Journal for the Study of Metropolitan John Zizioulas' Theology

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Editorial

The late Metropolitan of Pergamon, John Zizioulas (1931–2023), is widely regarded as one of the most influential theologians and thinkers of the 20th century. The originality and creativity of his thought have attracted significant attention, resulting in numerous articles, essays, and academic theses worldwide. His major monographs, including his posthumous magnum opus, *Remembering the Future: Towards an Eschatological Ontology*, have already been translated into several languages.

Through his academic work and ecclesiastical service, Zizioulas has shaped the agenda of not only contemporary Orthodox theology, but Christian theology as a whole. Studying any aspect of Orthodox theology today—whether it be hermeneutics, philosophical theology, ecclesiology, dogmatics, ecumenism, the history of theology, anthropology, political theology, ecotheology, or gender issues—very often involves referencing his work to be complete.

In light of this, the John Zizioulas Foundation, in cooperation with St. Sebastian Orthodox Press (Los Angeles, California) and the Volos Academy for Theological Studies (Volos, Greece), has decided to launch a journal dedicated to an in-depth and scholarly study of Zizioulas' theology.

OmegAlpha: Journal for the Study of Metropolitan John Zizioulas' Theology is an open-access, peer-reviewed scholarly journal that publishes research on various aspects of Zizioulas' thought and work, positioning him as one of the foremost spokespersons of global Orthodoxy today. The journal primarily publishes scholarly articles that focus on specific theological issues related to the

late Metropolitan of Pergamon, as well as broader topics concerning his theological legacy from theological, philosophical, historical, or other perspectives. The editorial policy is ecumenical, allowing for the publication of critical book reviews, review essays, and responses to articles.

The journal's name is significant. It reflects John Zizioulas' fundamental idea that the Omega has a clear priority over the Alpha, that the eschaton affects both the past and present history. According to Zizioulas, "the future of the *eschata* is not a prolongation of the historical future into eternity; it is rather a future that visits history from outside or beyond history" (*Remembering the Future*, p. 24).

The first issue of the journal explores various aspects of John Zizioulas' eschatological view. For Zizioulas, eschatology "is not simply a doctrine; it is an orientation, a perspective, a mode of existence. Eschatology does not concern only the future; it affects our past as well as our present" (*Remembering the Future*, p. 1). In other words, eschatology represents an outlook that informs everything one can assert about existence/being and truth. Exploring this conviction, in the first issue authors from diverse backgrounds investigate the role of eschatology in his work, its relevance for inter-Christian encounters, and the challenges of the contemporary world. The issue also includes a critical edition of unpublished archival material, notably an essay written by Zizioulas for a seminar on "Mysticism" while he was studying under Paul Tillich at Harvard University in 1956. This volume concludes with two extensive review essays and one conference review.

The second issue will focus on "Hermeneutics," a central theme in both theological and philosophical reflection across time.

Nikolaos Asproulis
Editor-in-Chief

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Theological Heritage

Mysticism and Liturgy (In the Greek Orthodox Thought)

John D. Zizioulas

Editor's Note: *This text is published here for the first time. It marks the inaugural scholarly work of the late Metropolitan John D. Zizioulas (1931–2023), written while he was still a lay theologian pursuing his post-graduate studies at the prestigious Divinity School of Harvard University, dating back to 1956. The text was prepared for a special seminar titled "Mystics in Church History," taught by Prof. Paul Tillich (1886–1965), a theologian who had, at least indirectly, an influence on Zizioulas' subsequent theological formation. In this text, Zizioulas delves into the significance of mysticism from an Orthodox perspective, most likely for the first in his entire body of work. He underscores the relevance of the Divine Liturgy in general, and the Eucharist in particular, for both the essence of the Church and theological discourse. Additionally, he reflects on the importance of the "symbol" and the "icon" in theology, engaging extensively with the writings of his patristic hero, St. Maximus the Confessor. Those familiar with his work will recognize core tenets of his theological vision articulated and further developed throughout his writings—such as his Eucharistic outlook, existential interpretation of the patristic tradition, to name only a few—culminating in his posthumous magnum opus, "Remembering the Future." The text has remained unpublished since 1956, while certain sections, particularly those focused on the "icon" and the "symbol," echo insights found in Zizioulas' mature work in a significantly developed form. (See, for instance, "Symbolism and Realism in Orthodox Worship,"* Sourozh, *no. 79*

[2000] 2–17). The text, recently discovered in the archives of Metropolitan John, is published here with minimal editing to preserve its original handwritten form and style.

Introduction

(Theological thought and liturgical practice in their mystical connection)

Liturgical practice is the sphere of Orthodox thought. In the tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church theological thought and liturgical life have appeared as an organic unity and their divorce would mean a loss of their specific character. It is remarkable that the whole worship in the Orthodox Church is baptized in theological thought and that the whole theology finds its expression in the form of the Liturgy.

But what is the bond that brings the two manifestations of the life of the Church into such an organic interrelation? The answer to the question is that both theology and liturgical practice are deeply mystical. They are justified only so long as they share the attitude of experience and participation, the living realization of the divine presence. To know God means to enter into union with Him, i.e., to participate in the divine life. The mysteries of God are only revealed in a state of deification (θέωσις) when man becomes by grace what God is by nature. This has been the main scheme in which the Greek Fathers conceived salvation. Revelation cannot be a mere rational achievement; it belongs to the totality of life.[1] It is, therefore, in the participation in the divine life as it appears in the Incarnate Christ and his Body—the Church, which one can speak about God, that theological thought can be conceived.

[1] Sergius Bulgakoff, "Revelation," in J. Baillie and H. Martin (eds.) *Revelation*, translated by Oliver F. Clarke and Xenia Braikevitch (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1937), 146: "Revelation represents the divine-human life of the church and our own participation in it. … Revelation is life in God, a process of deification."

The same mystical motive is to give the explanation to and get support for, the fact that a mere soteriological interest characterizes all the involvement of the Greek Fathers in theological controversies. They understood salvation as "θέωσις," and they could not accept any doctrine that would destroy this mystical and only possibility. Thus their attitude in the whole history of dogma has this deep mystical motif. They condemn Arius because if the Logos were not consubstantial with the Father our deification—possible only through participation in Christ—would be impossible. They fight Nestorianism and monophysitism because they want to secure perfect participation of humanity and divinity in the person of Christ. They do the same against Monothelitism because they are anxious to see human will in a possibility of union with the will of God in Christ. They, finally, struggle hard to secure the acceptance of the Icons in order to affirm the possibility of expressing divine realities in matter. Their theology is moved by the same mystical motive: man needs for his salvation a participation in the divine life. Christ is the only ground of this union. In Him we find the divine and human united and it is He who "became Man so that we may become divine."[2] Thus *the motif*, *the possibility,* and *the content* of theological thought were based on a mystical ground.

There is no mysticism conceived in the Greek Orthodox tradition without a theology. But more than that, there is no theology without mystical quality. It probably is not by accident that in the long history of the Eastern Church up to the last few centuries, the name of "theologian" has been specially reserved for only three writers: Saint John, the most mystical of the four evangelists; St. Gregory of Nazianzus, the author of contemplative poems; and St. Symeon, "the New Theologian," the chanter of the union with God. Thus "the mystical is considered as the perfection, the summing up of the whole theology, as a theology par excellence."[3]

[2] Thus, the motif, the possibility, and the content of theological thought was based on a mystical ground.

[3] Vladimir Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient* (Paris: Aubier 1944), 7.

This mystical theological thought, with its soteriological accent, could not but seek a deep unity with what constitutes the incarnation of all mystical experience and the accepted means of soteriological realizations, namely the Liturgy of the Church.

In a deep mystical participation in the Eucharistic-centered Liturgy, the theologian realizes the presence of the Divine in whose life He is called to participate if he is asking for any knowledge of Him.

This attitude of the Fathers towards theological knowledge has made worship in the Greek Orthodox Church the mystical ground of her whole life. "The Church lives by the Eucharist and in the Eucharist."[4] All vitality and creativity have been used in order that liturgical worship may become a realm of man's meeting with God and a revelation of the reality to which he is called as a participant.

In the coming chapters, we are going to see the mystical implications of liturgical practice with the help of some of the Greek Fathers, especially St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. Maximus the Confessor, who attempted to interpret it in a mystical way.

In the Realm of the Mystery

The terminology of Orthodox worship prefers the use of *mystery* (μυστήριον) instead of sacrament for the Divine Liturgy. The term is very old and perhaps there has never been a difference between the two Latin terms, *sacramentum* and *mysterium*, as they translated the Greek term.[5] Yet, the preference of the term is very characteristic of the mode of the worship. It describes the atmosphere in which the Liturgy dwells and discloses its very meaning.

But the word undoubtedly needs some explanation, since it has been deeply distorted. Many uses of the word have appeared; it

[4] Georges Florovsky, "Orthodox Contribution," in P. Edwall, E. Hayman and W. Maxwell (eds.), *Ways of Worship*: *The Report of a Theological Commission of Faith and Order* (London: SCM Press 1951), 58.

[5] Louis Bouyer, "Mysterion," in *Mystery and Mysticism: A Symposium* (London: Blackfriars Publications 1956), 25.

seems that the most popular one hardly allows it to mean more than just something misty! Mystery tends to be understood as something hidden, incomprehensible, and above any understanding.

Louis Bouyer[6] undertakes the job of pointing out that this is not the right interpretation that the term deserves. Even in the pagan use of the word we cannot say that a mystery is an un-revealed doctrine, since it has been proved that they never had any secret doctrines—they had only secret rites.[7] No matter how true this reference to the pagan use is, it remains true that in the Christian use of the word the mystery is not a hidden and unapproachable reality. It is on the contrary *something disclosed.* The nature of mystery is such that it ceases to be a mystery if it is not disclosed, although *it always remains inexhaustible* in the process of disclosing itself.[8] Thus St. Ignatius of Antioch in his Epistle to the *Ephesians* (19:1) calls the virgin-birth and the death of the Lord as "μυστήρια κραυγῆς" i.e., as mysteries which now stand revealed and must be proclaimed to the whole world. St. Justin approaches the term with his characteristic typological intentions and finds that in the Pascha "the mystery of the Lamb was the type of Christ."[9] The next characteristic step is taken by Origen. Here we have the old apocalyptic idea of a mystery as a symbol foreshadowing eschatological realities. The Cross is not only the revelation of God's plan in history but also a figure foreshadowing the way in which the whole Church is to follow her divine head to a glorious end.[10] In Origen, "the Passion and Resurrection (of the physical

[6] Ibid., 18–32. See also Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology,* vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1951).

[7] Ibid., 20.

[8] In supporting this view, Bouyer points out many New Testament passages; *Eph.* 1:9; 3:9 and the entire context to say that the Epistle to the Ephesians gives us the final revelation of the mystery as the completion of history and also of God's work; since it consists in the recapitulation, the comprehensive summing-up of the whole human history and its successful outcome. Ibid., 22.

[9] *Dial. with Trypho* XI. In Irenaeus, despite the fact that he is the first writer who sets the Christian mystery in direct relationship with the non-Christian mysteries of his day (especially Gnostics), the mystery is almost identified with οἰκονομία. *Adv. Haer.* I, 20.

[10] "Just as the visible and tangible body of Jesus was crucified and buried and then rose from the dead, so likewise the whole body of Christ's saints is now nailed to the

body of Jesus) is the 'μυστήριον' of the passion and resurrection of the mystical Christ."[11]

This is precisely the decisive point in the history of the concept. Origen's interpretation of mystery as symbol of eschatological realities prepared the state with which we are mainly concerned in the present paper, namely *the application of the term μυστήριον to the rites of the Church*. This appears for the first time in the middle of the 4th century. It is in the *Catecheses* of St. Cyril of Jerusalem that we first meet it.

Mysterion, now, is not only the fact which lights up divine revelations, it is also the rite in which all this is expressed and brought into effect for us. Baptism is a *mysterion*. Before Baptism man "heard mysteries and did not understand, "he heard Scriptures and did not know their depth." But now, in Baptism it is no more hearing "about" mysteries but hearing "in" them ("οὐκ ἔτι περιηχῆ, ἀλλ' ἐνηχῆ").[12] Man becomes "οἶκος θεῖος" where the Holy Spirit speaks. This is not a mere intellectual relationship between the baptised and the divine reality expressed in the mystery. Cyril does not hesitate to quote from the *Psalms* the phrase which also appears in the gospels: "ἐγὼ εἶπα· θεοί ἐστε καὶ υἱοὶ Ὑψίστου πάντες."[13] It is the same idea of deification that appears here. Through and in the mystery of Baptism the Holy Spirit acts as "θεοποιόν."[14] But this deification has a necessary Christological basis. It is described as a marriage relationship between the Baptized and Christ. It is a "καθοσίωσις"—a dedication to the heavenly Bridegroom.[15] Thus the baptised becomes able to see and receive in himself ("χωρητικὸς") the most divine mysteries,[16] yet only in the sense of these mysteries being the mysteries of Christ.[17]

cross. ... But when the resurrection τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ καὶ τελειοτέρου Χριστοῦ σώματος takes place, then the many members will form a single body." *In. Jon. Com.* (6, 10, 20).

[11] Hans von Balthasar "Le Mysterion d'Origène," *Recherches de science religieuse* 26/5 (1936): 543.

[12] *Pro catechesis* (PG 33:344).

[13] PG 33:344–345.

[14] PG 33:476.

[15] Ibid., PG 33:345.

[16] "Χωρητικοὶ τῶν θειοτέρων μυστυρίων" (PG 33:1065).

[17] "Χριστοῦ μυστηρίων κοινωνοὶ" (PG 33:369).

In this whole process of mysteriological practice, the initiated and baptised into the mystery man does not remain passive. The mystery is offered to him, but his will is asked. The mystery influences nature; nature is not unable to receive salvation. A strong distinction is made by St. Cyril between nature and will. Nature is able to accept salvation; the will remains[18] and it is the will that both produces and fights evil.[19] Thus the mystery is given, but a full acceptance of the mystery is a matter of entire process through progressive realization and participation in the divine life.

This immediately introduces the connection asceticism has with the realm of the mystery. It is true that the struggle introduced by asceticism aims to detach man from self and the world[20], but it should not be seen as introducing a dualism. This detachment does not stand in opposition to what we are detached from, but it is necessary in order to make mysteries efficacious. It is not a struggle against matter, for matter has already been used in the *mysterion* itself; it is a transfiguration of matter, a transcendence of matter into the realm of the ultimate, which has to travel the hard path of denying self and world when they insist upon arresting our participation in the divine reality of the mystery itself. Thus it is not surprising that for the ascetic the whole creation becomes a mystery, and revealed mysteries can manifest all their mystery-power.[21]

Looking therefore toward the struggle of asceticism through the eyes of the *mysterion* we can realize how asceticism and mysticism stand together in the spiritual life. This is what makes St. Cyril so anxious to secure a connection between the mysterious rite and a struggle against evil. The ethical imperative is not absent, but it is entirely baptised in the waters of mysticism. It is only because unity is possible with the divine that purity and virtue are required.

[18] Ibid., PG 33:389.

[19] Ibid., PG 33:381, 384.

[20] I.e., from the human and symbolic realities of the mystery.

[21] One could say that ascetic detachments themselves may be called mysteries, for they are experiences of the divine through the path of the "apophatic" approach to God. For even what we do not understand of God may be a revelation of His Glorious Majesty and as such a deep mystical experience.

Since the greatest mystery is Christ Himself[22] the Church found in the idea of Herself as the Body of Christ, the center of all mystery-minded mysticism. The expression of St. Paul in Eph. 5 that "this mystery is great," namely the mystical union of Christ with the Church has served as the basis of a Church-centered mysticism. Yet, this mystery of the Church is disclosed through another mystery, and that is the Eucharist. The Eucharist is *the* mystery of the Church. It is a double mystery, or a mystery of the "Whole Christ," the Head and the Body—*the mystery of the Lord and the mystery of the Congregation*.[23]

The offering of the gifts and the miraculous change (μεταβολὴ) of them into the Body and the Blood of Christ through the invocation of the Holy Spirit constitutes the central and most important part of the mystery of the Eucharist. This is the great moment and perhaps the moment of the "*mysterium tremendum*." In fact, the phraseology of the Liturgy itself is full of adjectives corresponding to this idea, and it is notable that after the sanctification of the gifts, they are always called *mysteria* accompanied by some adjective of this kind. Thus they are called "φρικτὰ μυστήρια, or πῦρ," i.e., the fire that burns the unworthy.[24] Is this to be understood in the way that Rudolf Otto describes the phenomenology of the "mysterium tremendum"?

At first it is true that the entire Liturgy cries out to God with trembling and fear. It calls him "φοβερὸν" and just before the Lord's prayer is uttered, God is asked to make us worthy of *daring* to call Him "our Father..."[25] Thus it seems that the element of "absolute unapproachability" which Otto points out[26] is dominant in the worshipping heart. At the same time, the confession of the

[22] See Col. 1:27.

[23] The term is used by Nicholas Cabasilas in his "Commentary" of the Holy Rite. See Florovsky, "Orthodox Contribution," 58.

[24] "Καταξίωσον ἡμᾶς μεταλαβεῖν τῶν ἐπουρανίων σου καὶ φρικτῶν μυστηρίων..." "Ορθοὶ μεταλαβόντες τῶν θείων, ἁγίων, ἀχράντων, ἀθανάτων καὶ ζωοποιῶν φρικτῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ μυστηρίων..." (From the Divine Liturgy of St. John the Chrysostom.)

[25] "Καταξίωσον ἡμᾶς τολμᾶν ἐπικαλεῖσθαι σέ..." from the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

[26] *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. J.W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 19.

soul during the Liturgy is very often what the same author would call "I am naught, Thou art all."[27] Yet, the Liturgy does not stop here; and it is of absolute importance that we do not miss this point. The Liturgy interweaves this distance of God with His presence in His Christ. In a clearly historical "*ἀνάμνησις*" after the expression of His absolute "majestas"[28] the man turns to the remembrance of the visitation of Christ and through an unseen, yet deeply felt "despite" he is transmitted from the abysmal distance to the mystery of the presence. Thus he can call upon the Holy Spirit, Whom he believes as indwelling in the Church. The Holy Spirit will then guide him to the great mystery. And there will be no hesitation in his mouth to utter the words which appear to be so contradictory:

"ἐλθὲ εἰς τὸ ἁγιάσαι ἡμᾶς ὁ ἄνω τῷ Πατρὶ συγκαθήμενος καὶ ὧδε ἡμῖν ἀοράτως συνών..."

i.e., Come to sanctify us, Thou who sittest above with the Father, and (yet) who are here invisibly with us.[29]

This is the *mysterion* in its mystical and only meaning. The *mysterion* is *not* the "wholly other" as Otto would say[30] but the reality where the "wholly other" presents himself to us in a form as accessible as the elements of the Eucharist before us. The Liturgy is based upon such a conception of the *mysterion*. It still remains dreadful (φρικτὸν) but not because of distance and inapproachability; it is dreadful, on the contrary, because of frightful approach and real presence in a form so accessible and simple.

Such a conception of the Eucharistic mystery allows the Liturgy to arrive at the second point of its mystical implications.

This point is the Communion of the Mystery to the members of the Church. This is another mystery or rather another side of

[27] Ibid., 21. See the prayer before the "Holy, holy, holy..." in the Liturgy of St. Basil of Caesarea.

[28] The term belongs to Otto again.

[29] Liturgy of St. Chrysostom.

[30] Op. cit., 28: "The truly 'mysterious' object is beyond our apprehension, because in it we come upon something inherently 'wholly other,' whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own..."

the same mystery, because it remains incomplete without that. The mystery of the Present Lord is meant to be distributed to the members in order to find itself as a *mysterion*. Communion is an inseparable part of the whole mystery. Here again, the worshipping heart stands between fear and joy, for the same tendency lies again in the core of the *mysterion*. "The holy are for the holy" and yet the response spontaneously appears: "One only is holy, one only is Lord, Jesus Christ."[31] But the approach will be done and the result will come: it is the unity with Christ, His dwelling in our hearts, and the transcendence of our bodies to temples of the Holy Spirit.[32]

But it is not only for the individual that the Sacrament of Eucharist has a living, mystic meaning. In fact, there is no such thing as individualistic mysticism in the Orthodox Church. No mystical experience is understood outside of a "social ego" rooted in the mystical participation of the Body of the Church. "Even in the solitude, in the chamber, a Christian prays as a member of the Church."[33] With rare exceptions, the mystical literature of the Eastern Church does not possess such autobiographies of the inner life as those of Saint Angele de Foligno, Henri Suso, or the "History of a Soul" of St. Tereza of Lisieux.[34]

Thus the mystery of the Eucharist has in its very essence a communal character. The line of unity is not only from the soul to the Lord but it goes through all the souls, the members of the Body. Furthermore, the mystery covers and unites even time in a common participation to its divine reality. Past, present, and future are united. Prayers are offered for the dead and by them in an at-

[31] I would like to quote a prayer of Symeon Metaphrastes of the 10th century, which is used as a thanksgiving prayer after Communion: "Thou who hast willingly given Thy flesh for my nourishment, Thou fire that consumest the unworthy, consume me not. O my Creator! Rather penetrate my limbs, my bones, my inmost being, my heart! ... Nail me wholly to fear of Thee! ... O awful mystery, O mercy of God! How can I, *even I*, unclean that I am, receive the Sacred body and blood and *become incorruptible*!" (Canon before and after the Communion, Canto 8). See also Nicholas Arseniev, *Mysticism and the Eastern Church*, Eng. Trans. (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1926), 57 ff.

[32] See St. Basil's Liturgy, prayer before Holy Communion.

[33] Florovsky, "Orthodox Contribution," 54.

[34] Lossky, *Essai*, 18.

mosphere that ignores the division of time. The Saints are commemorated (very frequently—above all the Virgin Mary, because all of them participate in the great celebration of the *mysterion*. Moreover, the whole cosmos is involved in it. Here the divine mingles with the human, the terrestrial. The praise and sacrifice is offered for the whole world and by the whole world:

"Τὰ σὰ ἐκ τῶν σῶν σοὶ προσφέρομεν κατὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ πάντα..."

this is the center of the Liturgy.

The Old Egyptian Liturgy of St. Mark declares: "Verily heaven and earth are filled with the Glory through the coming of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ."[35] The kingdom is all-embracing for Christ is the "ἀνακεφαλαίωσις" of all and all nature is waiting for its deliverance. Thus angelic power co-celebrate, and nature offers its fruits, the bread, and the wine, to participate in this "cosmic liturgy."[36] Thus not only the individual, not only the whole of mankind but the whole of creation is embraced by the Eucharistic mystery in a kingdom of eternal life.

Thus we arrive at the last characteristic of the Eucharistic mystery. The Liturgy ends its whole process by the declaration of the Resurrection of Christ. This is the underlying power behind all the Greek Orthodox worship. But now, as the Liturgy reaches the end the mystical Joy springs out of the Church which has tasted the fruits of the kingdom. The bridegroom has revealed Himself and offered Himself once again to the Bride. The Bride rejoices. The worshipping soul has touched "the wells of living water," has drunk eagerly of them, and declares its joy. Because of mystical experience the Church *can* now reassure and re-proclaim in joy that Christ *is* risen. And having tasted the mystical presence she declares singing at the end of the Liturgy:

"Ἴδομεν το φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ἐλάβομεν Πνεῦμα ἐπουράνιον, εὕρομεν πίστιν ἀληθῆ..."

[35] Frank Ed. Brightman (ed.), *Liturgies, Eastern and Western: Being the Texts, Original or Translated, of the Principal Liturgies of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1896), I, 132, 176.

[36] See: Hans von Balthazar, *Kosmische Liturgie. Maximus der Bekenner, Hohe und Krise des greishishen Weltbilds* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1941), where is the remarkable analysis of St. Maximus the Confessor's mystical development of the Eucharistic mystery.

i.e., we saw the true light, we received the heavenly Spirit, we found true faith in worshipping the indivisible Trinity, because He saved us.

The Symbolic and the Real

Liturgical rite aims to prevent the worshipping soul from a pure subjectivity or more "psychologism" in his mysticism. The Liturgy is a constant invitation of the soul to project her subjectivity into the objective pole of the cult. This becomes possible through *symbolism*.

Symbolism is based on a law of correspondence between the spiritual and the material world[37]. St. Maximus the Confessor exhibits this law when he says that: "the entire spiritual (νοητὸς) cosmos seems typified (τυπούμενος) mystically (μυστικῶς), through symbolic things (εἴδεσι) in the entire material (world) (ὅλῳ τῷ αἰσθητῷ), for those who can see."[38] Thus the symbol is taken over from the visible order to signify the realities of the religious world and it is very much used in Judaic-Christian tradition.[39] But above all, symbolism has been taken over by cult and Liturgy. Very early in the history of the Church the feasts of Nativity and Easter appeared bound up with symbolism. Nativity was the celebration of the Sun that is eternally rising out of the New Creation, of whom the prophet Zacharias tells us that "His name is Orient." And the new fire in the Paschal night was a symbol of the column of fire which guided the Jews in the desert.[40]

[37] On a common sharing by the two of the same ground of existence.

[38] *Mystagogia*, PG 91:669. Perhaps it is relevant to state here Aristotle's same view (*De Partibus Animalium*, i, 55): "Εν πᾶσι τοῖς φυσικοῖς ἔνεστί τι θαυμαστόν· καθάπερ Ἡράκλειτος λέγεται εἰπεῖν· εἶναι καὶ ἐνταῦθα θεούς."

[39] Jean Daniélou, "The Problem of Symbolism." *Thought: Fordham University Quarterly* 25, no. 98 (Sept. 1950): 424. The first book of the Bible compares the creative power of God to a great bird wheeling over the waters to rouse life out of them, and the last book, the Revelation of John, describes the new creation by using symbols: there will be no more sun for Christ will be the light and the sea which is the symbol of the kingdom of death and the home of the dragon, will disappear.

[40] "He who follows me does not walk in darkness."

Similarly, the baptismal rite, since its very simple New Testament form, is nothing but an allusion to the Biblical symbolism of water. Christ was the first to descend into the water of Baptism ("I thirst to be baptised with a baptism") and accordingly, all Christians are plunged into the pool. In the baptismal rite, a whole symbolic system of death and resurrection appears and the water symbolism is now taken from the creation and the deluge to come through the filtering of the Passion of Christ and Baptism.[41] Later on, the baptismal rite is enriched with more symbols, the basic and central, of course, being the descent into the water as a death and resurrection representation. St. Cyril of Jerusalem has left us a symbolic interpretation of the baptismal rite, which is the one that has since been used unchanged by the Eastern Orthodox Church. The baptismal candidate's turn from the west to the east side of the church is a symbolic turn from the "life of darkness" to the "paradise of light."[42] His taking off of his old dress symbolises the undressing of the "old man" with all his sinful past life.[43] The oil of the exorcisms is the symbol that we have been drafted into Christ's cultivated olive tree, according to 2 Romans, 24.[44] In the Baptism itself the descendence into the water is for St. Cyril a symbol of Christ's dark tomb and our own death and resurrection in the new life.[45] In an analogous way, the chrism that follows the mystery of Baptism is our symbolic chrismation by which we become "Christ-s" and "images of the Christ."[46]

In a similar way is the entire process of the Divine Liturgy interpreted by St. Maximus the Confessor. The entrance of the holy *synaxis* represents the first advent of Christ. The bishop's ascendance to his throne—Christ's Ascension. The entrance of the assistants symbolizes the entrance of the Gentiles into the Church. The sacred hymns express the joy that embraces the pure hearts as they are lifted towards God. The invocations of peace—the peace-

[41] Per Ivar Lundberg, *La typologie baptismale dans l'ancienne église* (Lund: A. Lorentz, 1942), 25ff.

[42] *Mystagogical Catechesis* I (PG 33:1073).

[43] *Mystag. Catech*. II (PG 33:1078/80).

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., PG 33:1080/81.

