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Pentecost and the Mission of the Church Today**With Particular Reference to the Theology of Metropolitan John Zizioulas**

Abstract: In the paper, the author critically examines the view of Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon on the issue of the mission of the Church in relation to the modern world and its challenges. Starting from the specific area, Western Europe, the author presents the views of the metropolitan on the question of the place of the Church as a reality of the relationship between the Orthodox tradition and Western Christianity. Within these frameworks, the author focuses on the event of Pentecost, as an event of ecclesial manifestation *ad extra* in relation to the world. The essential question of this part of the work is: what is, in fact, the mission, ethos or essential characteristic that the Church offers to the world, opening the perspective of the liturgical-relational identity of the Church by which every movement is measured. On those grounds, in the second part of the work, the author observes the mission of the Church in our time, presenting several parameters of the authentic relationship between the Church and the world. The last part of the work is dedicated to the dangers and challenges faced by the Church, where the author presents specific views and proposals of Metropolitan John Zizioulas.

Key words: Pentecost, mission of the Church, John Zizioulas, ethos, Western Europe.

“We live at the end of a historical culture shaped by the Enlightenment and the Gospel should be detached from it and be presented as an alternative to this culture.”

Metropolitan John Zizioulas

I want to thank His Eminence Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium, who invited me to communicate face-to-face with an elected part of his Diocese.¹ This Metropolis has a very prominent position in Western Europe. Its hierarchy plays a crucial role in implanting the orthodox ethos into this environment. He

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is informed of the existential concerns of contemporary society and is trying to influence it with the Orthodox ethos.

Since my task is framed by the theology of Metropolitan John Zizioulas (born in 1931 and passed away on February 2, 2023) — the most influential Orthodox theologian of the past and current century — I will try to accentuate his view on the mission of the Church today through a critical approach of his theology. Church and its mission in the world are at the center of the Zizioulas' theological project. Given the timeframe of this presentation, I can offer only some suggestions on a significant subject, trying to do justice to Metropolitan John and his "beautiful theological vision"². According to Dionysios Skliris, John Zizioulas could be called the "Saint-Exupéry of theology." Like the French writer and the *Little Prince*, this renowned Orthodox theologian and churchman of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. tried to reformulate, but in a profound way, the meaning of the human condition, seen in terms of freedom and love.

We will start with reference to Pentecost because this event was the beginning of the mission toward the world. After that, I will try to outline the basic principles of the mission of the Church according to Metropolitan John. What is the mission of the Church, and how does it relate to the feast of Pentecost?

Before that, please allow me to say something about the mission of Orthodoxy in the West.

1. Orthodoxy in Western Europe

To begin with, let us consider Metropolitan John's answer on what contributions can Orthodox Western Europeans make to the world today.

First, Metropolitan John Zizioulas rejects an erroneous perception of the role of Orthodoxy in the modern world and offers the following clarification. For some people, unhappily, the mission of Orthodoxy in Europe consists mainly in converting as many Western Christians as possible into Orthodoxy. Considering this as a minimal and inadequate goal, John Zizioulas, as an alternative, offers the following view.

The true mission of the Orthodox Church in both Europe has a far greater significance — it is much more substantial and threefold.

a) The Church must bear witness to the particular *ethos*³ of its Orthodox Tradition and confront the ethos of Western Christendom and its culture.

b) At the same time, the Church must also *interpret* the so-called 'Western' way of thinking for the Orthodox believer. This task is best fulfilled by an

² Cf. Talion, 2011.

³ 'Ethos' for Zizioulas is a spirit, combined the liturgical experience, which creates an attitude rather than a prescribed code of behavior of ethics.

Orthodox—Western European — who has a certain cultural credibility and can, therefore,

c) act as a *bridge* between historical Orthodoxy and Western culture.

What drives Zizioulas to think this mission is so imperative? Firstly, it is not insignificant to him that, currently, the West dominates the world. “Its political and economic superiority has turned it into a model for the rest of the world”⁴. The implication of such a mission in such a world cannot be over-emphasized. Secondly, he holds that the distinction of the Orthodox must not be an awaiting the others to innovate and then quickly move to copy their ideas. He also swiftly refuses the image of Orthodoxy and an exotic religion.

“Orthodoxy should not accept the image of an exotic religion that offers a refuge to those who seek mystical or other extraordinary experiences, as is the case with religions and cults of the East”⁵.

