. In the context of a complete theology, which includes extended consideration of the major theological topics the Trinity, Christology, eschatology, ministry, and sacrament, but above all, the Eucharist the author propounds a fresh understanding, based on the early Fathers and the Orthodox tradition, of the concept of person, and so of the Church itself. His consideration of the local church as 'catholic' in the literal sense, and the need to understand the universal Church not as a superstructure but as the communion of all Churches, provides the program for the ecclesiology of the future. Yves Congar has written that he considers the author 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 '

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Every so often a book comes along that manages to rotate and shake up your paradigm in such a way that, after the shift is over, you suddenly see things not only in a new way, but in a new way that makes far greater sense. *Being as Communion* by Metropolitan John Zizioulas is one such book for me. It works on several levels, bringing together what are oftentimes considered disparate strands of thought - philosophical, theological and pastoral - into a thickly weaved narrative that shows why an Orthodox understanding of the Trinity as the communion of the three persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is...necessary. For Zizioulas, this communion of the Trinity is the model

to be embodied not only by the Church as the communion of all churches, but by the very person as well: we only are who we are when we are in communion with God and one another. The title of the book is no mistake; Zizioulas puts himself in dialogue with some of the great philosophers of the 20th century (such as Heidegger and Levinas, the latter of whom he praises, particularly his work *Totality and Infinity*). The fundamental point that Zizioulas raises about Being is that in the eucharist - in the act of communion itself! - the essential and the temporal become fused into a living harmony. Such was - and is - Christ, and such also is to be the Church and the Christian, participating in the eternal life of God while in the here and now. Being is not static, but in time and in relation.

Bishop Zizioulas presents a very systematic defense of the Eastern Orthodox understanding, and relevance, of Trinitarian theology. He shows how the starting point of the Trinity is not the essence, as is often the case in western theology, but with the persons- Father, Son, Spirit. Commenting on western, essence first approach, he writes: "This interpretation represents a misinterpretation of the Patristic theology of the Trinity. 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. The one God is not the one substance but the Father, who is the cause both of the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit. Consequently, the ontological 'principle' of God is traced back, once again, to the person." (page 40-41) This line of thought runs thru the whole text, linking personhood with being in the ontological sense. Moreover, he draws various ecclesiological conclusions about the role of the bishop in the church catholic. He builds a eucharistic ecclesiology around some of his reading of the Greek Patristic tradition that fits well with much of modern Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic thought. This book has had a very wide influence among theologians.

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