[46] *Mystag. Catech*. III (PG 33:1088/89).

ful life of contemplation which succeeds the struggles against sin. The reading of the Gospel is the symbol of the last days before the end of the world, when "the Gospel shall be preached to all the world." All that follows after the reading of the Gospel, namely the bishop's descent from his throne, the expulsion of the Catechumens and the penitents, and the closing of the doors symbolize the last judgment: the second coming of Christ, the separation of the righteous from the condemned, the "disparition" of the visible world. Following, the entrance of the sacred gifts represents the revelation of the new world; the kiss of peace—the union of all the souls in God; the confession of faith is the great action of gratitude of the saved ones. The "Sanctus" is the elevation of the souls to the choirs of angels who, in the immobility of the eternal movement around God, praise Him. The Lord's prayer represents our filiation in Christ and the final: "One is holy ... Christ the Saviour," the supreme entrance of the creature into the mystical divine unity through the Communion of Eucharist.[47]

Accordingly, the Eucharist sets before the congregation in symbolic utterances and gestures the whole life of the Lord, from the Bethlehem manger to the Mount of Olives and Calvary including also His Resurrection and Ascension, and anticipating His second and glorious coming.[48]

But what is the relation between the symbols and the reality itself? In other words, what is the nature of the mystical world to which the worshipping soul is called when the symbols are put before her? Do these symbols have objective signification? The answer lies in one of the following two: either the very nature of the realities of the visible world is attached by specific signifying value or they take a signification from a positive and *external* relation that has been set up between themselves and the reality signified by them. In the latter case, symbols, at the core of their own natures, have no capacity for meaning or signification.[49]

[47] *Mystagogia*, Cap. 8–21 (PG 91:688–697); see also: von Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie*, 396–327.

[48] Florovsky, "Orthodox Contribution," 59.

[49] The problem is put forth and discussed by Prof. Paul Tillich in his *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, 239 ff. The distinction between "symbol" and "sign" which is made there is to be noted especially. See also: Daniélou, "The Problem of Symbolism," 425 ff.

The question seems to have been put forth as early as the times of St. Cyril of Jerusalem since we have in him a definite attitude towards the problem. In fact, reading St. Cyril, we are confronted with the question of what he means by "ἀντίτυπον," "σημεῖον," or "εἰκὼν" and how does he relate them with what he calls "ἀληθινόν." I find the following the most representative quotation which includes all the difficulties that the interpretation of the problem presents. It refers to the symbolic death and resurrection of Baptism and runs as follows:

> "Ὢ ξένου καὶ παραδόξου πράγματος! Οὐκ ἀληθῶς ἀπεθάνομεν, οὐδ' ἀληθῶς ἐτάφημεν, οὐδ' ἀληθῶς σταυρωθέντες ἀνέστημεν· ἀλλ' ἐν εἰκόνι ἡ μίμησις, ἐν ἀληθείᾳ δὲ ἡ σωτηρία. Χριστὸς ὄντως ἐσταυρώθη, καὶ ὄντως ἐτάφη, καὶ ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη· καὶ πάντα ἡμῖν ταῦτα κεχάρισται, ἵνα τῇ μιμήσει τῶν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ κοινωνήσαντες, ἀληθείᾳ τὴν σωτηρίαν κερδήσωμεν. ... Χριστὸς ἐδέξατο ἐπὶ τῶν ἀχράντων αὐτοῦ χειρῶν καὶ ποδῶν ἥλους, καὶ ἤλγησε· καὶ μοι ἀναλγητὶ καὶ ἀπονητί, διὰ τῆς τοῦ ἄλγους κοινωνίας χαρίζεται τὴν σωτηρίαν ..."[50]

In this long quotation two things are to be pointed out. On the one hand, there is a negation of a "true" death and resurrection. "The imitation is in image, the salvation is in truth." On the other hand, there is admitted a participation in the pain of Christ's death and crucifixion (διὰ τῆς τοῦ ἄλγους κοινωνίας), although without feeling pain (ἀπονητὶ καὶ ἀναλγητί). These expressions seem contradictory, yet there are often used, especially for the reality of the Eucharistic elements.[51] I find the key to the solution in the idea, fortunately, expressed in the very same quotation. St. Cyril interpolates this idea between the two contradictory parts; it is the person of Christ and His historical death and Resurrec-

[50] *Catech. Mystag.* II, 5 (PG 33:108). The English translation runs as follows: "O strange and inconceivable thing! We did *not really* die, we were not really buried, ... but our imitation was in a figure, and our salvation in reality. Christ was actually crucified and actually buried ... and all these things. He has freely bestowed upon us, that we sharing His sufferings by imitation, might gain salvation in reality. ... Christ received nails in His undefiled hands ... while on me without pain or toil by the fellowship (κοινωνία) of (in) His suffering He freely bestows salvation." *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. By Pn. Schaff and H. Wace, Vol. VII (New York 1904/1894), 148.

[51] *Mystag. Catech.* IV, 3, 6 (PG 33:1100 and ff).

tion. Christ's "real" (in the historical sense) death is what allows the symbol to be both "ἀληθινὸν" and "οὐκ ἀληθινόν." Christ's "reality," of course, does not lie only in the historicity of the event but also in its religious truth. *This is precisely what saves liturgical symbolism from paganism and idolatry*. In the opening chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, we find this. "Although they (the pagans) had the knowledge of God, they did not honor him or give thanks to him as God; they became fantastic in their notions and exchanged the glory of the imperishable God for representations of perishable man, of bird and beast and reptile (Rom. 1:21–23)." Paganism and idolatry is not the use of symbols itself. On the contrary the pagans "*had* the knowledge of God," through the visible world; their sin lies in that they degraded the natural symbolism to a level that signifies more biological realities.[52] Liturgical symbolism, like all Biblical symbolism, fights against that and uses a new symbolic dimension that unites the regularity of natural events with the singularity of religious-historical events. So all symbols in liturgical rite have their "reality" rooted in a unity of the natural with the historical.[53] The same God and the same plan of God are seen in unity through nature and single events, like creation, Christ's life, and His second coming. Correspondence between the two is admitted since the "infinite (i.e., God) is being itself and ... everything participates in being-itself."[54] This is the ground and the justification of the "reality" of symbols.

Symbolic, therefore, does not bear any connotation of unreal. As in the classical essays on the "divine names" so in liturgical symbols the "intention and result is to give to God and to all his relations to man more reality and power than a non-symbolic and therefore easily superstitious interpretation could give them. In this sense, symbolic interpretation ... enhances rather than diminishes the reality and power of religious language."[55]

[52] Daniélou, "The Problem of Symbolism," 432.

[53] It is more than obvious that Liturgy admits by that the possibility of natural revelation and does not regard it as contradictory to the revelation of the Christ-event.

[54] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, 239.

[55] Ibid., 241.

As a consequence of that the *ἀντίτυπον* is elevated to the realm of the *ἀληθινόν*, i.e., of what it represents. It is no longer secular,[56] it is holy. The Eucharistic process in its symbolic presentation is not a representation but a *re-presentation*, i.e., a "making present again" of the remote events.

But all this needs mystical eyes to be seen. It is for those "who can see," as St. Maximus says.[57] It is not to be conceived as a repetition of events, for no repetition of the Last Supper and Calvary is possible. Only as a mystical continuation of the "once and for all offered" sacrifice in the unbroken unity of the one Body of Christ, i.e., His Church, can be realized. The Liturgy explains itself, with regard to this, through its mystical phraseology. Christ is called the one "who offered and is offered, who receives and is distributed."[58] He is also called the one "who is broken and yet not divided, who is eaten and yet never spent (*μηδέποτε δαπανώμενος*)."[59]

Thus the mystical presence of the Holy is made vivid not just psychologically but realistically.[60] This sacramental "realism" is achieved by a synthesis of symbols which is so marvelously kneaded with the structure of the Liturgy.

Mysticism and the Icon

All that we have said about symbolism can also be applied to the present subject. Yet, we devote a special chapter to the icons, for there is much more and particular to say about them than about the other liturgical symbols which, in general, we have examined. Icons have been the object not only of big discussions but also of

[56] The examples Prof. Tillich gives in this respect (ibid.) can entirely fit in the case of the liturgical symbols.

[57] William R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (New York 1956), 260–261. "The true meaning of our sacramental system ... can only be understood by those who are in some sympathy with Mysticism ... — that which rests on belief in symbolism."

[58] The prayer of the "Cherubikon" in the Liturgy of St. Chrysostom. The office of the priest in the Liturgy needs again the symbolic interpretation, for he becomes elevated into the realm of the reality he represents as offering Him who offers and is offered.

[59] Before Communion, Ibid.

[60] Mysticism means neither mere feeling, nor irrationality. It embraces the whole of being and as such has to be understood.

controversies which cost unusual trouble to the Church. The reason cannot be explained by referring to political, economic, and purely secular factors, as it has been done for a long time in the past. A struggle of more than a century could not take place in the Church if there was no theological connotation put upon the subject. In fact, it is now proved by mere historical research that the religious and theological factor was the predominant one in the whole controversy.

As we indicated in the introduction, this controversy over the icons was a part of the mystical line that moved the whole history of dogma as far as the Greek patristic side is concerned. In the fight against the icons, the Fathers saw an enemy of their soteriological concept of deification, which constitutes the mystical idea of the unity between human and divine. It was felt that it hurts the person of Christ Himself, since Christ was for them the organic unity between earthly flesh and divine nature. If an icon of Christ is a theological impossibility and a blaspheming then Christ Himself is denied since He is not but a perfect material man, besides being a perfect God. (Here the decision of Chalcedon stands alive and influential). The meaning of the icon does not lie in its instructive character, although this connotation has many times been given to it.[61] Looking for the mystical implications that its meaning bears, we notice that these do not refer, for the most part, to the relationship that the icon has between itself and the worshipping soul. In the great master of the interpretation of icon, St. John of Damascus, and the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787) which declared its acceptance, the explanation is given in a merely rational rather than mystical way, that the "προσκύνησις ἐπὶ τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει." So, it is a relationship between the subject represented in the icon and the worshipping soul itself which is stressed in a way that seems almost to ignore the role that the icon itself plays in this relationship.[62] What

[61] In Gregory of Nyssa imagery is called γραφὴ σιγῶσα; *Oratio laud. San. ac Magn. Mart. Theod.* (PG 46:757D).

[62] An attempt has been made to find Neoplatonic and especially Dionysian influence on a theory of the relationship between the worshipping man and the represented divine

really and mostly constitutes the mystical meaning of an icon, lies in a timeless and cosmic relationship between the image and the prototype. Here again an Areopagitic influence may be true; just as, by virtue of the hierarchic order of the universe, there is an ascent from the lower and sensual to the higher and intellectual sphere and ultimately to God, so, in turn, God is reflected, according to the law of universal harmony, in the lower order and ultimately even in material objects. It is in their capacity as reflections that such objects may be called "εἰκόνες."[63] But what has really served as a basis of icon interpretation by the Fathers is the idea of man as created in God's image (Gen 1:27). Leontius of Neapolis argues: "The image of God is Man who is made in the image of God, and particularly that man who has received the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Justly, therefore, I honor and worship the image of God's servants [i.e., the saints]."[64] On this basis we have also the important mystical implication that the work of an artist becomes an *extension of the divine act of creation*.

Another theological basis for a mystical conception of the icon is Christ's Incarnation and historical life. Here the Byzantine religious image is not a mere means of a historical demonstration, but a living and perpetual presence. [The presence of the divine in the icon is not to be considered as sin.[65]] This appears in a vivid and somehow dramatic form in that kind of icons which are called ἀχειροποίητοι—made not by hand, but either by miraculous im-

figure. In Pseudo-Dionysius' interpretation of the physical and the intelligible worlds as superimposed hierarchies one could find the idea that the image may serve the faithful as a channel of communication with the divine. To Dionysius the entire world of senses in all its variety reflects the world of the spirit. Contemplation of the former serves as a means to elevate ourselves toward the latter. He even calls the objects which make up the world of senses as "εἰκόνες." Yet, we should not forget that he does not elaborate his theory in the realm of art. *De Eccles. Hier*, I, 2 (PG 3:373AB) and *De Coel. Hier*. I, 3 (PG 3:121CD).

[63] Plotinus defends the images of the gods on this basis (*Enn*. IV, 3, 11).

[64] PG 93:1604CD. In St. Theodore of Studium (*Antirrheticus* III, 2, 5 [PG 99:420A]) we find this important theory: "the fact that man was made according to the image and likeness of God shows that in the making of an icon its form of idea [εἶδος] is something divine."

[65] See St. Theodore the Studite, *Antirrheticus* I, 12 (PG 99:344).

pression of the saintly face or body on it, or by a divine hand in a miraculous way. In these icons a direct and intimate relationship between the prototype and the image is drastically expressed. Christ's Incarnation becomes dramatically represented and its miracle is embodied in the icon. In the same way a man-made icon can become a sacred and perpetual vehicle of the Incarnation. It can be an "indwelling" of divine presence or an "overshadowing" of it.[66]

But an icon has to be "truthful," and it is so in so far as truth can be seen at all on this earth. Thus of Christ who is the truth there can be images because his divinity has assumed visible form.[67] In the same way can the saints and all visible earthly realities be the subject of an icon so far as it bears connotation of Christian truth.

An icon, finally, is a work of art. Yet, the religious and spiritual—in a sense the ascetic—is so present in it that it tends to sacrifice the form for the sake of the meaning. Not everybody can paint an icon. Its mystical connotation of divine presence requires an analogous response on the part of the painter. The painter is involved in the icon and the more he has entered into the mysteries of the divine through prayer and contemplation, the better he can reach his purpose.

Thus the icon constitutes not simply a form but a mystical reality-an expression of divine reality in material form. In it: the represented figure, the material, used and the painter are involved in a mystical relationship with the divine.

[66] For a historical development, see: Ernst Kitzinger, "The Cult of the Images before Iconoclasm," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 8 (1950): 144 ff.

[67] St. John of Damascus, *De Imaginibus*, Oratio III (PG 99:1361). Characteristically enough, on the basis of this idea, the representation of Christ as a lamb has been forbidden in the Church since the council of Trullo (691).

Conclusions

In the words of the introduction, we have seen how deeply and organically theological thought has been bound up with liturgical practice in the Greek Orthodox tradition and that the reason for all this is the strong mystical character that unites both. Thus, worship has been deeply baptized in theological thought and theology finds its most adequate expression in the form of the Liturgy.

Since the whole liturgical practice in the Orthodox Church is Eucharistic-centered we went on to examine the mystical implications in the Eucharist itself. In examining the right meaning of the term "mysterion" which has been so much distorted we found ourselves confronted with a special type of mysticism peculiar to the Eucharistic Liturgy, which one could call mystery-minded mysticism. Here the entire mystical experience appears in a confrontation with the divine presence in a sacramental ritual which both reveals and offers for participation the divine reality to man. In a further analysis of the mystical meaning of a "mysterion" we noticed that: a) this mysticism is deeply and exclusively Christocentric. Its manifestations appear in a clean connection with Christ as the only ground of mysterious relation and divine presence; b) this Christocentricity appears actually in the form of church-centricity which is created by the mystical idea of the Church as the Body of Christ; c) the entire mystery-mystical experience is not deprived of an ethical element which however is so deeply baptized in the waters of mystical union that it always appears as a mystical imperative; in connection with this asceticism is also to be interpreted and understood in a mystery-minded perspective. In the same way Liturgy itself, by indication of the name, is a concrete "action," yet so deeply baptized in the mystical world; d) the entire liturgical process is a transmission of the soul between fear and joy, a realization of God's omnipotence which however finds a solution in the confession of His presence in Christ through the Church; thus the Liturgy ends with the ancient Resurrection joy and with the gift of "μυστικὴ ἀγαλλίασις";

e) The union with Christ that Eucharist implies is stressed, yet not in an individualistic sense as a relationship between the soul and Christ, but in a dimension that involves the entire body of the Church and furthermore the entire cosmos.

In order to avoid mere "psychologism," liturgical mysticism adopted to a great extent the symbolic presentation. Thus, the Liturgy becomes a re-presentation of the divine not in an impressionistic way of mere representation but in a real symbolic way, which unites the regularity of natural events with the singularity of the events of the Bible. The *antitypon* of all symbols in the Liturgy bears the reality of the *prototypon* in a way, however, that only by mystical eyes can be seen.

In a special chapter we dealt with the mystical implications of the icons. Their mystical basis lies in that they express divine realities in material form by virtue of the idea of man as the image of God and of Christ's Incarnation, which have offered the ground of mystical union with the divine. In an icon divine, cosmic and artistic elements are united. An icon thus becomes a little "liturgy" itself and the painter involvement is more mystical and existential than in the rest of art.

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Original Paper

The Neopatristic Synthesis and Eschatology: Georges Florovsky and John Zizioulas in Dialogue

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Abstract
This essay explores the eschatological dimensions of the theological thought of Georges Florovsky and John Zizioulas by emphasizing them within the context of the neopatristic synthesis. It begins by defining Florovsky's concept of the neopatristic synthesis and highlights it as a spirit of doing theology, rather than a strict methodology. Following, the essay examines the eschatological implications of Florovsky's thought and concludes that they remain incomplete. Responding to this, the essay demonstrates how Zizioulas builds on Florovsky's eschatological thought by integrating eschatology with ontology and communion. Therefore, offering a more precise understanding and developed understanding of the eschatological implications, and thus, advancing the vision of Florovsky's neopatristic synthesis.

Keywords: Georges Florovsky, John Zizioulas, neopatristic synthesis, eschatology, modern Orthodox theology

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Introduction

In a short text uncovered by his biographer Andrew Blane, Georges Florovsky (1893–1979) briefly sketches out his "theological will," for the future generations of readers and students of his thought. Florovsky reflects on the theological idea that his thought has become most associated with: the "neopatristic synthesis." Foundationally grounded in the example of patristic theology which Florovsky holds as that which "taught" him "Christian Freedom," the neopatristic synthesis is fundamentally "a creative reassessment of those insights which were granted to the Holy Men of old." It is that which is "patristic," and "faithful to the spirit and vision of the Fathers, *ad mentem Patrum* [according to the mind of the Fathers]. Yet, it must be also neopatristic, since it is to be addressed to the new age, with its own problems and queries."[1]

With such reflection, Florovsky lays the ground for the reorientation of an Orthodox theology that is rooted in creative engagement with the Fathers. However, he notes that his contribution to this project of the neopatristic synthesis has been limited. He writes that "much has been left undone. I have written less than I ought to have written or probably than I could have written. And now probably it is too late."[2] The evidence of such an admission is contained within the text: Florovsky did hope to be 'Given time' to fully write down his "theological will" and "to convey" his "deep concern to the coming generations," but no such theological will was completed, outside of this text.[3]

Despite Florovsky's self-admittance that he did not write enough to fully develop or establish his ideas—and in particular, the call for a neopatristic synthesis—his profound influence on the shape of Orthodox thought in the 20th century, through his writings, lectures, academic posts, and ecumenical activities has led many to regard

[1] Georges Florovsky, "Theological Will" in *The Patristic Witness of Georges Florovsky: Essential Theological Writings*, eds. Brandon Gallaher and Paul Ladouceur (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 242.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 243.

him as one of the most important figures in modern Orthodox thought. Thus, while Florovsky never did complete a "theological will," his influence upon the shape of Orthodox theology is undeniable.[4] The figure in which this influence is perhaps most visible and most comprehensively known is that of Met. John Zizioulas (1931–2023).[5] Zizioulas, who worked under Florovsky during his doctoral studies, is undoubtedly the most important Greek theologian of the 20th century. In many respects, Zizioulas shows himself as an inheritor of Florovsky's neopatristic synthesis. That is, as a theologian whose frame of thought is "faithful to the spirit and vision of the fathers" and addressed to "a new age." The primary contention of this essay, especially regarding Florovsky, is that Zizioulas engages in and fulfills a neopatristic synthesis within the sphere of eschatology.

There is an eschatological undercurrent throughout Florovsky's writings, and in many cases, the eschatological realities of the Christian faith are appealed to in order to promote a particular point. Zizioulas, likewise, is a deeply eschatological thinker. There is no consideration of Zizioulas, in his thought, that does not carry an eschatological characteristic. Zizioulas is a more developed eschatological thinker based on his comprehensive relation of eschatology to ontology. This essay is thus not a criticism of Zizioulas but a display of how, through eschatology, Zizioulas shows himself to be doing work that is truly neopatristic as Florovsky envisioned it—as oriented towards the thought of the patristic era, and fostering the spirit of creativity in such engagement.

This essay begins by defining the neopatristic synthesis as understood by Florovsky. It argues that, for Florovsky, the neopatristic synthesis is not a rigid methodology, but is rather a posture or spirit of

[4] For an example of Florovsky's influence, see *The Living Christ: The Theological Legacy of Georges Florovsky*, eds. John Chryssavagis and Brandon Gallaher (London: T&T Clark, 2021), which features a diverse range of theologians, monastics, and hierarchs, reflecting on the thought and legacy of Florovsky. See especially, in the volume, Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, "The Diachronic Significance of Fr. Georges Florovsky's Theological Contribution," 37–50.

[5] Other notable figures in whom Florovsky's influence can be seen include Vladimir Lossky (1903–1958), Alexander Schmemann (1921–1983), John Meyendorff (1926–1992), and John Romanides (1927–2001).

engagement. After establishing this foundation, the essay explores the eschatological implications of Florovsky's thought. Ultimately, concluding that these implications remain unfulfilled. This allows for an examination of how Zizioulas, in recognizing the limitations of Florovsky's approach, further develops eschatology in relation to ontology, and therefore, offers a more precise vision of the eschatological implications of the Orthodox tradition.

Understanding the Neopatristic Synthesis

One of the great misconceptions surrounding the neopatristic synthesis present in both endorsers and critics is that it exists as a unified methodology. That is, that it is envisioned as a methodological structure for theology that is neatly defined, categorized, and understood. This, it is to be said, is a fundamental misunderstanding of the neopatristic synthesis. Such an understanding is not present in the writings of the neopatristic synthesis' architect, Georges Florovsky. Because this essay argues that Zizioulas is an inheritor of the neopatristic synthesis and that this inheritance is known in the development of Zizioulas' eschatology, it must be defined. More specifically, in order to invoke it with a sense of usefulness, the neopatristic synthesis must be defined with special attention to how it is not—strictly speaking—a methodology, but rather a frame for doing theology in modernity.

It must first be stated that Florovsky's use of the term "neopatristic synthesis" is reflective. Thus, what is meant is that it is not, as it were, something that is invoked with any uniformity or consistency in his corpus. Moreover, it does not play an active role in shaping his writings and arguments. His use of the term is scant throughout his corpus. Its first real appearance was in Florovsky's 1948 commencement address at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary entitled, "The Legacy and Task of Orthodox Theology."[6] In the address, Florovsky speaks of a "reintegrated" Eastern theological tradition, wherein the theology of "The East must meet and face the challenge of the West,

[6] Georges Florovsky, "The Legacy and Task of Orthodox Theology," in *Patristic Witness*, 185–191.

and the West perhaps has to pay more attention to the legacy of the East."[7] The neopatristic synthesis is, for Florovsky, a broad effort of overcoming the "Westernizing" of Orthodox theology by reclaiming the spirit of the patristic tradition, i.e., "to walk truly in [the] steps [of the Fathers] means to break new ways. … No renewal is possible without a return to the sources."[8]

As evidenced by the above quotations, Florovsky's call for a neopatristic synthesis—or a patristic renewal for Orthodoxy's theological witness in modernity—is fundamentally not methodologically stringent. What is being pointed towards is more simply a retrieval of the spirit or "mind" of the Fathers. For instance, Florovsky argues that "'To follow' the Fathers does not mean just 'to quote' them. 'To follow' the Fathers means to acquire their 'mind,' their *phronema*."[9] For Florovsky, to follow the Fathers in the way of renewal is to acquire their "mind." Thus, it is to not just sit with "isolated sayings and phrases" of the Fathers, but to integrate them into one's own thought, as they "are truly alive." This is a recovery as "an existential attitude" and "as a spiritual orientation."[10] Florovsky argues that, in such recovery, theology can be "reintegrated into the fullness of our Christian existence."[11] The closest thing we have to a self-identified theological methodology of Florovsky comes from his conclusion to *Ways of Russian Theology*, entitled "Breaks and Links."[12] Here, Florovsky speaks of the future of Orthodox theology by advocating a theology that returns to "patristic sources and foundations" while remaining attuned to the problems of "the contemporary age."[13] This theology, Florovsky argues, must be historically conscious and ecclesially referential, that is, at the service of the Church and its catholicity. This is the contribution of the Fathers in Florovsky's mind. "Orthodox theology," he writes, "is called upon to

[7] Ibid., 191.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Georges Florovsky, "St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers," in *Patristic Witness*, 224–225.
[10] Ibid., 227.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Georges Florovsky, "Breaks and Links," in *Patristic Witness*, 159–183.
[13] Florovsky, "Breaks and Links," in *Patristic Witness*, 172.

show that the 'ecumenical question' can only be resolved in the fulfilment of the Church, within the totality of a catholic tradition."[14] What organizes these characteristics is their expression under the "Hellenistic style" of the Fathers.[15] That is, Christian Hellenism to which we will turn to shortly in our examination. However, in sum, these characteristics, as observed by Paul Ladouceur, do not give a strict definition to the neopatristic synthesis and its methodological aims. Thus, the neopatristic synthesis remains "nebulously defined."[16]

It has recently been argued that however laudable Florovsky's call for the recovery or reintegration of the patristic spirit in Orthodox theology may be, it is not always on display in his own writings.[17] Moreover, although Florovsky is a historian, he falls into the temptation of decontextualizing the Fathers in many of his writings to prove a particular point in historical reconstruction. This is perhaps most evident in Florovsky's proclaimed "Christian Hellenism," which Zizioulas endorses.[18] Florovsky's Hellenism is built upon an understanding of Christian Revelation to the Gentiles in a providential relationship to the language of the Greek world. For Florovsky, "Hellenism is a standing category of the Christian existence."[19] Florovsky severely undercuts the diverse theological witness of the patristic tradition by collapsing legitimate differences in the theological approach to Hellenism simply because the Scriptures and dogmatic proclamations of the Church from which these theologians were working are grounded in Hellenistic ideas. To quote Marcus Plested,

[14] Ibid., 174.

[15] Ibid., 168.

[16] Paul Ladouceur, *Modern Orthodox Theology: 'Behold, I Make All Things New,'* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 112–114.

[17] See Alexander Hurtsellers, "The Church as an Incarnational Mystery: Biography and Christology in the Ecclesiology of Georges Florovsky," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 67.3–4 (2023): 167–197.

[18] "Just as the Christianization of Hellenism would not have been achieved without the adoption of Greek philosophical concepts of the time on the part of the Church Fathers, so too the transmission of the patristic teaching from one age to another can only occur through the concepts and dilemmas of the time and culture where the patristic message is transmitted." Zizioulas, "The Diachronic Significance of Fr. Georges Florovsky's Theological Contribution," in *Living Christ*, 41.

[19] Georges Florovsky, "Creation and Createdness," in *Patristic Witness*, 51.

> The failure to adequately acknowledge the distinctive shape and characteristics of the Latin Christian tradition is compounded by the insistence on Hellenism as the defining feature of properly patristic theology. This insistence absolutizes one possible philosophical framework and would seem to preclude full integration into the envisioned synthesis of non-Hellenic expressions of patristic Christianity, such as the earlier Syriac tradition.[20]

Therefore, it becomes uncertain as to what veers too far away from Hellenism and ceases to be a properly grounded Christian theology. One could argue that, by engaging the Idealist philosophical tradition through the dogmatic tradition of the Orthodox Church, figures like Pavel Florensky and Sergius Bulgakov are being Hellenistic, insofar as their works are an idealism under the cross wherein they creatively engage a dominant philosophy through dogmatic affirmations. It is therefore difficult to engage the validity of the call for Hellenism because it is obscured by its own vagueness and limitations. It is an absolutization of "one possible philosophical framework." It thus does not consider the variety of non-Hellenic expressions of the patristic epoch. As noted by Sergey Horujy, "The very concept of "Christian Hellenism," in a manner typical of Florovsky, is nowhere rigorously defined and elaborated, remaining an umbrella formula of vaguely delineated content. In the course of time, the somewhat overblown quality of Florovsky's praises of Hellenism and their partial disputability are becoming more plainly visible."[21]

Moreover, this reconstruction of the neopatristic synthesis, encapsulated here through Florovsky's appeal to Hellenism, offers a paradigm for Orthodoxy theology that forcibly defines itself in opposition to the West. While Florovsky is not as anti-Western as some of the more notable figures he influenced such as Vladimir Lossky and more strikingly John Romanides, Florovsky's theological example, in its claimed reclamation of the Fathers against an acute Westernization, nevertheless leads his understanding of neopatristic syn-

[20] Marcus Plested, "The Emergence of the Neopatristic Synthesis: Content, Challenges, and Limits," in *Living Christ*, 231.

