

Transcendence of Cultural Divisions: Nation, Local Church, and Catholicity in the Theology of John Zizioulas from a Lutheran Perspective

The paper explores the tension between national identity and ecclesial universality through the lens of Metropolitan John Zizioulas's eucharistic ecclesiology, engaging his insights from a Lutheran perspective. In contemporary theology, nationalism and ethnophyletism pose significant challenges to the Church's catholicity. Zizioulas addresses these challenges by grounding ecclesial identity not in historical or cultural origins, but in the Eucharist's eschatological reality. For Zizioulas, the local church gathered around the bishop embodies the fullness of the catholic Church, transcending cultural divisions without extinguishing local particularity. From a Lutheran standpoint, this approach resonates deeply with a theology of Word and Sacrament, where the local assembly constitutes the true Church. However, a Lutheran critique also raises critical questions regarding Zizioulas's episcopal framework and the dialectic of sin and grace within historical structures. By bringing Zizioulas's ontology of communion into conversation with Lutheran commitments to *sola gratia* and the *creatura verbi*, the paper demonstrates how Orthodox eucharistic ecclesiology enriches Lutheran understandings of catholicity. Ultimately, the dialogue offers a constructive theological framework for overcoming cultural fragmentation and reclaiming a truly eschatological vision of Christian unity today.

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