According to Metropolitan John, we must fight against such a perception of the Orthodox mission because this kind of view is entirely contrary to what our Holy Fathers have handed down to us. He says, “Our Holy Fathers, hermits included, accepted the cultural challenges of their day. Far from preaching exotic religions, they aspired to transform the Greco-Roman culture of their time and were very successful in their venture”⁶. Zizioulas argues that this is precisely what Orthodoxy in the West, more so than the other members of the Orthodox worldwide body, is called to do—to use our rich Tradition to identify the problems of the modern Western people. “And the sooner, the better, since these problems will, before long, be the problems of all humankind”⁷.

“The first task, therefore, that Orthodox Theology is called to perform in the West is to witness to the common heritage of the undivided Church—not to promote and prolong the confessionalist spirit that resulted from the East-West division of the second millennium. Orthodox theology should not operate as another ‘Confession,’ but as a pointer to the spirit and ethos common to both East and West in the undivided Church. This means that Orthodox theology must draw from the source of both the Greek and the Latin Fathers. It must also listen to the voice of the Reformation as it points to the faithfulness to the tradition of the early Church including primarily the Holy Scriptures. The Bible and the Fathers of the undivided Church must be the ground on which East and West can restore their unity. This will be a service not only to Christianity but to Europe as well.”⁸

⁴ Ζηζιούλας, 1997, p. 8.

⁵ Ζηζιούλας, 1997, p. 13. Simply stated, Orthodoxy is different from these exotic religions because Orthodoxy has a universal message which carries the Truth for all people of all times, whereas an exotic religion appeals to an elitist ego that seeks to be a part of something exotic to increase one’s individualism.

⁶ Ζηζιούλας, 1997, p. 14.

⁷ Zizioulas, 2015, p. 10.

⁸ Zizioulas, 2015, p. 11.

Having said this, let us now proceed to clarify the link between Pentecost and the Church.

2. Pentecost as the mission par excellence

Pentecost, as described in the Book of Acts, Chapter 2, is often seen as the “mission-event” by which the Church was sent to every corner of the world. According to the biblical account, the disciples of Jesus were gathered together in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Suddenly, they experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them. This event empowered the disciples and enabled them to proclaim the message of Jesus to people from various nations who were present in Jerusalem at the time.

At the event of the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, a double miracle occurred (emphatically emphasized in the second chapter of the Acts): the people present first tasted the way of life of the Age to Come (2:1–4). Consequently, they repented (2:38–39) and were baptized (2:41). The Pentecost event shows that when the charismatic presence of the Eschaton is in the world it then awakens to repentance and inclusion (incorporation) into the New Israel, the Church. According to Metropolitan John,

“In the entire Pentecostal scene described in Acts 2 — the descent of the Holy Spirit, the Baptism of the three thousand people, and the participation of all in the “breaking of the bread” — form one indivisible unity.”⁹

Now, this image of Pentecost has led the Church to see its manifestation in the Holy Eucharist. As conceived by Metropolitan John,

“The Holy Eucharist in its communal and ecclesial character is the Pentecostal, eschatological community par excellence, a community which experiences and witnesses to the entrance of the *eschaton* into history and offers a taste of the Kingdom to come. ‘We have seen the true light, we have received the heavenly Spirit, we have found true faith, worshipping the indivisible Trinity, which has saved us’ is the final hymn of the participants in the Orthodox Eucharistic liturgy.”¹⁰

Metropolitan John kept reminding that it is quite important to bear in mind that “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3). There is no worshipping life possible in the Church without the presence of the Spirit”¹¹.

“The delay of the *Parousia*, therefore, did not result in leaving the Christians ‘orphans,’ but meant that another ‘comforter’ (παράκλητος) would undertake to guide and strengthen the Christians until the return of Christ (John 14:18). This made the role of the Spirit decisive for Christian existence between the Resurrection and the Second Coming of Christ).”¹²

⁹ Zizioulas, 2010, p. 93.

¹⁰ Zizioulas, 2011, p. 121.

¹¹ Zizioulas, 2010, p. 95.

¹² Zizioulas, 2010, p. 151.

Therefore, Pentecost marked the beginning of the Church’s mission to spread the Gospel to all nations. However, a mere “mission does *not* constitute the basis of the identity of the Church,” says Metropolitan John¹³.