[21] Sergey Horujy, "The Concept of Neopatristic Synthesis at a New Stage," *Russian Studies in Philosophy* 57:1 (2019): 22.

thesis to be spoken of vis-a-vis a Western counterpart. In short, Florovsky paints with too broad a brush a uniformity of the patristic tradition, which paradoxically hinders the call for the neopatristic synthesis, while simultaneously defining it.

Although there are shortcomings in Florovsky's use of history and in his polemics, he nevertheless identifies a way forward in the doing of theology that is able to address the problems of modernity ever aware of the richness of the Orthodox tradition. This richness is best witnessed in the creative engagement of the Fathers with the theological problems of their own day. Florovsky, in calling for this theological renewal, argues that "what is wanted… is not to translate the old dogmatic formulas into a modern language, but, on the contrary, to return creatively to the "ancient" experience, to re-live in the depth of our being, and to incorporate our thought in the continuous fabric of ecclesial fullness."[22]

Florovsky's hope is to present to Orthodoxy's dialogue partners in modernity a theology that offers a coherent understanding of the Orthodox tradition. However, he collapses the diversity of this tradition in an attempt to speak of its facets with great uniformity: In spite of his call to "ancient" experience, his call prioritizes a particular narrative of continuity amidst the patristic corpus that favors the Greek Fathers, at the exclusion of the diversity of the Latin West, and Syriac and Coptic traditions.[23] As observed by John Meyendorff in the preface to the 1983 reprint of the Russian edition of *The Ways of Russian Theology*, "An Orthodox theologian certainly has the right to ask himself if Florovsky does not consider the tradition of the Fathers too narrowly."[24] It is my contention that Florovsky does define the traditions of the Fathers too narrowly. Moreover, when I say this is definitive of the neopatristic synthesis, I am arguing that the neopatristic synthesis does not exist as a concrete methodology.

[22] Georges Florovsky, "The Ways of Russian Theology" in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky Georges Florovsky,* vol. 5, Richard S. Haugh and Paul Kachur (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing, 1976), 197.

[23] See Plested, "The Emergence," in *Living Christ*. See also John Behr, "Synthesis to Symphony", in *Living Christ*, 279–288.

[24] John Meyendorff, "Preface" to Georges Florovsky, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1983), 4.

This is evidenced by the noted shortsightedness in relation to the term. One cannot truly synthesize the Fathers, if aspects of the Fathers are ignored to present continuities where they are not. Thus, the neopatristic synthesis must be considered as providing a scaffold or structure for understanding the Fathers. It does not necessarily include the whole of the patristic corpus, but prioritizes a spirit of understanding the doing of theology that is deeply attuned to the past, present, and future life of the Church, or in Florovsky's language, the "fabric of ecclesial fullness." Therefore, the neopatristic synthesis is a scaffold or structure that was never filled out by Florovsky.

There are certainly works in Florovsky's corpus that exhibit the call of the neopatristic synthesis. Most notably, his essay, "Creation and Createdness", which surveys a variety of voices within the patristic tradition and within its commentary as they relate to the question of creation and its ontological separation from God. Nevertheless, his efforts to bridge the patristic mind with that of modern engagement do not cohere with a particular system. Thus, in this case, the neopatristic synthesis is left undone.

This has been recently observed by Kallistos Ware who sees in Florovsky's neopatristic synthesis "oversimplification and vagueness."[25] Ware states that "it has to be admitted that [Florovsky] himself f*ailed to provide a clear and concise inventory of specific doctrines that comprise this synthesis.*"[26] However, Ware notes that "despite these shortcomings, Forovsky may be applauded for providing an inspiring ideal for theological enquiry, a visionary charter for doctrinal exploration that is challenging in its possibilities and deeply Orthodox in its principles."[27] It is my argument, as stated in the introduction, that Florovsky's neopatristic synthesis left itself open to his aims in his theological will. That is, for those to come afterwards and fill in said scaffolding. This, as the rest of this paper will argue, is best evidenced in the thought of Met. John Zizioulas and this fulfillment is perhaps

[25] Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia, "Three Witnesses: Bulgakov, Florovsky, Lossky," in *Living Christ*, 59.

[26] Ibid. Italics added.

[27] Ware, "Three Witnesses," in *Living Christ*, 60.

known best through the eschatological considerations of Zizioulas and Florovsky.

Eschatology and Florovsky: An Incomplete Relationship

To demonstrate the eschatological development of Zizioulas from Florovsky's thought, we must recognize the eschatological theme shared between both, which is an admittedly broad point of consideration. However, there is between the two thinkers an appeal to eschatology that helps to structure their thought on ecclesial participation and anticipation of the *parousia*. It is through this that I would like to highlight their eschatological reflections more generally and show the more complete nature of Zizioulas' thought, as related to ontology and communion.

Florovsky's sense of the eschatological expectations of the Church must be traced back to the very grounding of the Church. That is, in Christ and thus in the mystery of the Godman. It is in this grounding that Florovsky's eschatological appeal is understood. Florovsky recognizes that the grounding of the Church is a mystery, but a mystery known in the Church's historical nature in Christ. In other words, by being established in history, the Church is, so argues Florovsky, able to wed together, as Christ did and does, the historical and the eschatological. The Church is the "Body of the Incarnate Lord." There is an incarnational emphasis to the Church. To quote further on this point,

> This is the chief reason why we should prefer a Christological orientation in the theology of the Church rather than a pneumatological. For, on the other hand, the Church, as a whole, has her personal center only in Christ, she is not an incarnation of the Holy Spirit, nor is she merely a Spirit-bearing community, *but precisely the Body of Christ, the Incarnate Lord.*[28]

It is not just that the Church is the Body of Christ, but that the Church is the "Incarnate" Body of Christ. Florovsky places emphasis on the understanding of the Church Incarnationally to highlight his

[28] Georges Florovsky, "Revelation and Interpretation," in *Collected Works*, vol. 1, 26. Italics added.

commitment to the Church in history. Namely, the Church moves from the God who entered into human existence and has been decisively made known in Christ. In the Church, "Christians are incorporated into Christ and Christ abides in them—this intimate union constitutes the mystery of the Church. The Church is, as it were, the place and the mode of the redeeming presence of the Risen Lord in the redeemed world. The Body of Christ is Christ Himself."[29] The Church, as the Body of Christ, is where "the Incarnation is being completed."[30]

The Church's identity, therefore, comes from the Incarnation. Christology announces the "mystery of the Church."[31] Here, one sees that Florovsky understands the Church to be "theanthropic," wherein the "mystery of incarnation, the mystery of the "two natures," indissolubly united, [is] continually accomplished."[32] Because the Church is the Body of Christ, it, in Florovsky's estimation, embodies Christ. In other words, Christ is known in the Church. To most fully know Christ, one must belong to Christ's Body. In the Church, therefore, the individual is brought to participate in the life of God in Christ, for the Church, as Christ's Body, is in Christ. With this, Florovsky comfortably can assert that "Christianity is the Church."[33]

It should also be remembered that Florovsky's notion of the Church as Christ's Body is indicative of his commitment to the visibility of the historical Church. Florovsky understands the Orthodox Church as "*the Church* and the *only* true Church."[34] For Florovsky, the Orthodox Church is the "true Church." In this case, the Orthodox Church is the Church of Christ. It is important to note that Florovsky understands the Orthodox Church as belonging to Christ not just in a mystical or mysterious sense, but as a matter of

[29] Georges Florovsky, "The Church: Her Nature and Task," in *Collected Works*, vol. 1, 65.

[30] Ibid., 64.

[31] Georges Florovsky, "The Body of the Living Christ," in *Patristic Witness*, 277.

[32] Georges Florovsky, "The Catholicity of the Church," in *Collected Works*, vol. 1, 38.

[33] Florovsky, "The Church: Her Nature and Task," in *Collected Works*, vol. 1, 70.

[34] Georges Florovsky, "Confessional Loyalty in the Ecumenical Movement," in *Patristic Witness,* 283.

history, or rather, in a historical sense. History, of course, does not fully comprehend this mystery, but attests to it and here is precisely where the eschatological appeal of the Church takes its key. Florovsky uses the historical reality of the incarnate God in Christ, which fundamentally points to and is the reality of the Church. The Incarnation, wherein God entered into history and established the Church, shows the Church as historically situated. In this, "The Church has her own authority in history. … An authority to teach and to keep faithfully the word of truth."[35] The historical authority of the Church spoken of here finds its grounding in the Incarnation, i.e., in Christ.

Likewise, the historical grounding of revelation that the Church possesses with regard to the Incarnation is also understood in an eschatological light. This is because Florovsky believes that the Jesus of history is the Jesus of the Creed. In the Church, these two are wed together and understood without any discontinuity. That is to say, God decisively entered history in the Incarnation. The mystery of the Incarnation, as it is historical, is also eschatological. To be more specific, the depth of the Incarnation and the ministry of redemption in Christ, understood creedally by Florovsky, recognizes in its scope the *parousia*, or the Second Coming, wherein Christ will return in judgment, as a mysterious truth of Christ's Lordship. Placed within an understanding of ecclesiology, the Church is where Christ is "present with us and encounters us here on earth. … Christ is the Church."[36] Christ abides in the Church and draws the Church's members to participate in the life of the resurrection.

Thus, in Florovsky's understanding, God revealed Godself in the Incarnation in Christ and Christ established a Church. As Florovsky claims, "Christianity, is Eternal Life, having been revealed to the world and human beings in the inscrutable Incarnation of the Son of God, and having been revealed to the faithful through the holy Sacraments by the grace of the Holy Spirit."[37] Here, we can see that Florovsky imbues the Church with the divine-human characteristic. It

[35] Ibid., 286.
[36] Florovsky, "The Church," in *Collected Works*, vol. 1, 65.
[37] Georges Florovsky, "The House of the Father," in *Collected Works*, vol. 13, 59.

is because of the "Incarnation of the Son of God",—that is, the entrance of God into creation—that the participation of the "faithful" in the life of God is possible. The Church, as wedded to Christ, is a Christological phenomenon that "is the transformed world, and in this development of creation in grace is included the entire meaning and genuine content of history, of existence in time. The Church is the beginning of the universal charismatic transformation of creation."[38] The Church, as Christ's, exists in time and awaits the eschatological renewal of all things.

This renewal coheres with Florovsky when he writes, "humans were made in order to open themselves freely to God's call, to overcome their isolation and to fulfill, by renouncing themselves, the dread mystery of the two natures, human and divine, for the sake of which the world was made, for it was made so that it might become the Church, the Body of Christ."[39] We must be especially attentive to the language of "become" in the concept of the Church. What this communicates is a potential of the "more" of the Church. There is, "for the sake of which the world was made," a sense in which the world "might become the Church, the Body of Christ." To borrow Florovsky's language, ecclesial participation is a renunciation of isolation that sees the Church as grounded in and oriented towards Christ. The Church, therefore, possesses an experiential recognition of its otherness.

The Church is the "leaven of history."[40] Thus, the priority given to the Church by Florovsky necessitates a commitment to the truth claims and experiences of the Church in its history, and also, in what lies ahead. That is, the eschatological promises of the Church in the *parousia*. The life of the Church speaks to an "encounter with living beings."[41] This encounter is not historically conditioned, but a reality of the eschatological participation of the Church. Instead, these living beings comprise the past, the present, and the future of the

[38] Ibid., 63.

[39] Florovsky, "Creation and Createdness," 62.

[40] Georges Florovsky, "The Predicament of the Christian Historian," in *Patristic Witness*, 217.

[41] Ibid., 203.

promises that the Church possesses. "The ultimate purpose of… historical inquiry is … in the encounter with living beings."[42]

Florovsky however recognizes that such an eschatological emphasis, like all experiential horizons, is "necessarily indirect and inferential."[43] The experience of the Church informs the "formidable bias" of the Christian narrative. Therefore, Christians must "dispense" with this bias. They must rather recognize that their "very particular interpretation" of history is predicated on the life of the Church. The Church, the Body of Christ, is that which Florovsky sees as possessing the fullness of recognition in engaging the horizon of the Church, which is eschatological.

From this, Florovsky argues that Christianity introduced a radical change to the ways in which history is thought of, in that it gives a distinct meaning to history. "The message of the New Testament," Florovsky argues, "makes sense of history. In Christ and by him."[44] Christ's entry into and actions in the world "existentially validated" time. By God's entry into history, through Christ, "history became sacred."[45] The Christian faith gives "man's historical existence … relevance and meaning."[46] The meaning of this historic transformation is upheld in the Church. In this, the Church is part of revelation. To be historically conscious, Florovsky believes that there must be a recovery of the doctrine of the Church, which as Christ's body can "restate history in its true existential dimension."[47]

History is therefore given existential meaning in the Body of Christ. That is to say that humanity, in the Church, can now recognize that history witnesses to the "mystery of salvation" and the "tragedy of sin."[48] The whole of history is properly understood, in the Church, in and through the revelation of God's activity in Jesus Christ. Any circularity that Florovsky relies upon becomes intentional. That is to say that the Church, as an interpretive community,

[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 197.
[44] Ibid., 217.
[45] Florovsky, "Predicament," in *Patristic Witness*, 217.
[46] Ibid., 216.
[47] Ibid., 218.
[48] Ibid., 219.

contains within itself the interpretive key of the "Christian vision of ... life." One that is "sorely distorted by sin, yet redeemed by Divine mercy, and healed by Divine grace, and called to the inheritance of an everlasting Kingdom."[49] The realities of history become existential in the Church, because the God Who entered into history, by this entry, gives history a meaning beyond itself. That is to say that history points to an end in Christ. The Bible, which shows a "dealing of the Personal God with human person" that "culminated in the Person of Jesus Christ" still communicates this dealing and encounter in the Church.[50]

Although he displays a true awareness and consideration of eschatology, I contend that Florovsky's eschatological invocations leave much to be desired. While it is helpful that Florovsky invokes and recognizes the necessary component of eschatological tension in the life of the Church—that is, in the historical experiences and forms and in that which is to come—he does not offer much development on the specific role of eschatological fulfillment or eschatological expectation. More specifically, Florovsky invokes the eschatological realities of the Church as a necessary facet of the Church's life and experience within this life. His invocation of the "more" or of eschatological fulfillment within the life and experience of the Church is, in my estimation, purposely limited. The mystery with which Florovsky grounds the Church is foremost explained through historical means. While he recognizes that the Church must exceed its historical scope, what is predominant in such expectations is what can be known and experienced. Florovsky foils the eschatological horizon of the Church with the safeguard of the Church's visible forms. In a word, Florovsky frames his understanding of "mystery" and of the eschatological horizon of the Church by focusing on the known of the Church in history.

The limitations of Florovksy's eschatology are displayed in his essay, "Eschatology in the Patristic Age," wherein he does not provide structure for the implications of the eschatological themes the work

[49] Ibid, "Predicament", 218.
[50] Ibid., 215.

surveys. The work certainly indicates his awareness for the need of an eschatological consciousness in doing theology.[51] However, the work primarily serves as an overview of patristic eschatology, focusing on the eschatological framework of the patristic era rather than providing original insights into the examples set by the Fathers or how these can be synthesized for contemporary use. While the essay demonstrates Florovsky's recognition of eschatology as the ultimate context for theological reflection, it fails to effectively integrate a nuanced understanding of eschatology and its significance in the life of the Church.

These limitations are reflective of Florovsky's discomfort in taking a more speculative approach to the question of eschatology's relation to history as expressed ecclesially.[52] Thus indicating his own limitations and how these are expressed through the neopatristic synthesis. I contend that such limitations of Florovsky to be more ambitious in relating the relationship of the mystery of the Church to its eschatological expectation is due to his work's relationship to Sergius Bulgakov (1871–1944). A large majority of Florovsky's thought can be understood as responding or reacting to Bulgakov.[53] It must be noted here that Bulgakov's work is considerably eschatological and Bulgakov's theological system of sophiology, as developed from Idealism, Vladimir Solovyov, and Pavel Florensky, was seen by Florovsky as deeply problematic. In offering undeveloped appeals to eschatology, Florovsky very well could be doing so in a

[51] The essay, it should be said, does make reference to the historical method and the contemporary historical scholarship of Christian dogma within Florovsky's milieu. For example, he criticizes, without directly naming him, the German historian Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930). 318 He also mentions Hegel's philosophy of history. However, these are not the general focus of the work, as he himself admits in the essay's closing paragraph. See Florovsky, "Eschatology in the Patristic Age," in *Patristic Witness*, 318–322.

[52] There are instances in Florovsky's writings where he is more comfortable in a speculative approach. See his essay, "'*Cur deus homo?*' The Motive of the Incarnation," in *Collected Works*, vol 3, 163–170 where he speculates on the plan of the incarnation. Cf. Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 155.

[53] See Brandon Gallaher, "'Waiting for the Barbarians': Identity and Polemicism in the Neopatristic Synthesis of Georges Florovsky," in *Living Christ*, 153–188.

guarded effort to shield and differentiate this thought from that of Bulgakov, who more ambitiously sought to develop thoughts regarding questions of the last things, judgment, and the relationship these have to the current predicament of humanity and the Church.

Eschatology and Zizioulas: An Inseparable Relationship

Here, Zizioulas helps complete the eschatological picture of Florovsky. In many respects, Zizioulas shares the eschatological appeals of Florovsky, but gives them a fuller sense of relationship to being and person. That is, Zizioulas fosters the same eschatological expectation of ecclesial fullness of Florovsky. However, Zizioulas develops a more systematic and comprehensive relationship of ecclesial life with eschatology. Moreover, this development is found in correcting and articulating the Christological implications of such an ecclesially experienced eschatology as Trinitarian by giving voice to the ontological implications of such thought.

As noted, Florovsky's eschatological appeal is foundationally Christocentric, or driven by a Christological priority. In the Church's grounding in Christ—Him who is God and Man—the Church exists in tension with these realities. In other words, the Church exists in history and in relation to the end of history. The Church, grounded in the incarnate Christ, is oriented towards the resurrected and glorified Christ. Thus, the Church draws the subject to Christ's resurrection and glorification. While this is not problematic, the invocation of mystery is incomplete in its Trinitarian impart. That is, this theology does not adequately account for the Trinitarianism it appeals to. Whereas Florovsky speaks of the eschatological hope of the Church through a Christological appeal, this appeal is invoked as "mystery" without adequately expressing this appeal's place in relation to the Father and Holy Spirit. What remains is an implied synthesis of Christology with pneumatology, without offering an explanation of such synthesis.

Zizioulas was aware of the incomplete nature of Florovsky's ecclesiology in relation to Christology. He writes, for example, in *Being as Communion* that Florovsky's overemphasis on the Christo-

logical characteristic of the Church "indirectly raised the problem of the synthesis between Christology and Pneumatology, without however offering any solution to it."[54] Zizioulas reaffirms the incompleteness of Florovsky's eschatological thought in his work, *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology* where he writes that Florovsky did not provide an adequate integration of eschatological implications into the realms of "systematic theology and Christian existence."[55] Zizioulas here offers a correction. Like Florovsky, Zizioulas appeals to Christology to understand eschatology in relation to history and the Church. As helpfully noted by Robert Turner, Zizioulas sees that Christ is the "key": "Christ is the truth realized in time."[56] This affirmation is in continuity with Florovsky. However, the ways in which Zizioulas unpacks this affirmation provides a more astute vision of the eschatological tension of the Church, as principally related to ontology, i.e., the understanding of being and the person and their participation in communion.

Whereas Florovsky's Christological invocation for understanding the eschatological tension of the present relies upon observation of the historical tension of the God-man, Zizioulas develops this thought into an ontological reality that emphasizes more concretely how salvation is to be understood within history and thus in Christ. Zizioulas argues that the truth of Christian existence resides in a dialectic of Christological character: "The end of history in Christ *already* becomes present here and now."[57]

Though similar to Florovsky, Zizioulas here uncovers a more precise meaning of this tension in the person and in communion by accounting for it in experience. This is not a subjective turn towards experience, but rather a recognition of what Zizioulas identifies as the ontological truth of being and of the person. He writes that "[S]alvation as truth and life is possible only in and through the person

[54] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and teh Church* (Yonkers, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 124.

[55] John D. Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology* (Alhambra, CA: St. Sebastian Orthodox Press, 2023), 4.

[56] Robert Turner, "Eschatology and Truth," in *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (London: Routlledge, 2007), 22.

[57] Ibid., 71.

who is ontologically *true*."[58] To speak of an ontological truth to personhood, Zizioulas argues that, in Christ and in the Triune God, "being and communion" must "coincide."[59] This language of communion corresponds to the ontological significance of love and personhood. That is, Zizioulas' ontology, in its eschatological orientation, is an ontology of love. Zizioulas rejects the understanding that love is simply an attribute or a property of the divine essence. He writes,

> Love is not an emanation or "property" of the substance of God ... but is constitutive of his substance, i.e. it is that which makes God what he is, the one God. Thus love ceases to be a qualifying property of being and becomes the supreme ontological predicament. Love as God's mode of existence "hypostasizes" God, constitutes his being.[60]

Love is "God's mode of existence." This ontological understanding expresses itself in Love as communion. As this pertains to the eschatological, Zizioulas recognizes that eschatology—"coming to truth" and final perfection—is constitutive of communion. To quote Scott MacDougall, Zizioulas' "eschatology ... qualifies ontology."[61] The eschaton represents the fullness of creation's communion with the Divine: "The truth and the ontology of the person belong to the future, are images of the future."[62]

Such identity of ontology and truth is with Christ. Zizioulas' identification of the eschatological experience and truth with Christ necessarily departs from individualism. As observed by Robert Turner, it is the resurrection of Christ, in particular that "gives Zizioulas' ontology its basis in eschatology. The Incarnation brings the truth of divine personhood into the world, but the victory of the resurrection realizes the eschatological truth, Christ, in time."[63] This confirms, quoting Aristotle Papanikolaou, that "The ontological no-

[58] Ibid., 107.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion,* 46.
[61] Scott MacDougall, *More Than Communion: Imagining an Ecclesiology Ecclesiology* (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 87.
[62] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 62; Emphasis in original text.
[63] Turner, "Eschatology and Truth," in *Theology of John Zizioulas*, 21.

tion of truth as 'being forever' is now paradoxically identified with history."[64] In other words, Zizioulas' ontology in eschatology asserts that the Incarnation brings the reality of divine personhood into the world, while the resurrection actualizes the eschatological truth of Christ within time. Zizioulas frames these claims by drawing on Maximus the Confessor. He argues that "the Incarnate Christ is so identical to the ultimate will of God's love, that the meaning of created being and the purpose of history are simply the Incarnate Christ."[65]

With this, he argues—again following Maximus as his patristic influence—that the Incarnation is not historically conditioned.[66] In other words, the Incarnation is not caused by the Fall of Adam. The Incarnation is indelibly linked to the truth of Christ Himself. Zizioulas is critical of any theology that assumes the Incarnation as conditional, i.e., as conditioned entirely on a supposed perfect state that humanity deviated from.[67] Christ is Himself truth and the revelation of truth is not subject to the Fall. Thus, as truth, the dialectic of truth is in Christ Himself. "[T]ruth is located simultaneously at the heart of history, at the ground of creation, and at the end of history:

[64] Aristotle Papanikolaou, *God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 83.

[65] Ibid., 97. It should be noted that Zizioulas' appeals to Maximus' use of "eikon" to express ontology. Nikolaos Loudovikos, a student of Zizioulas, has criticized this appeal by placing the terminology of Maximus within its proper contextual ground and as a reflection of a dialogical or analogical relationship. See Nikolaos Loudovikos "*Eikon* and *mimesis*: Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Ecclesial Ontology of Dialogical Reciprocity", *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 11, no. 2–3 (2011): 123–136. See also Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 162–170; Cf. Loudovikos, "Person Instead of Grace and Dictated Otherness: John Zizioulas' Final Theological Position," *The Heythrop Journal* 52, no. 4 (2011): 684–699. Noteworthy defenders of Zizioulas' approach to Maximus and more broadly his use of personalism include Aristotle Papanikolaou and Alexis Torrance. See Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Is John Zizioulas an Existentialist in Disguise? Response to Lucian Turcescu," *Modern Theology* 20, no. 4 (2004); Alexis Torrance, "Personhood and Patristics in Orthodox Theology: Reassessing the Debate," *Heythrop Journal*, 52, no. 4 (2011).

[66] As noted by Florovsky in his essay, "*Cur deus homo?* The Motive of the Incarnation", Maximus' view lacks patristic consensus.

[67] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 171.

all this in one synthesis which allows us to say 'Christ is the truth.'"[68] In Christ, one finds the realization of God's will. Thus, one finds the meaning or "synthesis" of existence in Christ who is the truth, i.e., simultaneously characterized in creation and in eschatology.

Because Christ as truth unites the meaning of history with eschatology, existence within history and within the expectation of the eschatological take form in Christ. That is to say, "Christ shows not just being, but the persistence, the *survival of being*; through the resurrection, Christology shows that created existence can be so true that not even human freedom can suppress it."[69] There is a Christological subtext of the person in relation to freedom, now modeled in the communion of God in Christ, i.e., the Triune God. Christ shows that the fallenness of freedom can be overcome by Divine communion. Therefore, eschatology can enter into a "mode of existence."[70] The meaning of history and truth unfold in Christ and in communion. Christ, the ultimate eschatological meaning and fulfillment, comes into history, but is not limited to history. Instead, the meaning of history is in Christ.

Zizioulas urges us to understand the participatory call of the human in truth, and thus in Christ. He does not stop his claims of Christ as truth here as though they are self-explanatory, or can be thought of in isolation. Rather, he relates these claims to the concept of communion. More specifically, the communion of God as Trinity and the pneumatological expression of communion in history and in the life of the Church. "Christology," Zizioulas argues, "is ... conditioned by Pneumatology ... in fact it is *constituted* pneumatologically."[71] Drawing on the New Testament, Zizioulas shows the necessarily pneumatological character of Christ's ministry. From Christ's conception to Christ's rising, there is a pneumatological presence. The Holy Spirit is therefore the person of the Holy Trinity "who realizes in history that which we call Christ."[72] Thus, in Zizioulas'

[68] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 98.
[69] Ibid., 108.
[70] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 1.
[71] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 111.
[72] Ibid., 110–111.

mind, there is no imbalance in Christology, for the invocation of Christ necessarily speaks to the communion of the Holy Spirit and the Father. Zizioulas' "pneumatologically focused" Christology allows for an understanding of divine and human communion. The necessary interrelation between Christ and the Spirit confirms Zizioulas' relation of communion to the relationality of God. He writes that "Without the concept of communion it would not be possible to speak of the being of God."[73] The Holy Trinity fundamentally discloses communion. Drawing from the Cappadocian Fathers, he argues that the Trinity is not "a primordial ontological concept and not a notion which is added to the divine substance or rather which follows it."[74] Therefore, the work of the Spirit in Christology necessarily is reflective of Divine communion.

Beyond the ontological distinctions made by Zizioulas, his reflections on the eschatological anticipation and mystery of the Church take greater form in the ways in which he sees this expressed ecclesially. That is, he intricately links eschatology to the life of the Church in worship and in liturgy, and thus in communion. While such appeals are present in Florovsky, Florovsky does not, as we have shown, deal consistently or comprehensively with such an eschatological expression. In marking communion as inseparably linked to life in God, Zizioulas necessarily reflects upon how this divine communion is manifest in the Church. He does so by emphasizing the centrality of the eucharist.

