

PREFACE

by Bishop Maxim Vasiljević

Typically, eminent authors, in the twilight of their careers, tend to produce final works that are not commensurate with the elevated standards their readership has come to expect. Contrary to this norm, John Zizioulas, at the culmination of his theological journey, has bestowed upon the academic world in this magnum opus, a work that surpasses all his previous endeavors in depth, insight, and scholarly rigor. The insights presented in his celebrated *Being as Communion* and *Communion and Otherness* provided the groundwork for the extensive exploration undertaken in this seminal piece that will likely be dissected and referenced even more extensively than the author's prior contributions.

Metropolitan John harbored a deep-seated aspiration to pen this masterpiece on eschatology, a desire that can be traced back to his lectures in the 1980s, where he reflects on the notion of the world as "creation." However, the journey to authorship of such a volume on the future was protracted. Frequently questioned about the anticipated publication date, the metropolitan would often respond with a touch of humor, remarking, "before the Second Coming, I hope." The publication, released posthumously a mere six months after his repose in Athens on February 2nd of this year, stands as both a fortuitous gift and a fulfilled commitment. It is thanks to his disciple, Andreas Goulas, to whom I express my warmest thanks, that five invaluable manuscripts have been bequeathed, culminating in this impressive volume.

The late Elder Metropolitan of Pergamon acknowledged the profound challenge of articulating the influence of the future on the present. In 1999, he remarked, "I realize that this concept is most difficult to grasp and to experience," attributing this difficulty to the fact that "we still live in a fallen world in which protological ontology is the dominant form of rationality." The future of things in this perspective is defined by its origins and the "given" or the "factum."

For the past decade, during my visits with colleagues to Metropolitan John in Athens, he would often divulge snippets from his forthcoming monograph with the intriguing title, “Remembering the Future.” He would emphasize that his book is written for those who *have accepted* the fact of the Resurrection of Christ and are interested in *the “logical” consequences* that follow the acceptance of this fact: *credo ut intelligam*. Throughout many discussions, he urged us to examine critically both the foundations and ramifications of his groundbreaking assertion that “the future precedes the past” from both logical and ontological perspectives. He maintained that Christian theology represents a hermeneutics of Resurrection, a pivotal theme at the heart of this book’s inquiry.

This work of Zizioulas presents a holistic Christian “Grand Unified Theory,” as he underscores how eschatological ontology deeply influences the entirety of Christian doctrine. While the lengthy introduction and the first three parts of this book are being presented to the public for the first time in this compilation, some segments have been previously published in other contexts. Yet, each piece has been carefully revised and refined by the author specifically for this edition. Editing the manuscripts of the late Metropolitan John has been a journey marked by fervent passion and reverential trepidation. I was convinced unequivocally that I had been handed writings parallel in profundity to those of ancient philosophers and Church fathers. The confidence bestowed upon me by the John Zizioulas Foundation and Sebastian Press, served as an invaluable source of encouragement. Engaging in numerous discussions with patristic scholar Norman Russell about the entire manuscript, as we revised it together, and his assistance provided by the meticulous cross-referencing, expert advice on the relevant literature, and translation of patristic passages, together with his translation of Pope Francis’s *Foreword*, has been both immense and gratifying.

The John Zizioulas Foundation expresses profound gratitude to Pope Francis for graciously providing the foreword to this book, imbuing it with his invaluable insights, heartfelt warmth, and straightforwardness. His enthusiasm and unwavering dedication to the theology of John Zizioulas shine through all that he says. I owe a special debt of gratitude also to Stavros Yangazoglou, George Papageorgiou, don Giuseppe Bonfrate, p. Pino di Luccio SJ, fr. Basil Gavrilović, Nikos Tzoitis, Dionysios Skliris, and Sally Anna Boyle.

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