“The Spirit brings the eschaton into history in an event of communion. If this is the meaning of Pentecost in Acts, it means that the Church is caught in a dual existence. On the one hand, in her being eschatological in nature, she is deeply, existentially contrasted to this world; the world hates her as it hated Christ (John 15:18; 17:14), and she must live, “the doors being shut” (John 20:19), her “citizenship” being “in heaven” (Phil. 3:20). On the other hand, by virtue of the same Pneumatological dimension, the Church is by nature relational; her existence cannot but be *ek-static*; she cannot reject anyone or anything; she can only embrace even that by which she is rejected.”¹⁴

To summarize Metropolitan John’s consideration of the connection between Pentecost and the mission of the Church, let us quote from his book *The One and the Many*:

“Wherever the Holy Spirit blows the immediate result is that the eschaton breaks through history and men are brought into *communion* with one another and with God in the form of a *community*. We see this happen par excellence on the day of Pentecost as described in Acts 2, where the descent of the Spirit upon the Disciples and those who are with them in the Upper Room is seen as a purely eschatological event bringing “the last days” into history (Acts 2:17) and, at the same time, as the creation of the community of the Church (Acts 2:41ff.)”¹⁵

This previous reflection on the feast of Pentecost leads us to the following question. If the Holy Spirit introduces the *eschata* into history, what is the relationship between the Church and the world?

3. The Mission of the Church

While Christology is concerned with the understanding of Christ in the context of history, connecting the present with the historical person of Jesus, on the other hand, the role of the Holy Spirit, is to bring the future into the present (Acts 2:18). It is through the Spirit that history is *interpreted* in the light of contemporary existential concepts of the world.

When a theologian speaks, he should always do it with an eye to the eschatological and pneumatological dimensions of the Church. This vision is holistic and very affirmative. Zizioulas emphasizes the importance of engaging in theological discourse within the heart of modern civilization rather than opposing it. He suggests that this approach allows for a more constructive and meaningful dialogue rather than engaging in unproductive conflicts.

¹³ Zizioulas, 2009, p. 127.

¹⁴ Zizioulas, 2010, p. 87.

¹⁵ Zizioulas, 2010, p. 182.

Already in his early study “The Eucharistic Vision of the World” (1966) Metropolitan John stated that “the liturgy is the most positive and active acceptance of the world and creation”¹⁶. A few years later, the late Metropolitan John underlined the following clarification:

“The Church and the world are not ontologically divided; the problems of the world are at the same time problems of the Church; the mission of the Church is not an attitude vis-à-vis the world, but a compassionate and sanctifying presence in it. All this would be part of the incarnational aspect of the Church’s Body and of its relational nature in the Spirit. But in so doing, the Church can never identify the eschaton with history by trying to build the Kingdom as part of the historical process.”¹⁷

In his *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, Metropolitan John that hearing and preaching the Gospel is not the primary mission of the Church.

“When an Orthodox Christian says that he is going to Church, he does not mean that he is going to hear the gospel of Christ being preached as though for the first time. He means that he is going to worship God in the community of the faithful and particularly to participate in the divine Eucharist. The Church is identified basically by its participation in the worship of God.”¹⁸

It follows from this that it is a modern phenomenon that Christians over-emphasize mission and preaching.

“However, under the influence of those contemporary Christian movements and organizations that emphasize mission and preaching, a more individual piety has come to affect Orthodox understanding of the liturgy. Some of the clergy promote preaching over worship, to the neglect of the Eucharist, which fundamentally changes the orientation of the Church. Many clergy now read, rather than chant, the gospel in the divine liturgy, in the belief that this makes it more accessible to the laity.”¹⁹

He explains it further when he says how evangelization does not constitute the Church, but “it is primarily the divine liturgy that gives the Orthodox tradition its distinctive view of the Church”.

“In Orthodox theology, the Church is not constituted by the task of evangelization or mission, that is, by its desire to make its faith comprehensible to outsiders. The divine liturgy does not attempt to explain the faith: though there are many accounts of the faith, none of them is central to the life of the Church. At the center, is the eucharistic worship, and here the only explicit articulation of the faith is the creed, which we share with all other Churches and denominations”.

This last point seems to be so fundamental that it is necessary to emphasize it further. According to Metropolitan John,

¹⁶ Zizioulas, 2011, p. 125.

¹⁷ Zizioulas, 2010, p. 88.

¹⁸ Zizioulas, 2009, p. 121.

¹⁹ Zizioulas, 2009, p. 121.

“However, the Church also receives from the world, its history, its culture, even its tragic and sinful experiences and failures, for it is the body of the Lord who takes upon himself the sins of the world. Second, the Church itself is received. The Church as a distinct community within the world exists in constant dialogue with whatever constitutes the ‘non-ecclesial’ realm, in an attempt to make herself acceptable to the world. *What we used to call “mission” is better rendered with the notion of reception*, because the Church should be offering itself to the world rather than imposing itself on it.”²⁰

For Metropolitan John, the mission of the Church is nothing less than an ek-stasis of communion, which means and *exodus*, “thanks to which the Church is not left behind to become another city vis-a-vis the world, but takes a sympathetic part in the life of the world, with the result that the Church is effectively involved in a specific situation, with all its problems state of it”²¹.