The eucharist relates to communion and what communion allows is for the individual to be the 'image of God' by being "incorporated in the original and only authentic image of the Father, which is the Son of God incarnate."[75] The eucharist is "where communion" is "realized *par excellence*."[76] Zizioulas writes, "In the celebration of the eucharist the Church experiences that which is promised for the *par-*

[73] Ibid., 17.
[74] Ibid.
[75] John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 5.
[76] Ibid., 7.

ousia, namely the eschatological unity of all in Christ."[77] The eucharist thus liberates the historical condition of the person by allowing them to participate in its eschatological fulfillment: Christ, and the communion of the Holy Trinity. In this sense we can see that the eschatological character of the eucharist allows for humanity to partake in eschatological existence. By this, what is meant is that in the life of the Church, those who partake in the eucharist partake in the very Truth, Christ, of history and of eschatology. To quote Zizioulas, "The eucharistic community constitutes a sign of the fact that the *eschaton* can only *break through* history but never be identified with it."[78] This "sign" is a transformation of all things in Christ, where the "many" become "one." That is, where there is substantial unity in Truth, i.e., Christ, and the communion of the Trinity.[79] This sign of unity is not a mere historical remembrance, but an active partaking in the Risen Christ, or Him Who is the age to come. Therefore, the eucharist is not only a symbol of what will be, but is itself an expression of what will be. In other words, in the eucharist, the Church "is what she is by becoming again and again what she will be."[80]

We can see, therefore, that the invocation of eschatology in Zizioulas is not simply an appeal to that which is to come, as a means for relating the expectation of the *parousia* to the present. More than this, the eschatological guides the very life of the Church, because the Church is fundamentally Christ's and partakes in the truth of Christ as the fulfillment of all things; drawing all to communion with Himself, the Holy Spirit, and the Father. Therefore, Zizioulas' eschatological appeals take shape through his considerations of how humanity, being, and the person relate to God in communion. The depth with which Zizioulas seeks to understand the Christological basis of the truth is an eschatological consideration for understanding the truth of all things. Unlike Florovsky who only indicates the

[77] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 144.
[78] Ibid.,161.
[79] Ibid., 145.
[80] John D. Zizioulas, "The Mystery of the Church in Orthodox Tradition," in *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today*, ed. Gregory Edwards (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2010), 144.

eschatological expectation of the Church, Zizioulas makes such an expectation indispensable to the very participation of life in the Church, and thus in Christ.

Neopatristic Synthesis and Fulfillment

While we have highlighted the ways in which Zizioulas offers a deeper sense of fulfillment to the eschatological implications of Florovsky's thought, I would like to draw this study to a close by reflecting on the overarching concern that both theologians engage. Specifically, as this pertains to how Zizioulas more broadly realizes the neopatristic synthesis as envisioned by Florovsky. As we have shown, the neopatristic synthesis must not be thought of as a strict methodology. Rather, in Florovsky's mind, the neopatristic synthesis embodies a spirit of retrieval. That is, a dynamic engagement with the patristic corpus that is driven by and coheres around ecclesial identity and outlook.

His use of the term "neopatristic synthesis" is scant and when it is employed, he does not use any strict criterion for what constitutes authentic neopatristic theology. The neopatristic synthesis should thus be understood as a broad and flexible orientation, or a framework within which Orthodox theology can engage modernity. The neopatristic synthesis therefore does not possess a specific set of doctrinal conclusions or methodological rules, but instead is representative of a general theological posture that resonates more as an ethos than a methodology. Thus, it is a framework for thinking in and engaging the tradition.

Florovsky himself, while revered for his historical acumen and theological creativity, left much of his writings open in their implications and conclusions. That is, his work often does not follow its own conclusions, or offer pathways for the future of Orthodox theology. No matter how astute his historical analysis and observations are, these observations function more as invitations for exploration or general observations of historical and theological phenomenon than as solutions. Zizioulas, while reverent towards Florovsky's mind and ideas, sees that Florovsky did not adequately follow his argu-

ments into conclusions. In this particular instance, Zizioulas recognizes that Florovsky did not adequately synthesize the implications of the Church in its Christological and thus eschatological orientation. Zizioulas therefore sought to complete this open endedness in Florovsky's theology and he does so in a manner that is not only patristic, but also engages modern existential concerns with a greater sense of clarity and immediacy.

Therefore, it is not that Zizioulas engages the Fathers more thoroughly than Florovsky—while of course, this point can be made in certain respects—but that his thought actively seeks to present an Orthodox theology that is invested in the patristic corpus and engaging of the concerns of modernity. In particular, as seen in this study, through an appeal to ontology, personhood, communion, and their eschatological nature in the Church. Regardless of one's personal evaluation of the efficacy of Zizioulas' theology and the interrelatedness of ontology and eschatology, there is little doubt that his work fulfills Florovsky's criterion for what constitutes a neopatristic synthesis.[81] Zizioulas' work is truly neopatristic in the way Florovsky envisioned: providing an Orthodox theological vision that remains faithful to the patristic era, while engaging the present. This creative engagement, characterized here by his deep considerations of eschatology, shows that Zizioulas' theology remains an expression of the neopatristic synthesis that Florovsky had only begun to sketch.

[81] For instance, John Behr's criticism that Zizioulas' metaphysical system is an abstraction that does not adequately consider the function and story of revelation within the tradition. John Behr, "Faithfulness and Creativity," in *Orthodoxy and the World Today: Proceedings [of the] Sixth Congress of the Higher Orthodox Schools of Theology, Sofia, 5–10 October, 2004* (Sofia, BG: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2006), 166–173. Behr's assertions, in many respects, are countered by Alexis Torrance in "Personhood and Patristics."

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Original Paper

John D. Zizioulas and Frank D. Macchia in Conversation on Eschatology: A Preliminary Assessment

Anita Davis

Abstract
This article brings the eschatologies of the Eastern Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas, and Pentecostal theologian Frank D. Macchia. Zizioulas' primary theological orientation is the ontological and eschatological significance of the Eucharistic gathering of the Church. Macchia's north star in contributing to the maturing of Pentecostal theology is the eschatological significance of Christ and Pentecost. Both eschatologies are thoroughly Trinitarian and relational, Christological and pneumatological, with the whole cosmos in view. The main issues identified are, first, differing views on human freedom in the eschaton, and second, the significance Zizioulas assigns to the intercession of the Church and the saints. Zizioulas rejects the possibility of a turn toward true relation after judgment, viewing human freedom as bound to temporal sequence. In contrast, Macchia allows for the possibility, given the eternal and universal efficacy of Christ's salvation. Both theologians affirm the annihilation of sin and death, and thus its deception. Given the Resurrection's liberation of creation from sin and death, and its universal salvific efficacy, human freedom to turn toward life can be seen as integral to it. Moreover, the faithful never cease to participate in Christ's intercession for this turning.
Keywords: Macchia, Zizioulas, eschatology, pentecostal, personhood

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Introduction

The intent of this article is to bring into dialogue the eschatological aspect of Zizioulas' oeuvre with that of a contemporary Pentecostal theologian, Frank D. Macchia. Within both traditions, the significance of eschatology is increasingly being acknowledged and addressed.[1] In this area, both Zizioulas and Macchia have made important contributions within their own traditions and more broadly. Given the significance of this issue for each tradition, this article aims to both inform ongoing considerations and to contribute to the wider endeavor of the Pentecostal-Orthodox dialogue.

The discussion will commence with a brief outline of the theological conceptual framework and grammar Zizioulas and Macchia utilize, the critical elements of their eschatological thinking, and the significance of eschatology for their broader theological perspectives. It will then bring these two perspectives into dialogue to assess the extent of congruence with their respective eschatologies. It will also identify any issues arising and propose a response that could be considered. However, before commencing, it is important to provide a broader context for the discussion regarding the respective traditions, as well as Zizioulas and Macchia's theological interests.

Background

On the surface, the Eastern Orthodox and Pentecostal traditions can seem quite different. For example, Eastern Orthodoxy has a long Church history and so has a rich tradition to inform its theological reflection. On the other hand, Pentecostalism as a movement traces its beginnings to the early twentieth century, with its theological reflection maturing only in recent decades. Challenging for Pentecos-

[1] See, for, example: Pantelis Kalaitzidis, "Eschatology and Future-Oriented Hermeneutics in Contemporary Orthodox Theology: The Case of Metropolitan John D. Zizioulas," in *The Spirit, Hermeneutics, and Dialogues*, ed. Reimund Bieringer et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 157, 162; Peter Althouse, "The Landscape of Pentecostal and Charismatic Eschatology: An Introduction," in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World Without End*, ed. Peter Althouse and Robby Waddell (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010).

tal theologians and also for broader ecumenical engagement, is that Pentecostalism is a "bewildering pluralism," an amalgam of different traditions, cultures, languages, and catholic and evangelical backgrounds.[2] Eastern Orthodoxy has more formalized church structures and liturgies, centered on the Eucharist. Pentecostal churches are multi-denominational and decentralized. The gatherings are less formalized (although not without structure) and can be seen as more emotionally expressive, centered on the worship and sermon. On the other hand, the setting for Eastern Orthodox liturgies is highly expressive with the congregation surrounded by iconic depictions of Christ, the apostles, and the saints whereas Pentecostal settings generally do not have any external depictions along these lines. However, Rybarczyk in his monograph on Eastern Orthodox and Pentecostal understandings of salvation, identified significant fundamental similarities between the two traditions. For example, both traditions understand Christianity as more than just salvation, and both are thoroughly pneumatological, embracing the mystical aspects of spiritual transformation.[3] It could then be expected that this preliminary exploration of this article, focused on the eschatology of two particular theologians, has the potential to identify both further foundational congruences between these traditions and to identify issues that could inform ongoing eschatological considerations.

By way of background regarding the theologians, Zizioulas has primarily engaged with the patristics to develop his theological perspectives, notably the Greek church fathers and St Maximus the Confessor. His early mentor was Georges Florovsky under whose guidance he completed his thesis, published as *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*.[4] Florovsky's "inaugurated eschatology" was also significant

[2] Walter J Hollenweger, "An Introduction to Pentecostalisms," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 25, no. 2 (2004) 125–37; Allan Heaton Anderson, "Pentecostal Theology as a Global Challenge: Contextual Theological Constructions," in *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology*, ed. Wolfgang Vondey, Kindle Electronic Edition (London/New York: Routledge, 2020), 18–28.

[3] Edmund J Rybarczyk, *Beyond Salvation: Eastern Orthodoxy and Classical Pentecostalism on Becoming Like Christ* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004).

[4] John D. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop during the First Three Centuries* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross

for the development of Zizioulas' eschatological perspective.[5] Macchia's theological contribution engages mostly contemporary Western theologians but not to the exclusion of Eastern Orthodox and the patristics. His main concern has been to "contribute to the global Pentecostal conversation about the significance of life in the Spirit (Spirit baptism) for theological reflection."[6] Macchia's early studies included a focus on Karl Barth; and a doctoral thesis on the challenge of a theology of social transformation—life in the eschatological "now" but "not yet"—focused on the theology of the Blumhardts.[7]

It should be noted that although it is not assumed these theologians stand as definitive representatives of their respective traditions, it is clear that both have made substantive original contributions both within their own traditions and in broader ecumenical conversations and consultations. It should also be noted that although Zizioulas' thinking, particularly his relational ontology of the trinity, has been influential within the West, within Eastern Orthodoxy, he has been subject to substantive critique, primarily in relation to his interpretation of the Cappadocian Fathers to support his relational ontology.[8] On the other hand, Zizioulas' eschatological perspective is being recognized as having the potential to make a significant contribution to both Eastern Orthodox and ecumenical theological discussions.[9] Within Pentecostal academia, Macchia's

Orthodox Press, 2001).

[5] Kalaitzidis, "Eschatology and Future-Oriented Hermeneutics in Contemporary Orthodox Theology: The Case of Metropolitan John D. Zizioulas," 157, 162.

[6] Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006), 17.

[7] Published as Frank D. Macchia, *Spirituality and Social Liberation: The Message of the Blumhardts in the Light of Wuerttemberg Pietism*, Pietist and Wesleyan Studies, no 4 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1993).

[8] A point noted by Asproulis in Nikolaos Asproulis, "Foreword," *The Wheel* 36 (2024): 6; Examples of critiques include: Andrew Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers: From the Philokalia to the Present* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2015), 214–25; Alan Brown, "On the Criticism of Being as Communion in Anglophone Orthodox Theology," in *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight, Kindle Electronic Edition (London/New York: Routledge, 2007), 35–78.

[9] For example, Vasiljević cites Kalaitzidis who "rightly pointed out" that "the his-

theological endeavor is recognized as a significant contribution to the maturing of Pentecostal theological perspectives , and to providing resources for broader ecumenical engagement.[10] In particular, Macchia has made a substantive and recognized contribution to refocusing the fundamentals of Pentecostal eschatology, at least within the academy, from speculation about end time events toward a trinitarian focus on the kingdom of God inaugurated in Christ.[11] Within this context we now turn to commence the discussion.

Zizioulas: Personhood, the Eucharist, and Eschatology

Personhood

A significant contribution by Zizioulas to contemporary theology has been his development of an onto-relational understanding of personhood. In summary, for Zizioulas "the person is an identity that emerges through relationship."[12] According to Zizioulas, it is the true personhood of the past-present-future Christ who is the revelation of the Father's intent for humanity and the world: to participate

tory of eschatology in Orthodox theology can in its turn be divided into a pre- and post-Zizioulas period." Bishop Maxim Vasiljević, "Between the 'Already' and the 'Not Yet'" A Journey with Metropolitan John Zizioulas," *The Wheel* 36 (2024): 26.

[10] For example, I. Leon Harris, *The Holy Spirit as Communion: Colin Gunton's Pneumatology of Communion and Frank Macchia's Pneumatology of Koinonia*, Kindle Electronic Edition (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2017); Peter D. Neumann, *Pentecostal Experience: An Ecumenical Encounter*, Kindle Electronic Edition, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 187 (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012); Henry Lederle, *Theology with Spirit: The Future of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements in the 21st Century*, Kindle Electronic Edition (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Word and Spirit press, 2010); Christopher A. Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[11] See, for example, Althouse's refers to Macchia's eschatology in Peter Althouse, "Eschatology: The Always Present Hope," in *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology*, ed. Wolfgang Vondey, Kindle Electronic Edition (London/New York: Routledge, 2020), 274; Although beyond the scope of this article, Macchia acknowledges the common tendency by Pentecostals, and evangelicals more broadly, to focus eschatology on interpreting end time events. However, he also advises these are not central to eschatology and shouldn't be a point of division. Frank D. Macchia, *Introduction to Theology: Declaring the Wonders of God*, Foundations for Spirit-Filled Christianity (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2023), 153.

[12] John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 9.

in the relationality of the divine communion. "Christ is the head not only of humanity but of all creation, embodying it in his person and giving it eternal being."[13] The concept of personhood, for Zizioulas, is anchored in the eschatological Eucharistic experience of the church in the relational communion of divine love in and through Christ by the Spirit. It is this eschatological understanding of personhood that underpins and provides the grammar for his reflections on Trinity, Christ and Spirit, and church.[14]

The ends of creation

The distinctiveness of the person of Christ is that he is, by the Spirit, the union of created and uncreated and so, the "eschatologization of history."[15] It is this eschatological union who is Christ into which humanity, and through humanity, all of creation is to be resurrected and transfigured by the Spirit to participate in the divine communion, true personhood. He is the end of all things, the truth of created being.[16] The concept of *theosis* then, is thoroughly Christological, pneumatological and relational because it is through participation in Christ by the Spirit that humanity acquires their true identity.[17] The Spirit eschatologizes history to realize the Christ event, from his incarnation and resurrection, through to the constitution of his body, the church, and ultimate eschatological fulfilment.[18] "Christology is either pneumatological, or it is no Christology at all."[19] It is the distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit in the economy that the Spirit is beyond history, and so brings the *Eschata*, through

[13] John D. Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology*, Kindle Electronic Edition (Alhambra, California: Sebastian Press, 2023), 170.

[14] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, 2004 edition (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1985), 43–65; Nikolaos Asproulis, "The Eschaton as Mystery and Problematic: Exploring John Zizioulas's Eschatological Vision," *The Wheel* 36 (2024): 27.

[15] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 142.

[16] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 97–98.

[17] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 243.

[18] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 111; John D. Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Douglas Knight (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 107–8.

[19] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 29.

the incarnation and resurrection of the Son and the Eucharistic gathering, into history.

Consequently, drawing on St Maximus the Confessor, Zizioulas sees the future, rather than the past, as determinative of history. By the eschatological Spirit, history is freed from natural protological necessity because it has its "roots in the future and its branches in the present."[20] It is the end reaching into history, to redeem, renew and transform (to "eschatologize" in Zizioulas' words), to cause true being.[21] Thus for Zizioulas, "eschatology ... is about a future that *comes to* history and does not *come from* history."[22] This is also how Zizioulas, again drawing on Maximus, can conceptualize the eschatologization of history as a movement from "shadow" to "icon" or image to "truth".[23] For Zizioulas, icon is the ultimate truth of the world—the kingdom of God—eschatologized in history. In relation to the incarnated Christ, he is icon/image of the Father, and so icon of creation's eschatological participation in the divine communion.[24]

Current state of creation

It is from these eschatological ends of humanity and all of creation that Zizioulas narrates the historical state of humanity. What constitutes humanity is the call by the Creator to the relation of true personhood. "There is no human being unless there is the Other to issue the call."[25] Conversely, humanity has imprinted in its nature the desire for this relationship.[26] Humanity cannot be ultimately free unless they are the other in relationship with God, a "responding and returning to its original cause."[27] This call of humanity is also *for* creation. In relationship with the divine Other, humanity is called to bring all of creation into this relationship for the participation of the

[20] Ibid., 43–44.

[21] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 31–44, 202; John D. Zizioulas, "Toward an Eschatological Ontology," *The Wheel* 36 (2024): 8–19.

[22] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 41.

[23] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 99.

[24] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 202–27.

[25] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 42.

[26] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 69.

[27] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 91.

whole cosmos in the divine communion.[28] The response is one of acceptance or rejection as there is no ontological alternative—this is the boundary of human freedom.[29]

Humanity has not only resisted this call but done so on the basis of the deception that there is an ontological alternative within creation for the fulfilment of human existence. This movement away from the divine love toward creation as ultimate without reference to the Creator is what constitutes sin. Zizioulas sees it as a fall or deviation from the future, rather than a fall from the past.[30] The consequence of humanity's surrender to this lie is movement toward annihilation rather than its true ends. This corruption of the good creation at the scale of the uniqueness of individual persons results in fragmentation and division with pervasive consequences throughout all of creation.[31] The Son submitted to the constraints of creation, including mortality; and it was the eschatological Spirit who transcended these constraints to realize the intent of the Father, to make Christ the eschatological "last Adam."[32]

Zizioulas' concept of fall from the future provides the basis for him to consider the enigma of evil.[33] For Zizioulas, evil "is nonbeing itself."[34] If sin is deviation from the future of creation, then evil is return to the nonbeing of the past.[35] Zizioulas characterizes evil as parasitic with no ontological existence, dependent on created being.[36] From this perspective, evil is a cosmological problem which

[28] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 43.

[29] John D. Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, ed. Luke Ben Tallon (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 167–68.

[30] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 245–46; Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 43–44; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 102. As an aside, Zizioulas appears to assume, across his work, a historical Adam as the cause of the deviation from the ends of humanity, but for the purposes of setting out the current dilemma it is not necessary to explore this issue.

[31] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 229–30.

[32] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 29; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 111, 130; Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 106–7; Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 244.

[33] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 247 Zizioulas acknowledges the origin of evil remains an enigma and sees it as an existential rather than a rational question.

[34] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 245.

[35] Ibid., 245.

[36] Ibid., 255, 256.

can only be addressed "through a cosmic transformation at the end of history," the healing, perfecting and transfiguration of humanity and all of creation, in and through the eschatological Christ.[37]

The Eucharist as foretaste of the eschaton

Baptism and Eucharist are, for Zizioulas, the definitive way in which humanity turns toward participation in the love of God, and thus true personhood.[38] Zizioulas points out that from the beginning of the church, baptism and Eucharist have been understood as events "*in* the Spirit" and "*into* Christ."[39] This is because true personhood cannot be obtained by humanity by its own endeavors. Rather, true personhood is formed through participation in that which is beyond humanity, participation in the ecclesial body of Christ: "no-one is saved on his or her own."[40] It is the move toward true personhood because it is the eschatological Holy Spirit that is the cause of the Eucharist and realizes its true being.[41] Because the Holy Spirit is person, the activity of the Spirit in the Eucharist event is necessarily person-forming. It is individuated and divided bodies, passing through the "not my will but yours be done" participation in the death of Christ in baptism, to rise as new creation, by the Spirit, to participate in the eucharistic ecclesial person of Christ, the One and the many.[42]

The Eucharistic gathering is a celebration and breaking in to the present of the future banquet of the kingdom, the "filling of the present with reality … from the future."[43] It is on this basis that Zizioulas

[37] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 250–51 It is important to note that for Zizioulas, "Creation is to become perfect with the Incarnation, rather than be restored to an original state of perfection."

[38] Zizioulas regards the Eucharist event as inclusive of the whole gathering including the Bishop, deacons and congregation, the liturgy and the partaking of the bread and wine.

[39] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 244.

[40] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 314.

[41] Ibid., 352, 354; Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 154.

[42] John D. Zizioulas, *The Meaning of Being Human*, Kindle Electronic Edition (Alhambra, California: Sebastian Press, 2021), 39–41.

[43] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 212; Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 31; John D. Zizioulas, *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today*, ed. Fr

notes remembrance of the past is only possible because of the disciples' encounter with the risen Christ that brought hope and meaning to the present.[44] The Eucharist also affirms that in Christ, by the Holy Spirit, the materiality of creation is not to be destroyed. Rather, it is to be transfigured, to "become carriers of life rather than death," and is thus sacred.[45] It is in and through the historical events of the incarnation and resurrection, baptism, and the ecclesial gathering of the Eucharist, that we and all of creation can be in relation with the eschatological Christ of the *Eschata*.[46] This is how Zizioulas can identify the Eucharistic gathering as icon of the kingdom to come, of the "corporate personality" who is the eschatological Christ.[47] The "Eucharist is … the act or event in which the identification of the Church with Christ … reach(es) its fullest realization."[48]

Given the significance Zizioulas accords the Eucharistic gathering and all its elements, it could be argued that he proposes an overly realized eschatology of the Eucharistic gathering as the body of Christ.[49] For example, Zizioulas proposes the icon of the Eucharistic gathering is "as real as the presence of Christ in the New Testament itself." Zizioulas however provides an important qualification. It is of itself not this reality, but it is icon because of its relation to true reality.[50] That is, the Church is participation by the Spirit in the reality of the truth, without being identified as the truth.[51] The gift of the Spirit is foretaste of the kingdom to come.[52] Zizioulas also draws attention to the fact that the Church, the Eucharistic gathering, is

Gregory Edwards, Kindle Electronic Edition (Alhambra, California: Sebastian Press, 2010), Loc. 3136.

[44] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 27.

[45] Zizioulas cites Saint John of Damascus (78 f.): "… and I do not cease to venerate matter, through which my salvation was brought about." Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, 80–81.

[46] Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 153; Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 204.

[47] Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, Loc. 3241–3324.

[48] Ibid., Loc. 3206.

[49] See for example, Asproulis, "The Eschaton as Mystery and Problematic: Exploring John Zizioulas's Eschatological Vision," 31.

[50] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 346.

[51] Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 136.

[52] St Maximus cited in Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 29.

clearly a community of those who are struggling against evil and being made holy.[53] Although Zizioulas understands the Church as icon, a depiction and projection into history of the eschatological kingdom, it is "clearly not identical with the kingdom of God."[54] This is why "the Church needs the Pentecostal scene to be set again and again."[55]

Zizioulas also takes an eschatological perspective on ethics. He acknowledges that although actual application can be problematic, it is love, "the quintessence of eschatology and the ethical content of living," which is the "goal of Christian morality, a foretaste of the Kingdom."[56] He draws on Maximus the Confessor who understands ethical life as living "as if the eschaton has already come," similar to, Zizioulas proposes, the experience of the Eucharist.[57] For Zizioulas, love is the moral connection between ethics and eschatology, because only love will survive.[58] On this basis, the philosophical concept of virtues are re-purposed to express the fruits of the Spirit, the consequence of becoming a "being of the Spirit."[59] The grace of the eschatological Spirit enables humans to live a way of life that is a foretaste of the eschaton, while living in the hope of the *parousia*. This perspective, for Zizioulas, must govern our relations with one another because the other is one who has a right to the possibility of a new beginning.[60] Our relationships can be liberated from enslavement to the past because of this future hope. This is the basis for Zizioulas to afford priority for love of enemy and forgiveness.[61]

[53] Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 136.

[54] Ibid., 136–37; Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 202; Zizioulas, *The One and the Many*, Loc. 3274.

[55] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 185.

[56] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 72, 78.

[57] Ibid., 69.

[58] Ibid., 78–79.

[59] Ibid., 69.

[60] Ibid., 73.

[61] See for example, the frequent discussion of love for the enemy in Zizioulas's sermons. John D. Zizioulas, *Receive One Another: 101 Sermons*, ed. Bishop Maxim Vasiljević, trans. Fr Gregory Edwards, Kindle Electronic Edition (Alhambra, California: St. Sebastian Orthodox Press, 2023).

Parousia, general resurrection and final judgment

The question then becomes, what does the movement from the "already" to the "not yet" look like?[62] To begin with, Zizioulas affirms as a "fundamental article of the Orthodox faith, that the Parousia, the resurrection and the final judgment form an unbreakable unity," a single event.[63] Also, the resurrection is universal, not just of the righteous.[64] It will reveal the lies that have deceived the world away from the purpose of the cosmos, and that "there is no ultimacy for death and non-existence."[65] It dissolves the ambiguities of historical existence that has been lived in coexistence with the love of God and with death and evil. Zizioulas calls the final judgment a κρίσις where it is both separation and discernment (Jn 5:29; Rom 2:16; 1 Cor 4:5; cf. Mk 4:22; Lk 8:17), and condemnation.[66] Rather than juridical and vindictive, Zizioulas sees the final judgement as healing, restorative and reconciling of the entire cosmos, a "purification of the entire creation from evil" with evil revealed for what it is, and relegated to non-existence.[67]

Our whole personhood—body-in-relation—will be resurrected in Christ. Resurrection is not only corporeal but corporate.[68] Zizioulas does not engage in the dualism of a material body and an immortal soul. When a body dies, the whole person dies. This for Zizioulas is the tragedy of temporal time in that death is the division and severance of relationship. Resurrection restores a "being of community and communion, not of individual entities."[69] Resurrection is not just the reconstituting and transfiguration of the body, but the reconstituting and transfiguration of relationship to be part of the many of the oneness of the eschatological body/person of Christ. This is the source of immortality for the created, not anything that is

[62] Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 10.
[63] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 258.
[64] Ibid., 112.
[65] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 246.
[66] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 256.
[67] Ibid., 257–58.
[68] Ibid., 109.
[69] Ibid., 109.

intrinsic to humanity.[70] The bottom line for Zizioulas is that the event of resurrection is of universal cosmic proportions as it restores what corruption and death have disintegrated—the movement of creation toward the divine communion.[71]

The remaining question is what about Hell? There are several givens for Zizioulas in this consideration. The first is that the general resurrection and Final judgement are for all humanity. Those who have resisted participation in the love of God in Christ in history, will be resurrected. The second is the decision of the individual during their life as to whether they resist or accept the call to participation in the divine communion is determinative in the Final judgment of their relation in the divine communion of the *eschaton*. It is not possible to repent and turn toward God in eternity because the chronicity of time has been abolished.[72] God respects human freedom and so for those who have chosen to reject the call for true personhood in relation, this decision "cannot be healed by force."[73] Hell then will be the enduring motion away from God, from true personhood. In Zizioulas' words, "hell is not something imposed by God who punishes; it is something we create for ourselves, the moment we create the condition to be tortured eternally, because next to us there is someone whom we never wanted to have beside us in this life."[74] This is why Zizioulas emphasizes the necessity of forgiveness and love for the enemy in this life, "to give him space in our existence" in preparation for the *eschaton*.[75]

In relation to those who are deceased, Zizioulas points to the long Church tradition that the Church fights against hell by offering the Eucharist on behalf of deceased members because they can no longer repent. Zizioulas refers to St John Chrysostom who emphasizes both the necessity for people to grasp the terrible and tragic reality of hell, and that "his compassion will be victorious [over sins]

[70] Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 102; Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 252, 294; Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 227–28.

[71] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 111.

[72] Ibid., 312.

[73] Ibid., 292, 312, 321.

[74] Zizioulas, *101 Sermons*, 309–10.

[75] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 63, 300, 390; Zizioulas, *101 Sermons*, 120, 366.

in limitless measure."[76] The intercessions beseech the self-giving love of God, to find "within the earthly fragments of their lives even a dim and weak turning toward God and his will."[77] He also asks for the intercessions of the Saints in his sermons, which one would assume, are those yet to be resurrected.[78] Zizioulas points out that this linking of our personal salvation with that of others is consistent with the intercessions of Moses, the apostle Paul and the desert ascetics.[79] It is an intervention "between the justice and the love of God to annul any historical determinism which would make the eschaton the slave of our historical time."[80] Worth noting at this point Zizioulas' final word on the matter of hell. "Hell will always remain a mystery to human logic, hidden deeply in the mercy and freedom of God" and that "none of us can predict God's judgment."[81]

Macchia: Spirit Baptism, the Kingdom of God, and Eschatology

Spirit baptism

Macchia's theological contribution has been to consider the broad theological implications of the "crown jewel" of Pentecostalism, Spirit baptism.[82] His main premise is that the Spirit incarnated and resurrected Christ in order for Christ to pour out the Spirit on all flesh. The intent of Spirit baptism is to bring humanity and all of creation into Christ, to participate in the Trinitarian divine communion.[83] In summary, "Christ baptizes others in the Spirit on behalf of the Father and, in so doing, incorporates them into his crucified and risen life."[84] It is from this perspective of Pentecost that Macchia de-

[76] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 316.
[77] Ibid., 312–13.
[78] Zizioulas, *101 Sermons*.
[79] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 314, 318.
[80] Ibid., 312–13.
[81] Ibid., 315.
[82] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 2006, 20.
[83] Frank D. Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer: Christology in the Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 28, 57–58.
[84] Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 301; It is worth noting at this point the relation of Macchia's use of the term "Jesus, the Spirit baptizer" and the filioque issue. Macchia

velops his Christology, ecclesiology and soteriology. This means that for Macchia, the Christ event, from conception through crucifixion, resurrection and ascension to Pentecost is the inauguration, by the Spirit, of the eschatological Kingdom of God, the breaking in of the *eschaton* into history.

The ends of creation

Macchia understands the eschatological kingdom of God, both in the "now" and the "not yet" of the *eschaton*, as the communion of divine love. "Spirit baptism in the context of the inauguration of the kingdom of God… is characterized essentially by reciprocally and mutually dependent communion of divine love into which the creation is drawn through the overthrow of death as the reigning principle and the establishment of the reign of life through the divine transformation and indwelling of all things."[85] It is worth noting at this point that the brief references Macchia has made to the thinking of Zizioulas, has been along these lines—Christ as a "corporate personality" and the Church as baptism into the "realm of relationships shaped by divine love."[86] For Macchia, the intent of Pentecost is Christoformic: to be joined in Christ's Sonship by the Spirit, into filial relation with the Father. The Spirit-baptized humanity of Jesus, in indivisible oneness with the divine communion, is the "sacrament … in which we are united to Christ."[87] In this, Christ's humanity is "unique."[88]

Macchia is clear that the whole of creation is included in this understanding of the fulfilled realization of the kingdom of God.[89] Pentecost "expands God's love and communion to creation" so that ultimately God is "all in all," the eschatological completion of cre-

is clear "the Spirit may be said to proceed eternally from the Father alone but through the Son," and likewise, "the Son is eternally generated from the Father alone through the Spirit." Frank D. Macchia, *Tongues of Fire: A Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2023), 264.

[85] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 2006, 124.

[86] Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 57; Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 2006, 177.

[87] Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 4.

[88] Ibid., 182–83.

[89] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 2006, 106.

ation.[90] This is how Macchia can say humans are created to be priests in this temple of creation.[91] Consequently, humanity's alienation from its Creator and true destiny impacts all of creation. Humanity's participation in Christ by the Spirit is the possibility for the destiny of all of creation to be liberated from its bondage to decay (Rom 8:21).

It is from this perspective that Macchia engages with Pentecostal apocalyptic understandings of the ends of creation.[92] Macchia rejects the notion of heaven as an escape from the world. Rather his eschatology is firmly grounded in the hope of the New Testament witness to a future new heaven and new earth.[93] For Macchia, created materiality is embraced by an eschatology of new creation.[94] If the resurrected Christ is the first fruits of the new creation, then the "gospel of the resurrection redeems and transforms creation and is not the escape of the immaterial soul to another world."[95] This means the Spirit of Christ is the eschatological Spirit because the Spirit's mission is a breaking into the present of the foretaste of the ultimate fulfilment to come.

Current state of creation

Humanity is entirely reliant on God for the fulfilment of its destiny for which it is called, and for which it reaches: to live in communion with God.[96] Macchia proposes that from the beginning, humanity was "able to fall by turning from God under the illusion of

[90] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 2006, 116–17.

[91] Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 105, 459–60.

[92] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 2006, 102.

[93] Frank D. Macchia, "Theological Horizons of Revelation," in *Revelation*, by John Christopher Thomas and Frank D. Macchia, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 579.

[94] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 2006, 275.

[95] Frank D. Macchia, "Tradition and the Novum of the Spirit: A Review of Clark Pinnock's 'Flame of Love,'" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 6, no. 13 (1998): 37.

[96] Frank D. Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church: A Dogmatic Inquiry*, T&T Clark Systematic Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2020), 36.

self-sufficiency."[97] Macchia thus understands the fall as alienation from and denial of the life of communion with God.[98] This results in broken human relationships. Human beings are unable of themselves to recover and maintain this communion with God, and the subsequent healing of human relationships. Consequently, "the communities, languages, and social structures into which we are born condition our relationships and distort them from the start."[99] This understanding then situates sin as a thoroughly relational concept. In alienation from God, we only have the self and the resources of creation to rely on.[100]

Christ, by the Spirit defeated this alienation because he is the ultimate relation of created and uncreated. "As the faithful Son and bearer of the Spirit, Christ accomplishes this reconciliation by passing through the judgmental fire on our behalf without being consumed to it."[101] In giving himself over to the binding entailments of creation—mortality, injustice, suffering—Christ by the Spirit, defeated and voided them of power, liberating creation to be brought into the freedom of the sons of God.[102]

Macchia addresses the "riddle of evil" from the perspective of theodicy, the suffering of creation. Here, Macchia refers to the unfathomable depths of the love of God: "There is no black hole in history that cannot be healed, that sucks into itself all light so as to destroy it."[103] Both victims and torturers were made for the love of God. Christ's descent into hell means that "there is no place, no situation, to which God's love does not have the right of entry. Therefore

[97] Macchia, *Introduction to Theology*, 110.

[98] Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 54.

[99] Frank D. Macchia, "Baptized in the Spirit: Towards a Global Theology of Spirit Baptism," in *The Spirit in the World: Emerging Pentecostal Theologies in Global Contexts*, ed. Veli-Matti Karkkainen, Kindle Electronic Edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2009), 174.

[100] Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 631.

[101] Frank D. Macchia, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit-and-Fire: Luke's Implicitly Pneumatological Theory of Atonement," *Religions* 9, no. 2 (2018): 6.

[102] Frank D. Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), Loc. 2085.

[103] Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 212–22.

no one should ever consider himself lost, for there is no lock that Jesus cannot open."[104] The glory to be revealed (Romans 8:18) of the divine love is unfathomable as according to Paul, it "far outweighs" our afflictions (2 Cor. 4:17).[105]

The "now" but "not yet"

The same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead raises us to new life as we participate in Christ's death and resurrection. Through the Spirit poured-out, we are baptized in fire when we are baptized into his death to enter into the new reconciled life of the resurrected Christ, a life liberated from death and freed from alienation from God.[106] What does this new Spirit baptized life look like in the present? For Macchia, vertical reconciliation—love of God, and horizontal reconciliation—love of neighbor are two sides of the same coin.[107] Being baptized in the Spirit and so participating in the communion of God in Christ by the Spirit, we live in a dynamic of reconciliation with the other.[108] Thus Church "is a community of believers incorporated into Christ's filial relationship with God."[109] This is why Macchia describes the Church as a "communal dynamic," a community of "graced relationships."[110] In considering the Church as the body of Christ, Macchia emphasizes that the "Head is mature, but the body still needs to grow."[111] It is a dialectic that addresses the risk of an overly realized eschatology that is not appropriately qualified.[112] For example, Macchia points out the model of "bride of Christ" emphasizes the union of covenantal relationship without which the Church cannot be the body of Christ. Macchia concludes,

[104] Ibid., 212–22.
[105] Ibid., 223.
[106] Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 153.
[107] Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006), 142; Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit*, 275.
[108] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 2006, 164.
[109] Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church*, 49.
[110] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 2006, 156–68; Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church*, 35–56.
[111] Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church*, 113.
[112] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*, 157.

"Christ identifies himself with his body, but his body is not identical with him."[113]

In the life of the Church, Macchia affirms the grace of God is mediated by the Spirit through material means, the "'institutions' of proclamation, sacraments and gifted ministries."[114] In relation to baptism, Macchia understands it is a confirmation and deepening, by the Spirit, of our initial reception of Christ by faith and baptism into his Spirit.[115] For Macchia, the Lord's Supper is a communal event that both signifies and is participation in the gracious work of the Spirit to constitute the body of Christ. The meal is "sanctified as the occasion in which we are further sanctified," nourished in communion with Christ (1 Cor 12:13).[116] The sacraments are gift, the "divine offer of grace," to be received by "repentance and faith."[117] For Macchia, the Lord's Supper is communion in Christ, both remembrance and thanksgiving for Christ's self-sacrifice that has made this life in the Spirit possible, and anticipation of the final eschatological banquet. In the sacraments, the "Spirit performs what is promised."[118] Thus these core practices of the Church "opens the church to a continuous drinking of the Spirit" into corporate union with Christ.[119]

Macchia also positions the range of Pentecostal spirituality's emphases such as the miraculous healing ministry of the Spirit, *glossolalia*, and an eschatological passion for people to turn to Christ as signs of our future hope. They can be blessings on Church mission that cut through to provoke unbelievers to question "What meaneth this?" (Acts 2:12).[120] However Macchia notes the realities of unanswered prayer and societal suffering must not be ignored. While ordinary human actions in the world can also be graced sign and in-

[113] Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church*, 108, 113–14, 164.

[114] Ibid., 163, 168; Macchia's Christology emphasises the Spirit cannot be disassociated from the material. The Spirit "befriends matter" in a way that "redeems, transfigures, elevates and exceeds it." Rogers cited in Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 87.

[115] Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church*, 163, 190.

[116] Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 335.

[117] Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church*, 189.

[118] Calvin cited in Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church*, 190–91.

[119] Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church*, 163.

[120] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 2006, 38–39, 105, 277.

strument of the coming kingdom, he also emphasizes the illusion that the realizing of the kingdom of God can solely be the result of human agendas. Our challenge in the "now" is participation in the life of the Spirit that is faithful to Father's faithfulness to creation, prophetic sign and instrument of the ultimate reconciliation and healing of the "not yet," the coming triumph.[121]

Parousia, general resurrection and final judgment

In relation to the main questions of resurrection, the second coming of Christ and final judgment, Macchia considers the second coming of Christ as an event of the resurrection of the faithful, the giving up of the captives of death and Hades, and final judgment (Mk 8:38; 13:26; 14:61-62).[122] In relation to the faithful, those who have died will be with Christ. He draws attention to Scripture where those awaiting resurrection are communing with Christ after death.[123] The end-time resurrection at the second coming of Christ is where the faithful will be resurrected to return with him, and those who are still alive will be caught up to meet him, bodies transformed.[124] It is both an individual and corporate event because salvation is both communal and individual.[125] The Holy City comes from heaven to earth, all things are reconciled into the new heaven and new earth where God's sovereign presence fills the earth.[126] In relation to those who die and are not in Christ, given the paucity of Scripture on what happens to non-believers at death, Macchia tentatively proposes, the

[121] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*, 277–79; Macchia, "Theological Horizons of Revelation," 616, 623.

[122] Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 352, 641; Macchia, *Introduction to Theology*, 117–22, 153, 165, 168 Acknowledging the controversy within evangelical eschatology regarding the rapture and millennium, Macchia draws attention to Christ's direction to his disciples before his ascension, that their focus needs to be on being his witness (living by faith in the hope of the eschaton) rather than fixating on the when and how of the transition from mortal existence to the eschaton (Acts 1:7-8).

[123] Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 634; Macchia, *Introduction to Theology*, 159.

[124] Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 647, 650.

[125] Macchia, *Introduction to Theology*, 155, 179.

[126] Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 634–35, 647–48; Macchia, *Introduction to Theology*, 161–62; Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church*, 204–5; Macchia, "Theological Horizons of Revelation," 613.

dead are captured by death and Hades, which are compelled to give them up at the final judgment (Rev 6:8; 20:13-14).[127] This looks like some form of resurrection to judgment. However, it does raise the question of what kind of judgment is exercised at death and before final judgment as to whether one is with Christ or captured by death prior to the resurrection.

On the question of the immortality of the soul, Macchia distinguishes the being with Christ after death and the resurrection of the body. It is the material resurrection where we are shaped, through the Spirit, into the image of the glorified Christ. This is the "pneumatic existence that leads to immortality."[128] Creation of itself, is mortal, and will return to dust. It is the resurrected and glorified Christ who has defeated mortality, and in whose immortality, we will participate through resurrection.[129] On this, Macchia affirms "the Eastern Orthodox have it right ... flesh and blood cannot ... evolve its way to immortality."[130]

Regarding hell, Macchia affirms hell is not meant for humanity but rather "to rid humanity once and for all of their tormentors—the devil, death and Hades."[131] Christ's descent into the depths of hell–human alienation from God—was precisely to rescue humanity from this dead end.[132] The redemptive work of Christ is universal, for all creation, for all time, and for eternity.[133] However the issue is the "limited reception of its benefits due to unbelief," and resistance to grace.[134] The question this raises for Macchia is whether the "divine claim" on humanity, can ever be limited by death, and so remain, for eternity, unfulfilled.[135] He wonders if the perfecting of the resurrection also allows for a "spiritual journey of sorts (that) contin-

[127] Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 641.
[128] Ibid., 646.
[129] Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit*, Loc. 1776-1777; Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 647.
[130] Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 647–48; Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 632.
[131] Macchia, *Introduction to Theology*, 175.
[132] Ibid., 175.
[133] Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 674.
[134] Ibid., 674, 688.
[135] Ibid., 535, 675.

ues even after resurrection."[136] Macchia points to the open gates that face those who oppose God (Rev 21:15; 22:14-15) and the conversion of nations after the Final judgment. Macchia suggests it may "say something profound about the endurance of the divine offer of grace," and the extent that it is possible for the implicit yearning of humanity for God to "eventually bend toward grace."[137] However he also notes the divine respect for human choice, and does not deny the incomprehensible stubbornness of human resistance and "possibility of never-ending contempt, loss, and suffering."[138]

Discussion

It will be clear from the brief outline of Zizioulas and Macchia's eschatologies that they are thoroughly Trinitarian and relational, Christological and pneumatological, and the whole cosmos is in scope. The will of the Father is for humanity and all of creation to be incorporated into the eschatological Christ, by the Spirit and so participate in the divine communion. The only aspect of creation that will not be granted the immortality of eternal life through resurrection is evil and death from which creation will be forever liberated.

Consistent with the Eastern Orthodox tradition, Zizioulas' primary theological orientation is the ontological and eschatological significance of the Eucharistic gathering of the Church. For Zizioulas, it is the definitive foretaste, by the Spirit, of the eschatological Christ. Macchia's north star in contributing to the maturing of Pentecostal theology is the eschatological significance of Christ and Pentecost. Christ the Spirit baptizer is the inauguration of the Kingdom of God, and the Spirit is the eschatological guarantee and foretaste in history of what is to come. Undergirding the thinking of both theologians is the eschatological reality of the historical Christ by the Spirit, as attested to by the apostles and the early Church. As

[136] Ibid., 515 This wondering also seems to suggest the giving up of the captives at the final judgment is some form of resurrection.

[137] Macchia, "Theological Horizons of Revelation," 615, 620–21; Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 683.

[138] Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 687–88.

Zizioulas says, "the New Testament and all subsequent Christian doctrine simply point to the person and event of Jesus Christ."[139]

Both theologians are strongly relational in their theological perspective. For Zizioulas, this is expressed in his trinitarian understanding of person as ontologically person-in-relation which provides the conceptual framework to express his Eucharistic eschatology. Although his development of this framework is primarily derived from his exploration of the Cappadocian Fathers, it is firmly grounded in the biblical witness that God *is* love. Similarly, that God is love is the basis for Macchia to understand the Spirit as the outpoured love of God. This means for both theologians, the work of the Spirit, both in the Christ event, and in the dialectic of the "now" but "not yet," is thoroughly relational, to bring the created into communion with the uncreated.

Both see the Spirit as fundamentally engaged with the materiality of creation in history, most definitively in Christ, and in the ongoing gathering of the Church and its participation in the sacraments. They also understand the partaking of the bread and wine as eschatological in character, an occasion of the Spirit that constitutes the Church, in Macchia's words, the community of "graced relations." Both also acknowledge and emphasize the dialectic of this tension that the witness of the Church and its mission in the world cannot be identified with the Kingdom of God. There are of course differences as to the weight accorded various aspects within the respective confessions. A significant difference for example, is the eschatological weight Zizioulas attaches to the office of Bishop such that the Bishop is essential to the Eucharistic gathering.[140] Macchia, while respecting the traditional and symbolic or sign value of the historic episcopate, and its role in preserving the apostolic faith, rejects its

[139] Zizioulas, *Lectures*, 9.

[140] Louth critiques the historical basis for Zizioulas's monepiscopal eucharistic ecclesiology, arguing it is "overly categorical" and "not the only form of the church to be found in the early centuries." Andrew Louth, "Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries," *The Ecumenical Review*, no. 1 (2004): 147–48. For Zizioulas, the structures of the Church are essential because they image the Kingdom (Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, Loc. 383.)

essentiality. He proposes other forms of ordained ministry in other churches "should also be respected for their work in preserving and especially renewing the substance of that sign."[141] However, given the fundamental similarities, these could be regarded as differences for further exploration, rather than points of division. The unity in diversity of the Church after all, is grounded in the work of the Spirit who brings humanity into the divine communion in Christ.

From these fundamental consonances, it would be helpful to explore how Zizioulas and Macchia then grapple with the issue of created free will, and the possibility of the hell of eternal torment for humanity in alienation from the divine communion. Both understand hell as eternal alienation from God, that it is a real possibility, and that it is not punishment. Rather, it is the consequence of human resistance to the call of the love of God who does not force or coerce. Zizioulas observes that post-resurrection, there is no opportunity for a turning toward reconciliation as repentance is a temporal concept. Zizioulas then considers the depth of the mercy of God, focusing on the intercessions of the living and the Saints. Macchia on the other hand, leaves open the possibility of the human turn to relationship in Christ after Final judgment. He bases this possibility on the universal and eternal efficacy of the cross and resurrection, that it does not cease after the Final judgment.

Several issues arise from these perspectives. The first is the capacity of humanity to freely accept the call of God to align their innate desire with the will of God. This is particularly pertinent to Zizioulas' position as the consequence of this choice is eternally irredeemable. The question then is how free really, is humanity in this life, to consent to the divine call, entrapped, deceived and entangled in the consequences of sin. It seems paradoxical that the fate of humanity is contingent solely on the choice made in a creation where there is evil and deception, when there will be a new creation with no deception but with no opportunity to turn. On these terms, it would seem the new creation in Christ will consist mostly of humanity in the hell of sharing the same space with their enemy. Macchia on the other hand,

[141] Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church*, 153.

with a similar understanding of hell, leaves open the possibility of a turning based on the universal and eternal efficacy of the cross and resurrection. However, he still leaves it open for the humans to resist.

This brings to the fore the second issue, the importance Zizioulas accords to the intervention and intercession of the Church and the Saints, grounded in the mystery of the mercy and freedom of God. Given this mystery, and Macchia's point about eternal and universal efficacy of the cross and resurrection, could not our communal participation in the life of Christ also be participation in his intercession on behalf of all of humanity for the Father's will to be realized both now and in eternity? The gathering of the Church is both remembrance of the cross and celebration of our future hope. However, it is also a yearning that the will of the Father be realized for all of humanity and creation to participate in the eternity of divine love. Should not this be our priority existential concern? This is where Zizioulas' emphasis on the cruciform love and embrace of the enemy also comes to the fore. Could not forgiveness also be taken up by the Spirit, so that it is also on behalf of the enemy. That is, for the relationship to be established by the forgiver regardless of the response by the enemy. Forgiveness then becomes a movement, by the Spirit, toward the restoration of persons as fragmented and divided beings. It could be, applying Zizioulas' words regarding the example of Saint Gerasimos of Cephalonia to all of us, an embrace of the enemy that "radiate(s) grace, healing, and intercession," witness, by the eschatological Spirit, to the eternal and unfailing love of God.[142]

Our passion then, for the coming of Christ, can be filled with hope, not just for believers, but for all of humanity and creation. The Final judgment will confront humanity with what has been ambiguous in history, and to which the gathering and mission of the Church albeit in its brokenness, has been witness. This hope is the transfiguration of the corrupted creation into a new creation of the eschatological Christ, by the Spirit, freed from the bondage of sin and death. It is the unveiling of the mystery of the justice and mercy of God—the only hope of humanity and creation. Perhaps it is the space not

[142] Zizioulas, *101 Sermons*, 51.

only of the hell of being confronted with the enemy, but also where humanity can be truly free to turn through the narrow gate, to the banquet of the new creation.[143] Maybe it is also the space where the faithful, in communion with the Father in Christ, never cease to participate in the intercession of Christ for this turning. It is not coercion; it is not compulsion. It does not deny the possibility of rejection and its consequences. It is simply new creation where this gate is forever open. Come Lord Jesus.

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[143] Zizioulas, *101 Sermons*, 404.

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Original Paper

Eschatological Hermeneutics in the Thought of John Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon

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Abstract
In the posthumous work of the Metropolitan John of Pergamon (Zizioulas) *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology* the Christian dogmatic is reconsidered in the light of eschatology. Creation is thus considered good only in the perspective of the final victory of life over death. The Fall is interpreted as a fall from the future, not from an ideal prelapsarian condition. Time is regarded as acquiring meaning through the visitation of the eschaton in history. Ethics is viewed as fidelity to the eschatological state of being as communion, inaugurated in the Resurrection and prefigured in the Eucharist. Zizioulas rejects any kind of teleology that implies the eschatological state is inherent in the properties of nature. This prioritization of the eschaton over history, as well as the future over the past, brings Zizioulas into dialogue with the hermeneutical tradition, including Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. For Zizioulas, however, it is love—not death—that offers the hermeneutical key, as a coexistence of otherness and communion.

Keywords: eschatology, ontology, creation, resurrection, personhood, hermeneutics, time, teleology

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In his posthumous work *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology*, the Metropolitan John of Pergamon endeavours to reconsider the entire Christian dogmatic in the light of the eschatological victory of love over death. This victory creates a priority of the eschatological future over the historical present and past. Eschatology is thus not only the last episode in a linear exposition of dogmatic theology, but a perpetual presence which pervades all different domains of systematic theology and dogmatics. At the same time, if for secular hermeneutics truth is reached when one assumes one's mortality and envisages the end that is death, for a Christian thinker truth is achieved only if one judges history through the transcendence of death by love. The latter is, however, a foretaste of the Second Judgment by Christ, which distinguishes between what leads to love within history and what contributes to the circularity of death. This paper will explore the ways in which the Metropolitan John of Pergamon reformulates the fundamental subjects of Christian dogmatic theology through a priority of the eschaton over history, as well as the future over the past.

Eschatology and Creation

For Metropolitan John of Pergamon, eschatology is not simply a doctrine regarding the end times; it is rather an orientation which concerns the totality of theology, as well as a perspective and a mode of existence.[1] In this, Zizioulas is following the remark by Fr Georges Florovsky that eschatology is not one particular section of the Christian theological system, but rather its foundation, its guiding and inspiring principle.[2] Furthermore, for Zizioulas eschatology should not merely be the last chapter of dogmatics referring to death, the state after death, the resurrection and the Last Judgment, but a principle of interpretation for all Christian dogmas.[3] A central object of

[1] John Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*: *Toward an Eschatological Ontology* (Alhambra, California: Sebastian Press, 2023), 1.

[2] Georges Florovsky, "Eschatology in the Patristic Age," in *The Patristic Witness of Georges Florovsky: Essential Theological Writings*, ed. Brandon Gallaher and Paul Ladouceur (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 311.

[3] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 2.

his thought in this area is to respond to the provocative statement by Ernst Troeltsch at the end of the 19th century that "the bureau of eschatology is usually closed."[4] Zizioulas is also influenced by the project of Wolfhart Pannenberg to articulate an "eschatological ontology,"[5] but he places less emphasis than Pannenberg on the aspect of revelation and more on the Eucharistic remembrance of the future in an ontological and not merely psychological sense (i.e.,on the fact that remembrance is capable of creating events).[6] For Zizioulas, the Eucharistic remembrance of the future is an hermeneutical tool for understanding and appropriating the past.[7] This also entails a reversal of the direction of time, since the future causes and thus explains the past: what Zizioulas calls an "eschatological hermeneutic."[8]Along the same lines, Zizioulas rejects the linear time of the "History of Salvation" (*Heilsgeschichte*) as expounded by Oscar Cullmann,[9] stressing the fact that since the Holy Spirit brings the eschaton into history (Acts 2:18)time also moves backward.[10]This is a continuation of an early period of Zizioulas' thought where eschatology was linked with the work of the Holy Spirit in the divine economy and the Church, since it is the Holy Spirit that constitutes Jesus as the eschatological Christ (i.e., it is the Holy Spirit who "chrismates" the Messiah) and thus opens up the History of Salvation to the role of the historical Jesus as the eschatological Judge and King. This also reflects the sense of the patristic formulation that the Holy Spirit is the divine hypostasis who accomplishes (τελειεῖ) the plan of the divine economy.[11] It this way one can speak of a pneumatologically constituted Christology.[12]

[4] Ernst Troeltsch, *Glaubenslehre*, ed. Marta Troeltsch (Munich and Leipzig: 1925), 36.

[5] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 1991).

[6] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 6–10.

[7] Ibid., 11.

[8] Ibid., 28–35.

[9] Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1950).

[10] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 74.

[11] Ibid., 136.

[12] John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion:Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 123–142.

For the Metropolitan John of Pergamon, eschatology includes the entirety of creation, not only humanity. His is a cosmic eschatology,[13] which involves the resurrection and the transformation of creation as a whole.[14] This equally means that eschatology is an hermeneutical principle for the dogma of creation as well. The goodness of creation lies in its future when the created nature will be resurrected after the abolition of death. For Zizioulas, the resurrection of Christ constitutes an interpretation of creation, and it is in this sense that one should understand Saint Maximus the Confessor's principle that the *logoi* that lead us to the future explain nature,[15] and that the future is more important than the past,[16] since the resurrection realizes the goal for which all beings are brought into being.[17] This eschatological interpretation of creation means that creation is destined for immortality as loving communion, thus both nature and history are interpreted in the context of contributing to this identification of being with communion (or as failing to do so in the case of the fall and sin, which entail a temporary preponderance of death over love). For Zizioulas, the eschatological state, i.e. the ever-lasting being which is identical with communion, is a hermeneutical principle in order to partly understand what is happening in nature even during its historical state. This entails that there is a theological meaning in evolution, in the sense of a biological progress which leads to the human species as a mediator with God. Even if evolution in its modern Darwinian sense is linked to death, Zizioulas thinks that evolution *per se* could be considered as belonging to the divine plan, although the particular Darwinian sense of the evolution is regarded as something that should be surpassed by man. Following a patristic

[13] Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 182.

[14] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 80.