For this reason, Metropolitan John considered the *catechism* and *preaching* as missionary activities of the Church, that *can be carried out outside the Eucharistic community*.

“It is obvious that catechism and preaching, in order to be missionary effective, must be adapted to the age, characteristics, etc. of the people to whom they are addressed. Therefore, *these activities can and should be carried out outside the Eucharistic community*. In the primitive Church there were similar ‘gatherings without the performance of the sacraments,’ however every Wednesday and Friday (in Alexandria and elsewhere). However, *the ultimate purpose of such an activity is to lead the faithful to the Eucharist*. Only there is everyone united as a local church.”²²

All this has to do with the fact that *Mission in the Church is relational*. The logic behind Metropolitan John’s consideration of the mission of the Church is subtle.

“For quite a long time, Christian mission was regarded as a kind of sermon addressed to the world. It is, of course, true that the Church is not of this world and that the world hates Christ and his Church. But the relation of the Church to the world is not just negative: it is also positive. This is implied in the Incarnation and ideas such as the recapitulation of all in Christ to be found in the Bible (Ephesians, Colossians, etc.) and in the Fathers (Irenaeus, Maximus, et al.). In the Orthodox tradition, in which the Eucharist is central, the world is brought into the Church in the form of the natural elements as well as in the everyday preoccupations of the members of the Church. If communion is made a key idea in ecclesiology, mission is better understood and served not by placing the Gospel over against the world, but by inculturating it in it. Theology must seek ways of relating the Gospel to the existential needs of the world and to whatever is human. Instead of throwing the Bible or the dogmas of the Church into the face of the world, it would be best to seek first to feel and understand what

²⁰ Zizioulas, 2010, p. 120.

²¹ Ζηζιούλας, 2016, p. 543.

²² Ζηζιούλας, 2016, p. 545.

every human being longs for deep in their being, and then see how the Gospel and doctrine can make sense of that longing.”²³

4. The Mission of the Church today: Transmitting an Ethos

The mission of the Church today is the most sensitive matter because our time is completely different from the one in pre-modern time. Humanity faces unprecedented challenges, among them ecological problem, modern technology in its digital biotechnological version, etc.

How will our Church respond and address these challenges. Any violent response is excluded. The Church has to use its invaluable assets, such as the *Eucharist* and its *ascetical tradition*. But in order to keep them safe from secularization, two things have to be underlined.

Asked at the beginning of the third millennium what place Christ can occupy in our modern life, Zizioulas answered as follows:

“In this epoch of ours and in the one to come, Christ will be more than ever before a ‘sign that will be spoken against’ (σημείον ἀντιλεγόμενον). The discoveries we mentioned [in technology and biotechnology], I believe, will not make God ‘superfluous,’ but, on the contrary, necessary. Those discoveries will threaten the human person—the freedom, uniqueness and irreplaceability of each person—as well as nature—the integrity and laws that govern it, and that organize its unity in the diversity of species and ecosystems. Man will be forced to react to such a threat — otherwise he will cease to be man. Christ, as interpreted by the Fathers of the Church, and as he should be interpreted even today by theology, in such a situation will be the only authentic ‘perfect Man,’ Who — and as a ‘perfect God’ — will show the way that leads out of impasse. If the Church and theology will interpret and emphasize the Orthodox Christology existentially, that is, in the context of the development you mentioned, then even modern man will see that ‘there is no salvation in anyone else.’”²⁴

What has been said so far implies not only that the Church must point to Christ as a way out of impasse, but also that it has to do it in a proper way, by transmitting a certain ethos, an *ecclesial* ethos, required so badly today in order to face the problems of technology, ecology, etc.

The inculturation of the Gospel in the patristic era did not produce the loss of the Church’s identity; on the contrary, it saved her from withdrawing from the world into a ghetto-like existence. Certainly, “from the point of view of our Orthodox tradition, what happened in the patristic era was indeed a successful enculturation, since the purity of the Gospel was not lost through it.”

As Metropolitan John holds, “we live at the end of a historical culture shaped by the Enlightenment and the Gospel should be detached from it and

²³ Zizioulas, 2010, p. 57.

²⁴ Zizioulas, 1999, pp. 424–43.

be presented as an alternative to this culture.” But how can one present an alternative culture?