[15] Carl Laga and Carlos Steel, eds., *Maximi Confessoris Quaestiones ad Thalassium II, Quaestiones LVI–LXV una cum latina interpretation Ioannis Scotti Eriugenae iuxta posita*, *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca* 22 (Turnhout and Leuven: Brepols and Leuven University Press, 1990), 59, 61, 255–63, 283 (PG 90:613D-616A).

[16] Carl Laga and Carlos Steel, eds., *Maximi Confessoris Quaestiones ad Thalassium* I, *Quaestiones* I–LV *una cum latina interpretatione Ioannis Scotti Eriugenae iuxta posita*, *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca* 7 (Turnhout and Leuven: Brepols and Leuven University Press, 1980), 7, 459, 272–290 (PG 90:520C-D).

[17] Maximus the Confessor, *Capita Theologica* I,66 (PG 90:1108AB).

interpretation of *Genesis* found in a developed form in Saint Maximus the Confessor, the human being is considered as the last (ἔσχατος) being that enters creation,[18] because it is the being that will recapitulate it. In the Maximian context, this means that human beingsare naturally a microcosm of creation, since they have elements that are common with all other creatures; for example, matter is common with inanimate things, and corporeality is shared with plants and animals. What is more, there are, according to Saint Maximus, certain types, parts or faculties of the soul which link human beings with plants and animals, because they do exist in latter. For example, the capacity of nutrition and growth is regarded as being psychological and not merely corporeal, according to Aristotelian psychology. The human being thus shares common psychological features with plants. In the same sense, the capacity of sensation and self-movement, as well as desire and anger, are psychological features that the human being shares with animals. Last but not least, human beings share an intellectual and logical nature with angels, the latter also being considered as creatures that are saved through humans.

This communal orientation is of course Christological: it is through the union of human nature with divinity in the hypostasis of Christ that creation is established as being "good" and is saved. Christ is the microcosm of creation and its mediator with God. However, there is in Saint Maximus a sense of the preparation of nature through evolution in order to reach a level when a being—namely the human being—is introduced that can be a synopsis of all that preceded him. In this sense, human nature "explains" nature, i.e., it expounds the meaning of properties that we find in animals, plants, and inanimate nature. In turn, Christ explains human being, i.e., he realizes human nature in a novel way that explains the meaning of the properties that we find in humanity.

A chief contribution of Zizioulas here is that he underlines the difference between teleology and eschatology.[19] In Zizioulas' frame-

[18] Nicholas Constas, ed. *Maximos the Confessor. On Difficulties in the Church Fathers*, Volume II (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2014), 104(PG 91:1304D-1308C).

[19] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 22–26.

work, the salvation of nature through the humanity of Christ does not come as an actualization of the potentialities of nature, as would be the case in a teleological framework, but as the fulfilment of a personal call that visits history "from the outside." The human being's vocation to save nature lies in personhood and not in the fact that the inclusive character of human nature plays a significant role as a mediator with the nature of animals, plants and inanimate objects due to natural recapitulation. Of course, following the Fathers, Zizioulas might insist on the significance of the human being's corporeality for the mediation with corporeal and material creatures and their salvation through the incarnation of Christ. But he highlights the simple fact of the human being's corporeality and materiality,[20] not a full psycho-corporeal teleology that would include for example the desiring and irascible part of the soul, etc. For Zizioulas, humanity has the task to assume nature through its corporeal character and bring it to God through a personal call that elevates human being above nature, yet at the same time provides it with the possibility of bringing nature with it to a higher level of freedom. There is no mention of a specific task of human nature as such to recapitulate other created natures through its different psychological and corporeal properties. This is a personal call for Adam; but, when he fails, the Christ succeeds by his incarnation, through the assumption of corporeality in a divine person. In Zizioulas, there is no insistence on the salvific role of the human nature of Christ, i.e., on the fact that the human nature of Christ had specific psychological and corporeal properties which were realized by Christ in a specific way (for example, the realization of human desire, anger, thinking and praying by Christ). Zizioulas' insistence lies on the fact that Christ realized in a personal divine and supernatural way the properties of human natures; not on the fact that there was an "awaiting" of nature to be realized in this way.

This dialectic between natural necessity and human freedom permeates the work of Zizioulas from the time of his earlier work on

[20] Ibid., 148.

human capacity and incapacity.[21] It has a Trinitarian foundation[22] in the sense that the person of the Father is presented as constituting God as freedom by begetting the Son and breathing the Spirit, without any necessity of substance.[23] This conveys an ontological priority of the person of the Father, hence of person over nature, which is also conceived as a victory of freedom over necessity.[24] The human being has freedom as an image of God (that is, as an image of the Trinity), but it has limits due to its createdness. For created persons, liberation from necessity comes through ecclesial existence, which allows nature to be in freedom.[25]Christ transfers the personal mode of the Trinitarian existence in humanity through the Church. This personal mode also entails catholicity and universality[26] given the fact that Christ bears the catholicity of human nature and not a fragment of it, as is the case in the fallen mode of existence. The ecclesial community offers human beings the opportunity to exist in this personal universal mode, even though this will be fully realized only in the eschaton. Inside history, human beings can only have a foretaste of catholicity in the Eucharist.

Objections have been raised against Zizioulas' theology of personal freedom and catholicity as opposed to natural necessity, both from the point of view of Patristics[27] and from a systematic point of view. For example, if all humans share ecclesiastically in the Sonship

[21] John Zizioulas, "Human Capacity and Human Incapacity," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975): 401–447.

[22] For the philosophical and theological presuppositions of the Trinitarian debate on freedom and necessity, see Brandon Gallaher, *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[23] Douglas Farrow, "Person and Nature: The Necessity-Freedom Dialectic in John Zizioulas," in *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church*, ed. Douglas Knight (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 110.

[24] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 40.

[25] Ibid., 101.

[26] Farrow, "Person and Nature," 112.

[27] See for example, among many others, André De Halleux, "Personnalisme ou essentialisme trinitaire chez les Pères Cappadociens? Une mauvaise controverse," *Révue Théologique de Louvain* 17 (1986): 129-155; Lucian Turcescu, "'Person' versus 'Individual' and Other Modern Misreadings of Gregory of Nyssa," *Modern Theology* 18/4 (2002): 97-109; Melchisedek Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 55–56.

of the Son and in His relation to the Father, then there seems to be no way to distinguish between them.[28] Likewise, if freedom is offered to human beings only by divine personhood and not through divine grace that is participated in by human nature, then the result would be a dictated otherness that would prevent genuine human cooperation which includes human nature.[29] Zizioulas has responded to these lines of critics[30] by stressing, for example, the fact that the incorporation in the corporate personality of Christ enhances personal otherness rather than reducing it or leading to confusion of persons.[31]For Zizioulas, the notion of corporate personality refers to the possibility of one person to stand for many, such as for example Adam or a patriarch of the Old Testament could represent the entire humanity or his entire people before God or a bishop can represent his diocese in a council. Of course, the divine person of Christ is the only one that can literally incorporate all the human persons in his identity. Other corporate personalities are either prefigurations of Christ in the Old Testament or icons of Christ in the New Testament. This notion of incorporation is not linked to the corporeality of the human nature of Christ but to his divine personhood. Furthermore, Zizioulas asserts that the clash between freedom and necessity refers only to the fallen mode of existence and not to God or the non-lapsarian and eschatological state of humanity. Finally, he points to the principle that every personal *ek-stasis* from nature is also a personal *hypo-stasis* of nature. The latter means that Zizioulas is against any escapism from human nature and, on the contrary,

[28] Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 87.

[29] Nicholas Loudovikos, "Person Instead of Grace and Dictated Otherness: John Zizioulas' Final Theological Position," *Heythrop Journal* 52, no. 4 (2011): 684–699.

[30] John Zizioulas, "Person and Nature in the Theology of St Maximus the Confessor," in *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection: Proceedings of the Symposium on St Maximus the Confessor, Belgrade, October 18–21, 2012*, ed. Maxim Vasiljević (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2013), 85–113.

[31] For the biblical notion of the corporate personality see Henry Wheeler Robinson, "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality," *Werden und Wesen des Alten Testaments* 66 (1936) 49–62; Jean de Fraine, *Adam et son lignage: Études sur la 'personnalité corporative' dans la Bible* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959).

views personhood as a realization of the catholicity of nature, which also means a realization of divine perichoresis and consubstantiality.

Zizioulas emphasizes the fact that it is the divine person of the Son that makes human nature universal.[32] This universality of the human nature of Christ is linked to the lack of gnomic will in Christ, since the gnomic will indicates the partiality of human cognition and volition. It is true that the human gnomic will is inherent in created personhood and is not introduced by the fall. It initially means the capacity of a human person to be disposed toward a given reality. God does not have a gnomic will because there are no realities that pre-exist him. But human persons do have a gnomic will because they are created and thus face from the very beginning exterior realities to which they should respond. For example, both God and the exterior world pre-exist the human being. From the very beginning, even in a "pre-lapsarian" state, the human being faces a dilemma of orientation: It can either turn to God as the creator of the world or be enclosed in the world as a supposedly self-existent being, the latter constituting both a lie and a sin. Such dilemmas are linked to the notion of the gnomic will, which is not due to the Fall.[33] In contrast, the natural will means the tendency of nature to strive in order to acquire all the virtues that will make it ontologically fuller and more coherent, according to Saint Maximus' dynamic and eschatological ontology of nature. This entails that nature is not perfect in the beginning but is awaiting its accomplishment in the future.[34]That being said, the lapsarian mode of being has changed the character of the gnomic will. After the fall, the gnomic will is related to the fragmentation of nature and the fact that it is initially impossible for lapsarian humans to have a universal view of the world, This lapsarian lack of universality is linked to the fact that after the Fall both good and evil pre-exist the concrete human beings that come into existence and the human will thus faces a dilemma between good

[32] Zizioulas, "Person and Nature," 85–113.

[33] Maximus the Confessor, *Opusculum Theologicum et Polemicum,* 1 (PG 91:17C).

[34] For the fuller and more concise definition of the natural will see Maximus the Confessor, *Opusculum Theologicum et Polemicum,* 1 (PG 91:12C-13A).

and evil, as actually existent.[35] The fact that Christ is the divine person of the Word and not a created one, as in Nestorianism, entails for Zizioulas a new way for His human nature to subsist as universal, since divine personhood is linked to universality and non-fragmentation. This also entails that the human will of Christ does not express its freedom through a choice between already existent options of good and evil and is not influenced by sinful partiality.

The other aspect of this universality is the non-participation of Christ in biological reproduction, i.e., the dogma of the immaculate conception of Christ. For Zizioulas, sexual reproduction is intrinsically linked to death, since it means a survival of the species to the detriment of particular persons and their concrete bodies that perish.[36] Consequently, Zizioulas interprets in a way that is relevant to modern evolutionary theory and psychoanalysis the view of Saint Maximus the Confessor that there is an ontological vicious circle between birth (γέννησις) and death, which is also expressed as the vicious circle of pleasure (ἡδονὴ) and pain (ὀδύνη) at the psychological level.[37] The universality of the human nature of Christ which is due to divine personhood is thus prefigured at His immaculate conception and birth by the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit. It also entails that the Crucifixion is a free and voluntary passion in contrast to other men who suffer death as a necessity. And, most of all, it means that the resurrection of Christ constitutes the resurrection of the entire universal human nature and of creation as such. The resurrection of Christ is the premise for the resurrection of all the dead. The proclamation that "Christ is Risen" is tantamount to saying that each one of us is already risen in Christ, since Christ is a corporate personality that includes all persons and has a universal human nature which engulfs the entire humanity. The eschaton is the total revelation and manifestation of this truth, but its ontological foundation is already present in the Resurrection of Christ.

[35] Maximus the Confessor, *Ep.* 2 (PG 91:396D).

[36] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 50–53.

[37] Christoph von Schönborn, "Plaisir et Douleur dans l'Analyse de Saint Maxime, d'après les *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*," in *Maximus Confessor: Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg, 2–5 septembre 1980*, ed. Felix Heinzer and Christoph von Schönborn (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1982), 273–284.

Thus creation is good (καλὰ λίαν, after *Genesis* 1,31)in an eschatological, Christological and Pneumatological context. In other words, creation is good thanks to its hypostatic union with the Son, which entails its resurrection and the full revelation of its immortalization in the eschaton. Inside the historical lapsarian mode of being, however, death still exists. This means that recognizing the creation as good is a matter of hermeneutics.[38] For Saint Maximus the Confessor, creation is led to the eschaton by the *logoi* of beings which constitute divine wills for the future of nature.[39] Nature itself is like a text which invites an interpretation. Through ascetic purification, man is called to see the divine intentions behind nature, the latter being tantamount to illumination regarding divinization as the end of beings. In all of this Zizioulas is trying to actualize Maximian hermeneutics through a dialogue with Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer.

The Metropolitan of Pergamon incorporated many elements from the thought of Martin Heidegger, such as the notion of *ekstasis*, the emphasis on being and truth, and most of all the fact that Heidegger put eschatology at the centre of ontology through his notion of "Being-toward-death." It could be argued that Zizioulas' originality lies in his synthesis between the neo-patristic program of Georges Florovsky and Heidegger's insistence in eschatology, in the sense of the horizon of the end.[40] Heidegger himself drew this element from various sources: from Wilhelm Dilthey's insistence that historical life can only be understood in its totality (i.e., from the perspective of the end), from Saint Paul's eschatology, as well as from the philosophy of time conveyed by such Christian thinkers as Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther and Søren Kierkegaard. Heidegger used these sources to articulate an eschatological phenomenology

[38] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 113–132.

[39] Grigory Benevich, "God's Logoi and Human Personhood in St Maximus the Confessor," *Studi sull'Oriente Cristiano* 13/1 (2009), 137–152.

[40] Matthew Baker, "Zizioulas and Heidegger. 'Eschatological Ontology' and Hermeneutics" in *Between Being and Time: From Ontology to Eschatology*, ed. Andrew Kaethler and Sotiris Mitralexis (Lanham, Maryland, New York and London: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2019), 116.

without salvation, which is centred on death.[41] But since death is an impossible vantage point, human beings can only anticipate it, which requires a future-oriented projection. Heidegger's notion of authenticity thus entails an anticipation of the understanding of existence as a whole thanks to the assumption of the possibility of death. Hermeneutics is thus related to finitude and to its assumption, which constitutes the authentic mode of being.[42] Heidegger thus put into doubt the priority of the past in the interpretation of history. Zizioulas transformed this element into a hermeneutical freedom from the facticity of the past thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in ecclesial structures.[43]

The human being is invited to an existential interpretation of the world, according to which it will observe the divine will (λόγος τῶν ὄντων) for eternal loving communion. However, Zizioulas tries to downplay the teleological element in nature. By doing this, he is engaging in a modern actualization of Maximian thought after the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin and his successors, which did a fatal blow to teleology. For Zizioulas, the interpretation does not entail a detection of potentialities that are inherent in nature and bring it toward immortality and perfection, as is the case with any teleology which insists in the potentialities that are inherent in nature. It is rather an historical interpretation that is detecting historical events as God's deeds which reveal a will for personal communion—the event par excellence being the incarnation of the Son through the Spirit, in which the divine person realizes for the first time the human nature as universal in the image of the Trinity. After the resurrection, interpretation is a collective Pentecostal event which reads the historical evolution of nature as a history of divine love. For Zizioulas, the eschaton is not reached through properties that are inherent in nature and evolve, but comes as a "visitor" from the outside. There is an historical preparation of nature which is free from naturalistic determinations.

[41] Judith Wolfe, *Heidegger's Eschatology: Theological Horizons in Martin Heidegger's Early Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 75.

[42] Thomas Sheehan, "A Paradigm Shift in Heidegger Research," *Continental Philosophy Review* 32, no. 2 (2001): 1–20.

[43] Baker, "Zizioulas and Heidegger," 117.

The Eschatological Interpretation of the Fall

A concomitant result of the eschatological interpretation of creation is the eschatological interpretation of the fall as a fall not from an ideal past, but from the future.[44] If the good creation is the state of nature in the eschatological kingdom then there seems to be no need to postulate an ideal pre-lapsarian state in which death did not exist. The introduction of death by humans due to the fall is not corroborated by modern post-Darwinian evolutionary theory.[45] What is more, death is considered by evolutionary theory as a means of evolution or even progress since it is instrumental in the survival of the fittest through mutations that might lead to survival or prevent it. However, the fact that the introduction of death to nature might not have been an historical fact does not mean that the fall lacks any historicity or that it is simply an allegory or symbolism. On the contrary, Zizioulas struggles thoroughly in order to attribute an historical character to the fall, thus following the patristic tradition. Following Saint Maximus the Confessor, Zizioulas considers the fall as a "lack of the activity, which leads to the end (« τὸ κακὸν τῆς πρὸς τὸ τέλος τῶν ἐγκειμένων τῇ φύσει δυνάμεων ἐνεργείας ἐστὶν ἔλλειψις, καὶ ἄλλο καθάπαξ οὐδέν »)[46] or, in his own terms, as a fall from the eschaton. This means that even though death already existed, there could have been a human movement toward the transcendence of death, which would have characterized the animal kingdom if the human being had responded affirmatively to the divine call. The failure of this response to a call for immortality has an historical character. Zizioulas thus follows a middle way. On the one hand, he does not admit that there was an historical period without death, a fact that is not confirmed by modern science. On the other hand, he considers the fall as an historical event and not as a symbol for the existential

[44] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 171–182.

[45] See for example, Ulrich Kutschera and Karl J. Niklas, "The Modern Theory of Biological Evolution: An Expanded Synthesis," *Naturwissenschaften* 91/6 (2004): 255–276.

[46] Carl Laga and Carlos Steel, eds, *Maximi Confessoris Quaestiones ad Thalassium* I, *Quaestiones* I–LV *una cum latina interpretatione Ioannis Scotti Eriugenae iuxta posita*, *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca* 7 (Turnhout and Leuven: Brepols and Leuven University Press, 1980), 29, 217–219 (PG 90:253A-B).

struggle of each person, as is the case with many existential theologians. In doing this, he valorises the stance of certain Fathers, such as Irenaeus of Lugdunum, who considered the initial state as one of immaturity.

Furthermore, Zizioulas resists the metaphysical vocabulary of a distinction between potentiality (δύναμις) and actualization (ἐνέργεια), since the latter echoes Aristotelian teleology. He does not view the progress of the human being toward divinization as an actualization of natural potentialities, as is the case in teleology, but as a personal call for the overcoming of death through communion. The difference is that teleology describes a gradual progress through ethical achievements that realize human nature in conformity with its potency. Zizioulas focuses on the deep existential intermingling of nature with death in a way that requires ontological salvation and not only moral progress. In a similar way, Zizioulas defines the fall as a fall from truth into reality and as a fall from the future to the present. For Zizioulas, reality has the character of necessity in contrast to truth.[47] As Aristotle Papanikolaou has shown,[48] this does not mean that Zizioulas is an existentialist in disguise, since the opposition between freedom and necessity is not part of nature but only of its fallen mode of existence, whereas the salvation of nature means its being in harmony with personal freedom and not in a conflict with it as is the case in the existentialist view that human freedom clashes with natural necessity.

Eschatological Anthropology

The eschatological understanding of creation and the fall lead to an eschatological understanding of anthropology. The human being is conceived by Zizioulas as the animal which resists death and the "power of death" (Heb 2:14); i.e., the "system" of death, which pervades biology, the political and economical history of mankind, etc. Humanity is defined by love, which is a desire for the immortaliza-

[47] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 171–182.

[48] Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Is John Zizioulas an Existentialist in Disguise? A Response to Lucian Turcescu," *Modern Theology* 20, no. 4 (2004): 601–607.

tion of loved ones according to the definition by the French existentialist philosopher Gabriel Marcel: "To love is to tell another person that he or she is not going to die."[49] This is a way of reformulating the definition of Saint Gregory the Theologian that the human being is the animal that strives for deification. Zizioulas situates humanity particularity in art, religion and the care for the dead, which distinguish the human being from other animals. In this Zizioulas has a totally different stance from Christos Yannaras who considers religion as an instinctual drive for the psychological survival of the individual.[50] In today's era of artificial intelligence, Zizioulas insists that it is not the intelligence or the linguistic abilities of the human being that distinguish humans from animals and machines, but on the contrary their reference to otherness, including resistance to mortality and a wish to transcend death. For Zizioulas, reference to otherness provokes *ek-stasis*, which is also a distance (*apo-stasis*) from animal nature and thus freedom from it.[51]

Eschatological Ontology

For the Metropolitan of Pergamon, Christian ontology starts from the fact that from an early period the Christian Fathers undertook the task to express the biblical preoccupation with history in terms of being.[52] However, true ontological being lies only in the resurrection of all in the eschaton. Zizioulas views history as an icon of the

[49] Gabriel Marcel, *'Tu ne mourras pas.' Textes choisis et présentés par Anne Marcel*, (Paris: Arfuyen 2012), 104. This is quoted by Zizioulas in *Remembering the Future*, 60.

[50] Among the fundamental differences between the two important Greek theologians who are considered as exponents of a personalist theology, one can cite the fact that Yannaras regards religion as the urge of a primitive individualism that responds to egoistic needs, whereas the Metropolitan of Pergamon considers it as a part of the divine image in human beings, i.e., of their referentiality to divine otherness. It is to be noted that for Yannaras what distinguishes human beings from animals is the symbolic capacity of language, whereas Zizioulas thought that language and intelligence only constitute a difference of degree and not of quality between humans and non-human animals. See Christos Yannaras, *Against Religion: The Alienation of the Ecclesial Event* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2013).

[51] John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 229.

[52] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 86.

eschaton, following the triple schema of Saint Maximus the Confessor which describes the Old Testament as a shadow, the New Testament as an icon, and truth as lying in the eschatological condition.[53] An objection that might be brought forward is whether this entails an "inverted Platonism" in the words of Ilias Papagiannopoulos,[54] according to which history reflects not archetypes of truth but "eschato-types" which come from the future. Even though such a danger of regarding history as a totally passive reception of divine will might exist if one overemphasizes eschatology, it is to be noted that Zizioulas views history as a realm of human creativity.[55] The future enters history as divine grace, but human persons cooperate with the divine will in an active way, not merely in passive anticipation.[56] An "eschato-type" coming from the future is not the same thing as an archetype. The notion of archetype entails a depreciation of history as a realm of corruption and decay which only alienates us from truth. On the contrary, the notion of an "eschato-type," if one is allowed to coin such a neologism, means that the human person is responsible for the realization of nature inside history in dialogue with the divine will. It is true, however, that Zizioulas sometimes seems to underestimate the value that is inherent in historical events. In this respect, the remark by Nikolaos Asproulis[57] that there could be a synthesis between the eschatology of Zizioulas and the value attributed by Fr. Georges Florovsky to the events of the history of salvation is a valuable starting point for a more balanced theology of history.

[53] Cf. the *Ambiguum* 21, Nicholas Constas, ed. *Maximos the Confessor. On Difficulties in the Church Fathers*, Volume I, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2014), 442–444 (PG 91:1253C-D).

[54] Ilias Papagiannopoulos, "Πρόσωπο και Υποκείμενο. Σημειώσεις για μια εσχατολογική ανθρωπολογία," in *Αναταράξεις στη Μεταπολεμική Θεολογία: Η Θεολογία του 'όο* (Athens: Indiktos, 2009), 159.

[55] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 28.

[56] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 33.

[57] Nikolaos Asproulis, *Το Μυστήριο του Χριστού και το Μυστήριο της Εκκλησίας. Γεώργιος Φλωρόφσκυ και Ιωάννης Ζηζιούλας σε διάλογο γύρω από τη θεολογική μεθοδολογία* (Volos: Ekdotiki Dimitriados, 2023).

Eschatology and Hermeneutics

For John Zizioulas, eschatology means that the past is always open to new interpretations that come from the future. If for Heidegger the *Dasein* acquires an awareness of its finitude through a projection to the future,[58] for Zizioulas it is the future of the resurrection which visits the past and explains it. Zizioulas follows the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, according to whom there is a fusion of the horizon of the past with the horizon of the future, in order for the past to acquire a new meaning. For a true theologian, this means that the transcendence of death through the resurrection of Christ gives a new meaning to the events of the past. Zizioulas considers the judgment of Christ in the Second Coming as an act of interpretation: the past is reopened and at the same time it is judged in an ontological way. Whatever led to death remains enclosed in a past that is abolished. Whatever led to love acquires new potentialities of meaning. There is also a place for repentance, i.e., for persons who were tied to sin and death through their deeds but asked for divine love to respond to their failures. The Second Coming is an act of interpretation because it entails the ultimate ontological distinction between love and death. This means that the past is reopened, is purified from what led to death, whereas the events of love are led to new ontological conclusions that did not exist inside history. This consideration also means that even within history every ecclesial and theological consideration can act as a novel interpretation that is a foretaste of the Second Coming.

On this theme, Zizioulas enters into dialogue with the thought of Wilhelm Dilthey,[59] insisting on observing the meaning of beings and events starting from their end. If for Martin Heidegger this end is death,[60] for Zizioulas it is the resurrection which reopens the past to interpretation. Zizioulas follows Friedrich Nietzsche in denying a

[58] Martin Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999).

[59] Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 177.

[60] Martin Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004), 123.

reified subsistence to historical facts, asserting the priority of interpretation.[61] Another aspect of this reopening of the past is the possibility of forgetting the past. For Zizioulas forgiveness entails an ontological (non-psychological) forgetfulness of the past, if the latter contains sin and hate that have been erased through repentance and reconciliation. The Resurrection connotes liberation from the past.

Saint Maximus the Confessor would speak of a participation in the *logoi* of providence and judgment, which complete the *logoi* of nature. According to this theology of history, once a human person is purified from self-centredness, he or she can see the mysterious and hidden ways in which God acts inside history and creates meanings which are not evident by those who are immersed in egoism. The *logoi* of providence are divine wills that lead to the creation of concrete natures inside time as well as the emergence of particular historical events in cooperation with the human will. The *logoi* of judgment are divine wills that lead history toward the Final Judgment of the Second Coming of Christ, distinguishing what is ontologically genuine from what is false. In Zizioulas' own terms, one could say that every true theology makes a distinction between love and death even within history. When a theologian interprets the past, she or he distinguishes between on the one hand the potential that leads to love and, and on the other, the forces that remain entangled in the power of death. History is a realm of confusion between the two in every sphere of life, such as biology, political history, economics, etc., whereas the eschaton brings an absolute distinction. The theologian thus acts as someone who brings the eschaton into history. This might be considered as something violent, since the visit of the eschaton brings an ultimate violence of separation of the things that are intermingled inside history. But it is a violence that is identical to love and to ontological authenticity. The latter is also a power of fertility, since reinterpreting the historical past can lead to novelties in human civilization. To provide an example, the primitive Christian Church reinterpreted the law of Judaism, the Greek philosophy and the Roman state in a way that led

[61] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 31.

to a new civilizational paradigm. But in every age, a theologian can reinterpret the demands of her or his era, leading to novel civilizations that are open to the light of the resurrection. This also means that a theologian leads others to the sacraments of the Church. The Eucharist is the foretaste of full eschatological communion. The sacrament of repentance is an existential annihilation of the past, or rather of what in the past contributed to death, and thus a reinterpretation of the personal past of the faithful which saves whatever led to communion.

While Zizioulas' thought presents some affinities with the eschatological ontology of Wolfhart Pannenberg,[62] his emphasis lies more on the ontological character of the overcoming of death than on the element of divine revelation. This prevalence of ontology over gnosiology is evident in the way he interprets the Eucharistic remembrance not as a psychological recollection, but as an ontological realization; i.e., as an event of the future that visits the present. Zizioulas' thought about the performativity of liturgical language could be compared with the relevant views of John Langshaw Austin[63] and John Searle[64] about speech-acts, which realize meaning instead of merely representing it. For Zizioulas, the Eucharist is a paradoxical remembrance of the future overcoming of death through love. As such, it interprets the present and the past: the transcendence of death through communion is regarded as the meaning of all historical events. Whatever contributes to it survives; whatever remains entangled in the web of the circularity of death and temporary reproduction is doomed to perish. This does not entail a lack of historicity. Events of love give meaning to history, whereas repentance, which is linked to the Eucharist, can mean a perpetual reinterpretation, in which we erase our ties with the forces of death and commit ourselves again to love reopening our past personal history to a visit

[62] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark International, 1991).

[63] John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

[64] John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay on the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

of the eschaton. The eschatological horizon is the subjection of the entire universe to Christ, because Christ has defeated the power of death, according to Oscar Cullmann.[65] The scriptural evidence for the future eschatological state lies in the apparitions of Christ after the Resurrection (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor 9:11, 1 Jn 1, etc.), which show both the corporeality of the body of Christ and the fact that this body was liberated from the separation that is presupposed in the fallen mode of space and time.

The function of interpretation is linked to the Person of the Holy Spirit. According to the Cappadocian Fathers, the role of the Holy Spirit inside history is the fulfilment (τελείωσις) of the divine plan. For Zizioulas, this means the eschatological constitution of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ of the Second Coming. Christology is thus Pneumatologically constituted. In other words, the Spirit is present in each birth of Christ and in each constitution of his identity: in the chrismation of the Messiah, in the Annunciation, in the Birth, in the Baptism, but also in the Transfiguration, in the Crucifixion, in the Resurrection and in the Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is also the divine Person who opens the eyes of the disciples so that they understand that the stranger is in fact the Christ who breaks the Eucharistic bread. The latter also signifies a novel interpretation of history based on the revelation that Christ is its Lord. Instead of interpreting history through a remembrance of the end of death, as in Heidegger, Zizioulas proposes an interpretation of history through the end of the resurrection. It is in this sense that the Holy Spirit inspires the saints and the prophets to discern the hidden meaning of history, but also leads to remembrance of Christ's words and deeds (Jn 14:26). The remembrance is at the same time an annunciation of the coming of the future (Jn 16:13). In Zizioulas' terms the Holy Spirit fulfils the void that is the present according to Aristotle (οὐθέν), as a vanishing mediator between the past and the future.[66] This hermeneutic of the Holy Spirit leads to a philosophy not *sub specie aeternitatis* as in Spinoza, but *sub specie resurrectionis* or

[65] Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 4–20.
[66] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 16.

sub specie eschatorum. Here also, Zizioulas follows a golden middle. On the one hand, he rejects the eschatology of a perpetual suspension of meaning, like those found in post-modern versions of Judaist eschatology (e.g. in Jacques Derrrida). In contrast to a Judaistic form of eschatology, faith in the Incarnation and in the Resurrection of Christ that has already taken place means that the Christian ethos involves a fidelity to the event that has already happened. On the other hand, Zizioulas rejects the realized eschatology that we find in forms of political theology that equate the eschaton to the realization of political ideals. For Zizioulas, the eschaton can inspire politics but cannot be identified with it;[67] at least, not as long as the power of death continues to be active within history.

Eschatology and the Theory of Time: Eschatology as the Opposite of Teleology

The Metropolitan John of Pergamon stresses the absolute difference between eschatology and teleology. Teleology entails the achievement of goals that are inherent in the natural properties of a being. On the contrary, eschatology means a sudden and abrupt "visit" of the eschaton within history, which comes as a surprise to the natural sequence of events and can even be opposite to nature, even liberating it from determinism. The eschatological Omega enters history as a "thief at night" (1 Thess 5:2). It is to be noted, however, that Zizioulas does not envisage a rejection of the natural. He emphasizes that in Christian mysticism, and especially in the Orthodox ethos, there is no ascetic ecstasy (ἔκ-στασις) from nature that is not at the same time a novel mode of being (ὑπό-στασις) of nature which saves it. The eschaton is rather an answer to questions that nature has not itself put.

The opposition drawn by Zizioulas between teleology and eschatology also has consequences for the theory of time. For classical Greek teleology time is the measure of the unfolding of natural potentialities (δύναμις) which are actualized (ἐνέργεια). For Zizioulas

[67] Ibid., 57.

there is a reversal of the arrow of time from the future to the past. The eschatological Omega does not stem from the Alpha, but is its cause. In this sense, Zizioulas engages in an eschatological ontology, following a Christianized version of Heideggerian thought,[68] but not in metaphysics like other theologians. In fact, he rejects any metaphysics, as well as any form of evolutionary teleology, such as the one that we find in Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.[69] He is also critical of the endeavour of theologians to incorporate Marxist philosophy of dialectical progress into a progressive Christian world-view. On the other hand, Zizioulas' thought affirms facets of Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory, since the latter brought a sort of abolition of teleology in Western thought. For example, the progress of animal species is seen by evolutionists not as following a pre-ordered intelligent design, but as the result of contingent mutations and of the instinctual struggle for survival. While Zizioulas seems to agree with aspects of the post-Darwinian rejection of teleological thought, he does not however wish to incorporate Darwinian evolutionary theory into a Christian theological view, since this kind of evolutionary progress is based on death and egoism, i.e., on the opposite of the Resurrection and the Crucifixion. Zizioulas prefers to reverse Heidegger and conceive of a horizon of meaning which is not that of death, but that of its transcendence through love. The Omega is thus not an offspring of history, but rather a visitor and a guest.

Eschatology and Ethics

The fact that Omega is ontologically prior to Alpha also means that the Resurrection is ontologically prior to the Crucifixion. In other words, the Resurrection is not a stage or an episode that comes after the Crucifixion. And the Crucifixion is not some necessary moment of dialectic, Hegelian or other. This also means that the Crucifixion cannot be a moral command, in the strict sense, since it is tantamount to the annihilation of one's nature or in a Christian perspective to its offering to God. It can however inspire ethics. In the same

[68] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 382–384.
[69] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 23.

sense, the Crucifixion cannot become a political program, since it could mean the collective annihilation of a state, nation, or other collective. That being said, it can infuse political society with values, even though the eschatological ideal cannot be fully realized within history. For just like evolutionary biology, politics instrumentalize death and violence and cannot be conceived apart from them. The modern state is based on the monopoly of violence and coercion in contrast to the Church which is a collective of free persons. An eschatological ethics would entail a resignation of survival as a goal. This cannot be turned into a moral precept or a political project, but it can inspire an ethos of self-sacrifice and of faith in the final victory of love and its coincidence with life.[70] Eschatological ethics is the opposite of moralism, i.e., of judging people according to objective moral criteria and characterizing them as good or sinful/evil. Since any person who survives in a world based on death is in some way sinful, an eschatological ethics within history can only be one of repentance. The latter is the Christian equivalent of a political permanent revolution, since the faithful can always start anew. It is an ethics of fidelity to the event of the Resurrection that has already happened in Christ, and, thus, to the truth that love is more powerful than death. At the same time, it is also a fidelity to the future, which entails being prepared for martyrdom, if it is needed according to the will of God.

Conclusion

The Christian eschatology expounded in Zizioulas' posthumous work *Remembering the Future* entails a universal resurrection of humanity in an eschatological era where being coincides with communion. The end of history entails an ontological judgment that is identical with the distinction between what has led to love and what has led to death. Eschatology equally functions as an interpretation of the past. In this way, Zizioulas is inspired by some of Martin Heidegger's intuitions, but in his own thought it is eschatological love

[70] Zizioulas, *Remembering the Future*, 43–59.

that functions as a hermeneutical key and horizon for the understanding of historical events. Eschatological love is defined as a coexistence of absolute otherness and full sharing of the substance, whereas the Resurrection entails a universalization of nature and time, and an abolition of every division and distance that is based on death. This view can lead to a novel appreciation of key Christian dogmas and themes: creation is considered as good only in the perspective of its future immortalization; the fall is a fall from the future and an enclosure to reality as necessity. Furthermore, time itself is not concomitant to a teleological movement; it acquires meaning if the eschatological Omega fills the historical Alpha. But the Omega comes from the outside as a visitor or even as a thief. Ethics is a fidelity to a future that has already happened in the resurrection of Christ, in the victory of love over death.

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Review Essay

Time, Freedom, and Being: John D. Zizioulas on the Christianization of Hellenism

Nikolaos Asproulis

John D. Zizioulas, *Freedom and Existence: The Transition from the Ancient to Christian Hellenism*, trans. M. Vasiljević (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2024), 174 pp.

In the spirit of Tertullian's renowned ancient question, "Quid Athenae Hierosolymis?", we find a critical lens through which to examine the intricate historical origins of Christianity. While it is undeniable that Jesus Christ, along with the remarkable deeds of God, serves as the foundation of the Christian Church and faith, Church historians have faced significant challenges in providing a clear account of the early roots of this new faith. The obscurity of the period in question complicates this endeavor. Furthermore, the dominant intellectual trend of the time—Hellenism—played a pivotal role in the gradual formation and development of the early Church. Concurrently, the essential contributions of the Hebrew spirit, which provided the primary historical context for the emergence of Chris-

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tianity and its initial engagement with the surrounding Hellenistic culture and philosophy, have become an increasingly important consideration for historians seeking to uncover the historical roots of the early Church.

This book, initially published in Greek in 2018 but based on a series of public lectures delivered in 1983, features the late Metropolitan John D. Zizioulas of Pergamon (1931–2023). In it, he systematically explores the interpretive relationship between Hellenism and Christianity.

The book is structured in two parts. The first significant section comprises five chapters that detail the gradual and often painful transition from ancient Hellenism to Christian Hellenism. While thorough historical research into the first three centuries informs this discussion—drawing on Zizioulas's earlier work, "The Meeting of the Two Worlds" (1976, originally in Greek, with an English translation in 2025)—the author aims to address "issues of worldview" (12) within the context of Greek identity and the profound influence of Christianity on Greek culture (13).

In the first chapter, titled "The Transition from Ancient Greece to Christianity," Zizioulas outlines the contrasting mentalities and worldviews that needed reconciliation during this encounter, before delving into the key historical developments that defined their initial interactions. He begins by highlighting the essential characteristics of Hellenism, emphasizing that it is primarily "aesthetic" (18), rooted in the observation of the world. This focus on observation is reflected in central concepts of Greek philosophy, such as image, idea, vision, and *theoria*, all of which are tied to this fundamental aspect of the Greek mindset. A common thread among all ancient Greek philosophical schools was the pursuit of understanding the true essence of phenomena: "to know the truth, you must search… the substance of a phenomenon" (20), as it provides a stable foundation for knowledge.

According to Zizioulas, the Greek perspective is inherently antihistorical, as it suggests that history cannot provide a "stable basis," characterized instead by continuous change (21). He emphasizes that, for the Greeks, every event possesses some reason that explains it, constituting its cause and truth (21). The primary concern of

Greek thought is ontology or the nature of existence. In contrast, the Hebrew spirit begins with the observation of history. Zizioulas notes that "for the Hebrew, knowledge is not a matter of theory, but… of hearing" (21), reflecting a fundamentally different mentality that takes history seriously. For the Hebrew mind, history is understood as a series of meaningful events, where the truth of existence always encompasses the 'new' and the 'novel' (23). It is not merely a repetition of past occurrences, akin to Florovsky's concept of "cyclophoria." For the Hebrews, the future—not the past—represents the realm of truth (23).

Zizioulas posits that Christianity emerged intrinsically from the heart of "Palestinian Judaism," indicating its clear Judaic roots. However, the message about Christ quickly spread to the Greek world, which was the dominant intellectual milieu of the time. Reflecting the historical emphasis in Judaism, both Paul and John underscore the historical and eschatological dimensions of early Christian thought. In addressing the questions surrounding the divinity of Christ, Christians confess His divinity in a "non-philosophical… way" through acts of worship. This response, however, was not readily accepted by the Greeks, who were in search of "wisdom" (1 Cor 1:22). Consequently, a new phase in the relationship between Greeks and Christians emerged, sparking lively discussions that would endure through the ages, culminating in Harnack's critique of an "acute Hellenization" of the Gospel. Zizioulas briefly recounts the debates of the 2nd century between the philosopher Celsus and the Apologists—who, though not always successful (as seen in the cases of Justin and Origen), endeavored to address external challenges. For Zizioulas, the core issue lies in the dichotomy of viewing the world as either beings or events, as nature or history. This perspective led to critical questions: "How and why does the world exist?", the concept of human freedom within the world, and primarily "the question of death." These inquiries will serve as essential discussion points for the subsequent chapters of the book.

In the subsequent chapter titled "God and the World," Zizioulas revisits the fundamental cosmological perspective of the Greeks. The terms "cosmos" or "nature" encapsulate the "totality of the sta-

ble characteristics of each being that enable us to recognize and define it" (41). This cosmos is influenced by the gods, who serve as the guardians of its "order, harmony, and symmetry" (43). Drawing on his familiarity with ancient Greek philosophy, Zizioulas highlights Plato as a significant innovator in both his cosmological and theological views, particularly in contrast to the Pre-Socratic philosophers. By introducing the notion of the world's creation by a deity—who is also identified as the mind, or Logos (44–45)—Plato marks a departure from the understanding that equates the divine directly with nature itself. This shift heralds a new era in Greek cosmological thought, which would become a pivotal issue in subsequent centuries. For Zizioulas, the critical question that arises from Plato's approach is to what extent "is the world the result of God's free will" (47). It is widely recognized that, despite his attempts to distinguish the Creator God from the cosmos, Plato ultimately portrays this deity as a mere "painter" (47), implying that the Creator remains, in some sense, constrained by preexisting materials in the act of creation.

Zizioulas emphasizes the significance of Philo (Iamblichus, Neoplatonism) as an important intermediary between the Hellenic tradition and Christianity. Philo's efforts to "reconcile Platonism with the Bible" are well-documented, leading to his assertion that God the Creator does not fashion the world from preexisting matter. Instead, he proposes that the Platonic ideas transform into thoughts within God's mind. Moreover, in Neoplatonism, "the world is now regarded as an extension of God" through the process of emanation. This concept has profound implications for the interplay between Hellenism and Christianity, particularly regarding beliefs about the eternity of God, which stands in stark contrast to biblical faith. In this framework, God is seen as not entirely free; rather, the existence of the world is said to "determine the existence of God eternally."

For Zizioulas, this issue poses a significant challenge to the early Church Fathers. Given that their intellectual backgrounds were rooted in Greek and Jewish thought, they struggled with the close connection between the world's existence and God, as this relationship seemed to threaten God's freedom. We have already noted the unsuccessful attempts by figures like Justin and Origen, who sought

to address the Greek philosophical questions of their time through a Christian lens, often finding support in Plato. Zizioulas characterizes this trend as "the Hellenization of Christianity" (53).

However, this was not the only possible response to the Greek questions. Another group of early Church fathers was more successful in overcoming the challenges posed by (neo) Platonism regarding the relationship between God and the cosmos. In discussing the various developments, Zizioulas emphasizes the significance of perceiving the world as a consequence of "not so much God's knowledge but rather God's love" (54). He regards this original idea, as proposed by fathers such as Irenaeus and Athanasius of Alexandria, as a "key to the entire understanding of the relationship between Greek thought and Christianity" (54). According to Zizioulas, these fathers, through a creative interpretation of the Johannine verse 1:3 (which states that the world was created through the Logos of God), managed to dissociate the Logos from merely being an aspect of God's intellect. Instead, this Logos is understood as "the Son of God, with whom God is eternally connected by a bond of love" (56). Thus, while the world remains bound to God, it is not in an obligatory sense but rather through love, which does not compel God to create the world. Zizioulas asserts that "knowledge presupposes love and freedom" (58). In essence, the "world exists because someone freely and out of love chose to create it" (59), a concept conveyed doctrinally as "creation ex nihilo" (59). For Zizioulas, this development signifies a fundamental shift in our perception of the world: "the world is [now] recognized as a gift arising from the freedom of a person" (60).

In the next chapter, Zizioulas addresses the issue of freedom, which he considers essential to understanding the being of both God and humanity. Through an examination of Plato's work, Zizioulas argues that "the chief characteristic of man becomes his tendency... to conquer nature and elevate himself above the laws of nature... It is his tendency for freedom ... Man is a seeker of freedom from any necessity" (66). In the ancient world, maintaining harmony within the cosmos was paramount, often requiring the sacrifice of human freedom (68).

Zizioulas contends that the need for freedom is not an external factor but a fundamental aspect of human existence. Unlike the per-

spective of freedom in Greek antiquity, which is largely tied to politics or morals, Zizioulas emphasizes that freedom primarily pertains to ontology, referring to "something absolute" (67). In this context, he indirectly engages with the modern debate surrounding anthropocentrism from an ecotheological viewpoint. Ecologists frequently argue that humanity's centrality in the world is a significant contributor to the climate crisis. This perspective promotes a more eco-centric worldview, positioning human beings as just one of many species in the world and diminishing their unique dignity and value.

While it is true that humanity's understanding of its role in the world has contributed to the current climate crisis, this view risks undermining the biblical message itself. The issue lies not in the central role of humanity but in the manner in which that role has been understood and received over time. Zizioulas observes that "the man in ancient Hellenism becomes a microcosm within the macrocosm … for the sake of which (the world) (man) exists" (69). By doing so, he subtly points to contemporary deep ecology theories that reduce both the role and responsibility of humanity in environmental degradation.

Conversely, the biblical worldview posits that "God's purpose was to make the entire world for the sake of man,… as ruler and representative of the world" (70). Although such a statement may be considered politically incorrect today, it reflects the vision of the biblical tradition, which requires careful hermeneutical work to convey the intended message amid the ecological crisis.

The problem of the fall is closely related to this discussion. "Here, man does not fail because he struggles to transcend what is natural, but because he becomes enslaved in it" (71). Therefore, sin is understood as "missing the mark." Humanity will be redeemed from sin not by longing for a lost paradise but through an eschatological perspective that redeems time (72).

For the ancient Greeks, the solution to human tragedy lay in "self-concentration through contemplation and purification," which can be seen as a means of escaping the material world and history. In contrast, Christianity introduced a new understanding of time, where the solution is not found in the past but is anticipated in the

future. For instance, St. Irenaeus emphasized that time is fundamentally good since humanity is called to exercise freedom within it and to progress toward the future.

For the first time in the history of ideas, it was proposed that a future event—the Christ event, which serves as "the criterion of the resurrection"—defines the truth of past events. Zizioulas asserts that "truth lies in the future," a theme significant to him that he further explores after 1985 in his work *Being as Communion* and especially in his posthumously published magnum opus, *Remembering the Future* (2023). This new understanding of time was articulated further by mature patristic theology, which suggests that the concept of time is closely intertwined with the concept of freedom. "Time is a gift from God that liberates," indicating a significant shift in Hellenism during its Christianization process, where time now takes precedence in addressing the human problem over space.

By emphasizing time as the framework within which everything occurs, relationships with others emerge as the defining criterion for exercising freedom within time. This idea leads us to the well-known assertion by Zizioulas that being can only be understood as communion – that is, as an ecclesial event. He inspiringly argues that "the Church… is a space for practicing love." In other words, "if there is no salvation outside the Church, there is no solution to the human problem outside of relationships with others, outside of love."

Zizioulas shines in this discussion. He posits that love is not merely a fleeting sentiment influenced by human desire; rather, it is fundamentally an ontological and existential issue intertwined with the concept of freedom. This leads to a pivotal question: "Can love embody freedom, and can freedom be truly absolute?" Zizioulas emphasizes the importance of this inquiry. He delineates three distinct forms of love—biological, ethical, and aesthetic—all of which are, to varying degrees, constrained by necessity and the laws of nature. For Zizioulas, such constraints represent a burden on human existence.

In this context, he argues that Christianity offers a transformative understanding of love in conjunction with freedom. This redefinition serves as the Christian response to the biological notion of love that characterized both the ancient and modern worlds. Further-

more, the biblical concept of loving the sinner challenges the ethical viewpoint that dictates, "one cannot transcend the bounds of morality." The same can be said for aesthetic love, which emphasizes harmony and symmetry. In contrast, church iconography presents a different notion of beauty, one illuminated by the transformative light of the future.

Ultimately, Zizioulas suggests that while both Christianity and Hellenism strive for an ontological interpretation of freedom, their conclusions diverge significantly. Yet, one fundamental issue remains unresolved: How can we address the "problem of death".

This is the topic of the next chapter. As has become clear so far, the language that Zizioulas uses in his interpretation of the encounter between the two worlds is ontological. He has faced criticism for employing a somewhat generic version of ontology throughout his work, and there is some truth to this critique. However, it is essential to understand that theology addresses not merely a peripheral aspect of being but fundamentally focuses on issues of life and death. This perspective is central to Zizioulas's use of ontological language when addressing various existential problems.

The question then arises: "How is it possible for a person to be absolutely free when death exists?" Zizioulas views death in ontological terms as the "submission of man to the laws and necessities of nature." Here, we encounter a rather negative perception of nature, seen as a burden that must be overcome or even extinguished altogether. This aspect of Zizioulas's work has attracted considerable criticism, although a more moderate understanding of the topic can be found in his later writings.

In exploring how ancient Hellenism approached the issue of death—from Homer's perspectives to Plato's notions of the "immortality of the soul" and the divine origin of the soul in Orphic thought, where "any fear or turmoil in the face of death is absent"—to Aristotle's belief that "man survives only as a species and not as an individual," Zizioulas then shifts to the biblical perspective, where "death is a result of sin." This reflects the idea that "death is directly related to freedom," and that it "contradicts God's will." While the ancient Greeks and contemporary individuals may perceive death as a natural phenomenon, from biblical and patristic perspectives, death is

seen as an "unacceptable" reality—an "enemy" that undermines the inherent dignity of humanity. In contrast to Socrates, who faces death with calmness and joy, Christ is depicted in anguish (Matthew 26:38), praying to the Father. This distinction between the two worldviews is quite revealing.

What, then, is the Christian response to the problem of death? Zizioulas suggests that "Christ addresses the issue of the corruption of the human body in relation to sin, and thus to freedom" (93). He notes that "death is the result of a historical event" (94). Although many critics have argued that Zizioulas does not sufficiently emphasize history, a closer examination of his work reveals that for him, history is the sole context in which death can be overcome through a specific historical event: the resurrection of Christ. Thus, he asserts that "salvation is a matter of events, not nature" (95).

Hellenism did not deliver its final verdict. The Platonic concept of the immortality of the soul proved to be particularly appealing to early Christians, who often lacked the philosophical tools to engage with the pressing questions of their time. For Christians, the material world and the human body also possess the capacity for salvation. In order to embrace the idea of the soul's immortality, Church Fathers had to clarify this notion by emphasizing the creatureliness of the soul itself. As Zizioulas poses the question, "If the immortality of the soul is understood as implying an inherent quality within it that guarantees its immortality, this would negate God's freedom," a proposition difficult for the Christian mind to accept. The Church can only support the view that God's will determines the soul's immortality. The definitive answer to the problem of death is found in the resurrection of Christ, which transcends even a moderate interpretation of the immortality of the soul. Zizioulas states unequivocally, "Death was abolished by Christ's resurrection." However, is this enough to address the issue of death? No, since humanity remains burdened by death. If that's the case, what more must be done to ultimately triumph over this "ultimate enemy"?

A notable perspective on immortality was presented by St. Irenaeus, who posited that "immortality is granted only by the Spirit" (100). According to this church father, immortality "takes on a distinct form of adoption," signifying a special relationship—a bond of

love established through baptism within the church (100). It is within the Church that "the life of God himself circulates," embodying a life of free and unconditional love (101). Through the divine Eucharist, this life of God is offered to all who partake and willingly contribute to the community. In this regard, the Eucharist is understood as "the medicine of immortality" (101). However, immortality in the Christian, Eucharistic context encompasses more than this. "The existence of man, the acquisition of his personal identity ... constitutes a fundamental aspect of what we refer to as immortality" (101). Moreover, Zizioulas suggests that "immortality is achieved through liberation from the necessity of the 'fallen' nature."

The series of these lessons concludes with the final critical step: the concept of the person. John Zizioulas is one of the most innovative theologians of personhood in contemporary Orthodoxy, alongside Christos Yannaras. He has established the concept of personhood as a central hermeneutical tool in the church's mission within a Western context. Following his mentor, the late father Georges Florovsky, Zizioulas argues that "the concept of person is the most important fruit of the meeting between Hellenism and Christianity."

By stating this, he does not deny that the concept of the person is present in ancient Greek thought. Through his exploration of ancient tragedies, Zizioulas observes that, although a person is merely a "mask," it is still tied to humanity's struggle with necessity, which is understood as freedom. The challenge, then, is not whether the concept existed in the ancient world, but the absence of an absolute character, which constitutes the main issue. In other words, the problem is ontological rather than merely political or moral, as was the case with the concept in its Roman application.

Well-grounded in the historical development of the concept (for example, in the works of Tertullian and Sabellius), Zizioulas turns to the Cappadocian Fathers, who, by identifying person with hypostasis, achieved what he refers to as an "ontological revolution." This significant advancement ascribes a new ontological status to the concept of person. With the Cappadocian shift, "the person is no longer a secondary element in existence but an absolute concept," which "cannot exist in isolation... but is communion." Simultaneously, by

acquiring this ontological status, the person is recognized as "something unique and unrepeatable."

Zizioulas concludes the chapter by asserting that the most significant outcome of the intersection between the two worlds is the patristic understanding of the person. This understanding, he argues, encapsulates the core message of the Gospel by enriching the Greek ontological language through the influence of the Hebrew spirit.

The book is accompanied by three short texts in the appendix. The first text explores the primary themes of the book, focusing on the encounter between two worlds through the lenses of cosmology and anthropology, as seen through the works of the three hierarchs of the church: St. Basil, John Chrysostom, and Gregory of Nyssa. The second text, titled "The European Spirit and Greek Orthodoxy," examines the spiritual implications of modern Greece's entry into the European Union. The final text, "Key Issues for the Mission of the Church in the New Millennium," was published in Greek in 2009 and discusses the contemporary role of theology. It emphasizes the importance of theology in equipping the church with essential guidelines to discern which cultural expressions faithfully embody the Gospel and which represent an "another gospel" (164). In essence, Zizioulas highlights the necessity for theology to first nurture and then provide the church with hermeneutical criteria that will guide it through modern challenges.

This book is of significant importance, representing one of the least detailed yet systematic discussions of the encounter between Hellenism and Christianity, a meeting that fundamentally transformed human history. It is not an easy read, as it requires a solid understanding of historical context and familiarity with the philosophical and theological traditions of at least the first three to four centuries. While it may lack certain academic rigor—such as thorough engagement with secondary literature and generalizations that could benefit from further elaboration—the work's origin from one of the last great theologians of our time makes it essential reading. Bishop Maxim Vasiljević's translation into fluent English provides readers with an extraordinary opportunity to embark on a journey through the historical roots of the Church.

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Review Essay

How to Be Real: Ascetic Ethos and Monasticism by John Zizioulas

John Stamps

John D. Zizioulas, *Ascetic Ethos and Monasticism*, ed. by Hieromonk Vasilije Gavrilović (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2024), 220 pp.

Metropolitan John Zizioulas's *Ascetic Ethos and Monasticism* is a timely and essential book for Orthodox Christians—and all thinking Christians—today. A more fitting title might be *How to Be a Real Human Being*.

Why?

This isn't your typical Zizioulas book. We all know him as a brilliant theologian, but here, he reveals his heart. His exploration of what it means to be a person is shaped not only by deep theology but by lived relationships. He draws heavily on St. Maximus the Confessor, Staretz Silouan the Athonite, but, above all, Elder Sophrony of Essex–his own spiritual father. This revelation surprised me. Zizioulas didn't just admire Fr. Sophrony; he was forged by his influence. Their bond runs so deep that *Ascetic Ethos and Monasticism* devotes seven (!) sermons to his memory and teachings—a fitting tribute to

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the man who helped form one of the greatest theological minds of our time.

This little book isn't about "being human" in some abstract sense. Becoming real is about how we exercise freedom, act in love, and become fully human through our relationships. To put it simply: only love is real. Only love makes us real. Only love makes us a real person.

And that means—gulp—we must become ascetics. But not in the sense of rejecting the world out of self-hatred or seeing the cosmos as evil. Asceticism liberates us from biological necessity, freeing us to exist in loving communion rather than being ruled by survival instincts and self-interest. Personhood isn't defined by competition–where every transaction is a zero-sum game–but by self-giving love, modeled on the Trinity. The ascetic ethos is a struggle to overcome ego and individualism so we can become beings *in* communion rather than beings *in* isolation. As Zizioulas puts it:

> "The meaning of asceticism consists in the fact that, the less one bases his existence on nature, on essence, the more he exists as a Person." (p. 163)

For Zizioulas, a person is not just an individual but a being whose existence depends on communion. Fr. Sophrony calls this the "hypostatic principle," rooted in the three hypostases of the Holy Trinity (p. 56). Just as God exists in relationship, so must we. The Trinity is a communion of divine persons, and human personhood is only real when it transcends individualism. Biology enslaves us to necessity, but love frees us from fear, self-centeredness, and even death itself.

Becoming a real person is an act of freedom, love, and Eucharistic communion. For Zizioulas, the Church is the only place where this new way of being is realized. By eating Christ's body and drinking His blood, we are transformed from fractured individuals into real persons in Him. To be a person is not merely to exist—but to exist *in love, relationship, and divine communion.*

At just 218 pages, this book is dense and rich. But for modern readers, one question stands out: What does it mean to be a real human being? That's where I'll focus my review.

"If you would be perfect..."

For Metropolitan Zizioulas, the Christian monk is the most real human being, strange as it sounds. By renouncing self-sufficiency and embracing radical communion with God and others, the monk embodies self-emptying love (*kenosis*). In withdrawing from the world, monks paradoxically become more connected to it—carrying the suffering of others in prayer and standing in solidarity with the abandoned. True personhood, they show, is not autonomy but self-giving—existing only in relationship, just as God does.

When St. Anthony heard Jesus' words in Matthew's Gospel—"*If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor ... and come, follow me*"—he took them personally. Unlike the rich young ruler, he obeyed, selling everything and heading to the desert. In doing so, he reshaped the Christian faith for the next 1,700 years.

Modern readers often reduce Jesus' teachings to moral platitudes—"*Consider the lilies,*" "*Do not be anxious about your life.*" But Jesus wasn't preaching a carefree existence. He was announcing God's imminent Kingdom, the urgent call that drove the early Church: "*Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.*" As Zizioulas insists:

> "The Sermon on the Mount is completely incomprehensible without eschatology." (p. 48)

Without understanding the monk's radical orientation to the Kingdom, we misunderstand their role in the Body of Christ. Their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience witness to the coming *Eschaton*.

Albert Schweitzer, the great Lutheran theologian, argued that Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet who expected history to end soon. His radical ethics—"*Turn the other cheek,*" "*Sell all you have*"—made sense in that urgent expectation. But when the world didn't end, the Church had to adapt His teachings for the long haul of history.[1]

[1] For the most thorough treatment of this subject, see Christopher M. Hays, *When the Son of Man Didn't Come: A Constructive Proposal on the Delay of the Parousia* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016). No, Jesus of Nazareth was not a failed prophet. As Jonah bitterly realized, prophecies can be conditional rather than mistaken. God always gives us time to repent. We shouldn't read Mark 13 and Matthew 24 as strict timetables

Yet a 2,000-year "delay" doesn't faze the vigilant monk—or any of us called to live for God's Kingdom. The *Eschaton* is not measured by clock time (*chronos*) but by God's time (*kairos*). As Zizioulas explains:

> "The monk behaves as if the end has already begun. All the virtues of the monk—poverty, self-restraint, love for enemies—are unthinkable without eschatology. Only the end frees these virtues from irrationality." (p. 48)

How does a monk experience the end times? By flipping everyday life upside-down. Their vows place one foot in the *Eschaton*, living as if death is already defeated.

Several chapters in *Ascetic Ethos and Monasticism* serve as a bishop's exhortation to monks: do not "secularize" your vocation. A monk is not a lone seeker pursuing salvation while the world burns. His journey is not the isolated mysticism of Plotinus—"*the flight of the alone to the alone.*" Nor is it, as William James put it, "*the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude.*" A monk's vocation is to serve the Body of Christ.

But all charisms, even monasticism, are temporary. Only love never ends (1 Cor 13:8). And love must never be self-love. True love is *kenotic*. It is how we become persons.

"Shake off the mother of passions, self-love (φιλαυτία)"

One of the most powerful themes in *Ascetic Ethos and Monasticism* is Zizioulas's warning about the dangers of φιλαυτία—self-love.

> "The main work of the monk is to root out—what Saint Maximus calls—self-love!" (p. 26)

Zizioulas repeatedly emphasizes that φιλαυτία is the greatest obstacle to true personhood and communion (κοινωνία) in the Body of Christ. Drawing from St. Maximus the Confessor, he describes self-love as existential isolation—turning inward instead of opening to God and others. This self-centeredness leads to fragmentation, sin,

but as calls to urgency, faithfulness, and repentance. That is why we still pray, "*Thy Kingdom come*." Extra time is a blessing, not a curse.

and even death because it disrupts the relational nature of being. For Zizioulas, personhood is not self-contained but given and received in loving relationship.

As bishop, he reminds monks that asceticism is pointless unless it leads to genuine love for others. The root of all evil is φιλαυτία. We can struggle against vices and passions, but unless we overcome self-love, they will keep resurfacing.

> "As long as self-love is maintained, we come back to them in another way and in another form, from another path." (p. 27)

Self-love isolates us from God and others, trapping us in an autonomous, self-referential existence. To break free, we must embrace *kenosis*—self-emptying—modeled after Christ. This transformation happens through ascetic struggle, Eucharistic participation, and a life of love.

Most importantly, when we root out *φιλαυτία*, we make space for God and our neighbor.

> "In order to possess everything you must lose everything. You must empty yourself of yourself and reach nothingness, so that the grace of God can enter the void you leave. God does not enter when the self is full of itself. There is no space." (p. 126)

When we are full of ourselves, there is no room for God. To truly live and love, we must empty ourselves—only then can we welcome God and others into our lives.

"Keep thy mind in hell and despair not"

One of the most striking aspects of *Ascetic Ethos and Monasticism* is how often Zizioulas repeats St. Silouan's cryptic words: *"Keep thy mind in hell and despair not."* At least five times, he returns to this paradox. But rather than just quoting it, he unpacks its meaning—as both self-emptying (*kenosis*) and hope.

I remember the first time I heard a newly ordained Orthodox priest try to explain it to a group of equally new converts. Fresh from chrismation, we were eager to grasp what made Orthodoxy distinct. Nothing seemed more bewildering—or unsettling—than being told to *keep our minds in hell*. It felt hopeless. Neither we nor the priest seemed to understand what it meant.

Two decades later, I picked up *Love's Work*, the final book by philosopher Gillian Rose, written as she was dying of ovarian cancer. To my shock, she opened with St. Silouan's admonition. Then it clicked. Of course, she would resonate with his words—her mind was already in hell. Denial was not an option. Some well-meaning friends with good intentions urged Rose to "*think positive*," "*everything happens for a reason,*" but she rejected such platitudes:

> "This is the counsel of despair which would keep the mind out of hell. The tradition is far kinder in its understanding that to live, to love, is to be failed; to forgive, to have failed, to be forgiven, for ever and ever. Keep your mind in hell, and despair not."

Since reading Rose, I've learned to keep my reservations about St. Silouan's words to myself. And yet, even now, I'm never quite prepared to be told to *keep my mind in hell*.

For Zizioulas, this paradox defines the spiritual life. We must fully confront sin, suffering, and despair (*keep your mind in hell*), while holding onto God's mercy and love (*despair not*). Christian existence is a tension: we face the world's brokenness honestly, yet remain open to grace.

Zizioulas argues that St. Silouan's statement only makes sense within Christology. Christ Himself descended to the depths of hell—yet triumphed over it.

> "This phrase becomes awfully nihilistic outside of Christology. If taken out of context, it can lead to suicide. Hell is a passage, not a destination. There is no detour if we wish to reach heaven and the Kingdom of God. Christ himself went through this experience. Because of this, it does not lead to despair." (pp. 56–57)

This is the only interpretation of St. Silouan's words that I have ever found even remotely convincing. It calls us to stand with the lost and forsaken, just as Christ did. As Zizioulas notes:

> "Our age is more conscious of tragedy, kenosis, and nothingness than Byzantium." (p. 57)

That's putting it mildly. Flannery O'Connor observed that *"If you live today, you breathe in nihilism … it's the gas you breathe."* The abyss has become a cliché. But the abyss is no joke.

Rather than retreating into despair, Christians are called to stand in solidarity with those who feel abandoned by God. We must never forget Christ's cry from the cross: *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*

Zizioulas describes this solidarity:

> "You identify with all mankind, especially in their fallenness. By doing so, you gain true humility and cease to be proud. At the same time, you feel sympathy for all sinners—including your enemies—loving them existentially, not because of a moral imperative, but by participating in their suffering. Christ did all this. Without it, Christology would be empty doctrine."

Christians have no business judging the world. Instead, we are called to suffer with it. Christ's descent into hell is the ultimate act of *kenosis*. He embraced the godforsaken state of fallen humanity, entering the isolation of death. But His resurrection shattered the finality of that abyss, opening the way to communion with God.

For Zizioulas, this reveals a profound truth: Hell is not a destination but a passage (*p. 56*). True existence is not found in isolation but in being drawn into the life of the Trinity. *"Keep thy mind in hell"* means walking the path Christ Himself took. He *is* the Way (John 14:6), and the way of suffering is the only road to true life. There is no other way that is real—no other way to be fully human.

"It shall not be so among you..."

Reading *Ascetic Ethos and Monasticism* through the eyes of the famous German sociologist Max Weber, you see a classic case of *charismatic authority* (monks) versus *traditional authority* (bishops).

To be clear, Metropolitan Zizioulas is no tyrant; he is wise and discerning. Yet, the age-old tension between bishops and monks remains unmistakable. He describes the bishop's role in the Church this way:

> "There is nothing that expresses the Church in her fullness as much as the Divine Eucharist. Where there is Eucharist, there is the Church. The presider of the Eucharist—the bishop—thus becomes the center of the Church. Everything must have his blessing and pass through him in order to become Church. Otherwise, they are extra-ecclesiastical actions." (pp. 44–45)

Metropolitan Zizioulas sees bishops and monks as having distinct but complementary roles in the Church. He urges us to understand these roles in terms of *ontology*—a weighty and often unfamiliar word to most people. But what exactly does he mean by it?

Simply put, *ontology* studies what something truly is—not just how it looks or behaves, but what makes it real. For Zizioulas, personhood is not just a matter of psychology, ethics, or social roles—it is rooted in our very being. To be a *real* person, in the fullest sense, means to exist in loving relationships, just as God exists as a communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Zizioulas uses *ontology* to challenge the idea that we are simply isolated individuals or just products of biology. He argues that true existence—what it really means to *be*—is found only in free, personal, and loving communion. This is modeled after the perfect relationship of love within the Trinity (*perichoresis*, or the divine dance of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

This ontological framework helps us understand why Zizioulas insists that the bishop is not merely an administrator but an icon of Christ within the Church. The Church is not just an organization; it is a living communion, and the bishop is at its heart, uniting the faithful and leading them sacramentally.

The monk, on the other hand, has a different but equally vital role. While the bishop safeguards the unity of the Church, the monk serves as a radical witness to the Kingdom of God, living in detachment from worldly concerns.

Tension arises when bishops reduce monasticism to mere obedience or when monks reject the Church's authority in favor of their own personal spirituality. The ideal relationship is one of mutual respect: the bishop keeps the monk connected to the Church, while the monk challenges the bishop—and all Christians—to remain faithful to the ultimate goal: union with God.

That's the theory. But how does *ontology* play out in real life? Zizioulas describes the bishop as an *icon* of Christ, reflecting divine reality in the Church's life:

> "The bishop represents Christ; the presbyters, the apostles; the deacons, the angels. The Church is surrounded by iconography, not

> just visually but in its very structure. But what does 'icon' mean? This is a deep theological and philosophical question, one that common sense struggles to grasp." (pp. 167–168)

We know what happens when our leaders act like petty tyrants instead of humble servants. We've seen bishops who mistake their role for imperial rule—wearing the dignity of office like a lost Byzantine crown. They don't act like shepherds but hirelings. They don't love their flocks, but abuse them. They fleece the sheep instead of feeding them.

But Metropolitan John raises a profound question. What does a true icon of Christ look like? We don't need to look any further than Archbishop Anastasios of Albania, of blessed memory (1929-2025). Now he was a true icon of Christ. Greek by birth, his shining example radiated the light of Christ in Africa for over twenty years (in the 1960s-1980s) first as a missionary and then Archbishop of East Africa. Then in 1992, he became Archbishop of Albania. It was Anastasios who led the Orthodox Church's revival after decades of brutal communist oppression. Through his wisdom, humility, and perseverance, he transformed the Orthodox Church in Albania into a thriving spiritual and social force. The Greek Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis described Archbishop Anastasios well in his eulogy:

> "He dared to hope… Courage and hope were the two compasses that always guided him on his marvelous journey of faith. He became a beacon of love and service, of kindness and simplicity, of persuasion and effectiveness. He became a diplomat of love. I remember when he would say, with a smile on his face, 'We gather the stones thrown at us by those who fight against our work and we use the stones to build churches and schools.'"

Well done, good and faithful servant. He exemplified what authentic Christian leadership should look like. His life was not spectacle but loving service. He demonstrated genuine kenotic leadership—self-emptying, Christlike service—through his humility, sacrifice, and tireless dedication to the Albanian Orthodox Church and its people. When cursed, he blessed. He repeatedly stressed that Christians must never have enemies. When slandered, he never tried to justify himself. Instead, he carried his cross with humility, patience, and forgiveness. He exemplified the words of our Lord:

> "But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mk 10:43-45)

Archbishop Anastasios showed us what it truly means to be human.

Conclusion: "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt"

If you're willing to receive it (Mt 11:14), *The Velveteen Rabbit* is the perfect conclusion to this review of Metropolitan Zizioulas's book. But to understand its message, we must become children again.

In this scene, the Skin Horse is the wise *staretz*, and the Velveteen Rabbit is his eager but naïve disciple:

> "What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day...
> "Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."
> "Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.
> "Sometimes," said the Skin Horse. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."
> "Does it happen all at once... or bit by bit?"
> "It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time... Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

The Skin Horse understands the cost of *kenotic* love. True personhood isn't found in autonomy but in self-giving communion. Love that suffers—modeled after Christ's self-emptying love—shatters the illusion of self-sufficiency and opens us to real existence.

Suffering love is the only way to become fully real. It is the only way to become godlike. Because God *is* love, and love alone endures.

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Conference Review

Conferences Honored the Late Metropolitan of Pergamon, John D. Zizioulas

Vasilije Gavrilović

The passing of the late Metropolitan of Pergamon, John Zizioulas, came as a profound loss that shook the world of theology and Christendom. Recognized as "one of the most original and most profound theologians of our time" (Fr. Yves Congar, among many others), Metropolitan John inspired numerous theologians, philosophers, scientists, and artists, to interpret, develop, and even critique his theological genius. His theology, in this way, left no one indifferent. For this reason, during his lifetime, in addition to the many essays and theses written on his theological perspectives, numerous conferences were organized in honor of his theological brilliance.

During his lifetime, a few conferences were dedicated to directly honoring and addressing John Zizioulas' distinguished contributions. In the Diocese of Braničevo, Serbia, a series of conferences were held in his honor (2006, 2014, etc.). The International Conference in Volos, which took place on October 28–30, 2011, was organized by Volos Academy for Theological Studies, Volos, and was titled "Metropolitan of Pergamon John Zizioulas: Person, Eucharist,

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and the Kingdom of God in Orthodox and Ecumenical Perspective." Similarly, the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies organized a conference at Westcott House in Cambridge on June 14, 2014, titled "On Eschatology Today: A Celebration of the Life and Work of John Zizioulas." Both of these conferences brought together theologians from both East and West to reflect on Zizioulas' theological perspectives, honoring not only his person but, above all, his immense contribution to theology.

Following his passing in Athens on February 2, 2023, renewed and intensified interest in John Zizioulas' theological vision led to the publication of numerous new books, essays, and the organization of several conferences. Three major conferences held after his repose further affirmed his status as a theological giant of our time.

Soon after Metropolitan John's repose, in the spring of 2023, the Diocese of Požarevac and Braničevo organized a series of three lectures in his memory. Furthermore, a conference in his honor was organized at the University of Belgrade, Serbia, on December 13, 2023, titled *"The Contribution of Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon to Contemporary Systematic Theology."* It is worth noting that Zizioulas was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Belgrade in 1991 and attended numerous conferences organized by its School of Theology. The conference gathered many speakers who presented papers on the Metropolitan's theological contributions. One of his students, Metropolitan Dr. Ignatije of Požarevac and Braničevo, spoke about his teacher, affirming that *"time will show that he is one of the greatest theologians of our time."* Metropolitan Ignatije presented a paper dedicated to Zizioulas' use and understanding of Neopatristic synthesis. Other professors critically engaged with his theological reasoning, exploring key topics such as Zizioulas' contribution to modern theology, ontological questions in ecclesiology, Christian anthropology, death, and resurrection.

Shortly thereafter, an online conference in honor of the late Metropolitan John was held on February 2, 2024, organized by a group of theologians from the Orthodox Church of Georgia. The conference aimed to highlight Metropolitan John's contributions to

theology and his distinctive theological approach. The organizers invited distinguished scholars from around the world, including Rt. Rev. Rowan Williams, Professors John Milbank, Cyril Hovorun, Tamar Grdzelidze, and Bishop Maxim Vasiljević, among others. Williams spoke on Zizioulas' theology of otherness, a theme central to his theological work. He also emphasized the Metropolitan's *"substantial reflection on eschatology,"* presenting his vision through Zizioulas' latest work, *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology*, published by St. Sebastian Orthodox Press.

The Department of Theology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens has inaugurated a new series of annual international lectures in honor of Metropolitan John Zizioulas. Inspired by his theological legacy, these lectures serve as a driving force for contemporary theologians. The first lecture in the series was held at the School of Theology on May 16, 2024, and was delivered by Dr. Thomas Graumann, Professor of Ancient Christian History and Patristic Studies at the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge. His lecture, titled "The Authority of the Church Fathers in Late Antique Theological Debates," explored the role of patristic tradition in early doctrinal discussions. The next lecture in the series is scheduled for March 13, 2025, and will be presented by Fr. Thomas Joseph White, OP, Rector of the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome. His talk, titled "Relational Ontology in Christian Theology: The Trinity, Human Nature, and the Mystery of Christ—Reflections on a Theme in Thomas Aquinas with a View to Catholic-Orthodox Relations," will examine the intersection of Thomistic thought with Orthodox theology.

The most comprehensive conference in honor of the Metropolitan of Pergamon, John D. Zizioulas, was held in Istanbul from October 5–8, 2024. Organized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in collaboration with the Volos Academy for Theological Studies and the Center for Orthodox Christian Studies at Fordham University, this significant event brought together numerous scholars at the invitation of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. Titled "Theological Legacy and Ecumenical Perspective: A Conference in Memory of Metropolitan John D. Zizioulas of Pergamon," the con-

ference was structured into nine sessions, each exploring various aspects of Metropolitan John's theological vision in a creative and critical manner. Each session concluded with a Q&A segment, which sparked further discussions and deepened engagement with his theological legacy.

Patriarch Bartholomew's introductory address emphasized Metropolitan Zizioulas' Eucharistic-centered vision, which shaped his life, thought, and hope. This focus on the Eucharist as the lifeblood and sustaining force of his theology is also a reflection of his eschatology—a perspective confirmed by the distinguished speakers who followed. Among them were Their Eminences: Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon, Metropolitan Ignatije of Braničevo, Metropolitan Maximos of Selyvria, Archbishop Maxim of Los Angeles, and Metropolitan Job of Pisidia, as well as Demetrios Linos, Nikolaos Asproulis, Paschalis Kitromilides, Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Rt. Rev. Christopher Hill, Stavros Yangazoglou, Rt. Rev. Paul McPartlan, and many others.

The sessions were thoughtfully structured to examine key theological themes central to Metropolitan Zizioulas' legacy, including eschatology, ecclesiology, Trinitarian theology, his engagement with philosophy, and ecumenism. Most of the discussions were further enriched by constructive and thought-provoking questions and dialogues, fostering deeper engagement with his theological contributions.

Additionally, the conference was enriched by a panel exhibition depicting Metropolitan Zizioulas' life and work, making it a significant component of the event. Participants praised the exhibition, noting its ability to visually convey Metropolitan John's theological legacy. Patriarch Bartholomew himself took time to engage with the panels, carefully observing the photographs and offering reflections on Metropolitan John's life and contributions. Many panelists referenced the exhibition in their discussions, commending the initiative of displaying large-scale images of Metropolitan John, which made his presence felt throughout the event. The panels will have a permanent home at the Volos Academy in Volos, Greece, ensuring their continued role in academic and theological discourse. At the conclusion

of the conference, the organizers expressed gratitude for the thoughtful curation by Marija Aćimović and the design by Denis Vikić, acknowledging their dedication in bringing the exhibition to life.

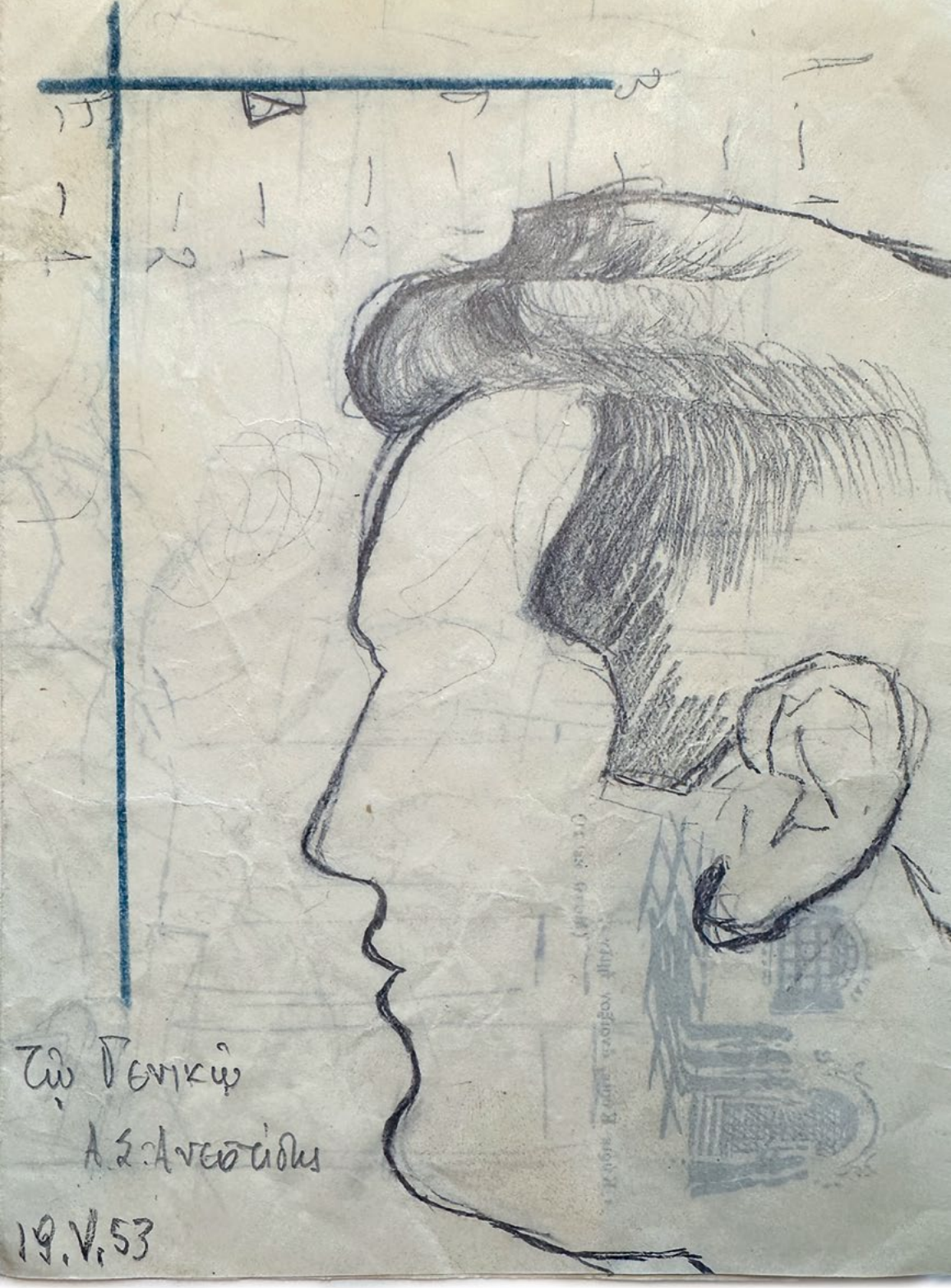
Finally, participants of this significant event were introduced to the "John Zizioulas Foundation," presented by Prof. Stavros Yangazoglou. The foundation, chaired by Andreas Goulas from Athens, seeks to promote and compile a comprehensive collection of Metropolitan Zizioulas' career, studies, and works, enriched with photographs and archival materials. As part of this initiative, the foundation has already launched a dedicated website for Metropolitan Zizioulas, managed by Vladimir Aćimović, and introduced a new international journal, OmegAlpha, edited by Nikolaos Asproulis, which will focus on the study and dissemination of Metropolitan's theology. Prof. Yangazoglou expressed gratitude to all those contributing to this project, particularly Archbishop Maxim of Los Angeles and St. Sebastian Orthodox Press, for their dedicated efforts in making many of Metropolitan's texts available in English.

As the conference in honor of Metropolitan John of Pergamon concluded, a vision for new projects dedicated to his theology was both inspired and encouraged for the near future. These initiatives reaffirmed the continued relevance of Zizioulas' theological hermeneutics, eschatology, and ecclesiology—centered on the Eucharist and koinonia—as well as many other themes essential to contemporary theology.

Meanwhile, since his repose, a number of John Zizioulas' books appeared in Greek, English, Serbian, and other languages: *Receive One Another: 101 Sermons* (Los Angeles: St. Sebastian Orthodox Press, 2023), *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology* (Los Angeles: St. Sebastian Orthodox Press 2023), *Ascetic Ethos and Monasticism* (Los Angeles: St. Sebastian Orthodox Press 2024), *Freedom and Existence: The Transition from Ancient to Christian Hellenism* (Los Angeles: St. Sebastian Orthodox Press 2024), *Knowing as Willing: The Ontology of Person, Nature, and Freedom* (Los Angeles: St. Sebastian Orthodox Press 2025). It is noteworthy that the book *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology* is being translated into eight languages and has already

been published in Italian and Spanish. Let us mention that, in addition to writing a heartfelt Foreword for *Remembering the Future*, Pope Francis has frequently referenced Metropolitan John's theological insights since 2023. The Diocese of Požarevac and Braničevo has undertaken the publication of the collected works of Metropolitan John in Serbian, with three volumes published so far: *Evharistija čini Crkvu* (2023), *Crkva kao zajednica* (2023) and *Asketski etos i monašto* (2024).

Three journals devoted to Zizioulas' legacy: The magazine *Anthropos* 14 (October 2024 – January 2025), dedicates an issue to Metropolitan John of Pergamon, highlighting his contribution to theology and philosophy. The special edition includes articles that examine his thought and his relationship with other thinkers, such as Jean-Luc Marion and Paul Ricœur (*Ἄνθρωπος*: https://www.anthrwpos.com). *The Wheel* Journal's Issue #36 (https://wheeljournal.com/issue/the-wheel-36/), titled "John D. Zizioulas: Perspectives," focuses on the theological contributions of Metropolitan John D. Zizioulas. This edition features articles such as "Towards an Eschatological Ontology" by Zizioulas himself, "Person and Confession: Truth-Telling as a Hypostatic Fact" by Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Between the 'Already' and the 'Not Yet': A Journey with Metropolitan John Zizioulas" by Bishop Maxim (Vasiljević), and others. Also, the journal *Φρέαρ*, Issue May 2023 (https://frear.gr/?p=34741), was dedicated to Metropolitan John, featuring articles by Maxim Vasiljevic, Nikolaos Asproulis, Giorgos Vlantis, Stavros Yangazoglou, Giorgos Grigoriou, Fr. Panteleimon Manoussakis, Demetrios Mavropoulos, Sotiris Mitralexis, Kostas Bousbouras, Giorgos Papageorgiou, Aristotle Papanikolaou, and Dionysios Skliris.



Profile drawing of John Zizioulas by A. S. Anestidis, May 19, 1953.

About the Journal

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