4.1. *Testimony to the ethos*

By this alternative culture Metropolitan John pointed to the testimony to the ethos, approach to life and mentality. He said: “Especially in view of the critical period, which the European civilization is going through, Europe has a specific need for one ethos and for one mentality, which can balance the antagonism of individual contentions and give priority to personal relationships.”

a) *Testimony of Orthodox Woman*. Interestingly enough, Metropolitan John pointed here to the testimony of Orthodox woman in contemporary society. He remarked once that,

“unless this society does adapt a person-centered mentality, which Orthodoxy fosters, it will die. The woman, maybe more so than anyone else in our society, teaches us to live as persons rather than as individuals, that is, as creatures of relationships and not as isolated and “independent” beings.”²⁵

Women can learn this kind of freedom easier and more naturally. Zizioulas believed that the Orthodox woman is called upon to change and transform the individualistic current in Western civilization. She has all the pre-conditions to be able to do this if she truly is an Orthodox woman.

b) *Testimony of women in public life*. As we can see, John Zizioulas took a different view on the role of the Orthodox woman by insisting that she should not be absent from public life.

In an era in which women’s right to vote is recognized and women exercise their responsibility in choosing political and other leaders, there are absolutely no biological or any other reasons to prevent the Orthodox woman from a substantially active role in public life. It must be emphasized, however, that the Orthodox woman who leads an active public life in European society, should be fully conscious of the basic cosmic-theoretical and social principles mentioned above, which differ from the western view towards the world, people and God. If, as a politician, technocrat/technician within the fields of science or administration in European society, she does not transmit these Orthodox principles and vision, she will then herself be assimilated by the very mentality she is called upon to change. For what purpose would an Orthodox woman as a minister of the environment be if she would not be conscious of the Eucharistic, Liturgical and ascetical approach to nature, to the natural environment and would act merely according to western goal-oriented criteria and utilitarian approaches?²⁶

²⁵ Ζηζιούλας, 1997, p. 12.

²⁶ Ζηζιούλας, 1997, p. 28–29.

c) *Ecological mission*

The ethos we spoke about also includes an ecological awareness. This is a topic introduced into the Orthodox sphere by Metropolitan John.

It should be clear now why 'all creation groans and suffers' (Rom 8:22) as it looks forward to man's reconciliation with the uncreated. Creation needs beings who can turn freely towards God, accept their existence from him and enter relationship with him. This immense *mission* belongs to man.

This embracing of the ecological problem allowed Metropolitan John to expand the notion of mission:

This *relationality* of mission should not be limited to human beings. It must be extended to include *creation* also in its non-human form. Sensitivity to the integrity of creation has not been traditionally part of the Christian mission. We now realize that it ought to be. The Church as *koinonia* relates also to the animal and the material world as a whole. Perhaps the most urgent mission of the Church today is to become conscious of and to proclaim in the strongest terms the fact that there is an intrinsic *koinonia* between the human being and its natural environment, a *koinonia* that must be brought into the Church's very being in order to receive its fullness.²⁷

d) *Mission via Art*

When Pentecost and the Resurrection-of-Christ event colors human life, than Christ is linked with people's essential and cultural issues. Thus, the folk art of those cultures will inevitably manifest the resurrected ethos. This is what happened with Christian iconography. From its very beginning it depicted a risen man, adding a crown of light as a sign of adoption and the resurrectional relationship with the transcendent God.

An ecclesial icon or symbol is a *presence* hidden behind corruptible things; it reveals the *hypostatic* presence (i.e., the truly personal and not simply phenomenal, or natural), and the icon establishes this relationship (συμβάλλειν) with us. For this reason, the iconicity (symbols, types, the making of icons, etc.) is truer to theology than any sort of "immaterial" approach (noetic prayer, preaching, logical argumentation, etc.) inherent in various forms of spiritualism, since that approach always requires the material visualization that no ecclesial symbolism can exist without. The Orthodox Tradition anticipated all the elements that characterized modern and postmodern art. It spoke the visual language of modernity and contained it in a unifying way, not analytically and fragmentarily (as it is in modern art). The icon was initially a surrealist painting.

Theologians have long neglected art as a way of expressing theology. We should use art as a means of theologizing, Metropolitan John strongly suggested.

²⁷ Zizioulas, 2010, p. 57.

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Due to recent developments in science and so-called technology, I will finish my broad and rather lengthy presentation with some remarks on these problems formulated by our beloved Metropolitan John.

5. Dangers to avoid: the challenge of technology and secularization

So far, we have noted the *positive* aspects of mission. But there is one aspect that calls for attention and discernment. It is connected to *the challenge of modern technology* and the danger of *secularization*. The culture in which we live is subjugated to the representation of reality, either as an evidence-based representation of how things were or are (naturalism) or as a representation with a freedom that distorts the identity of the beings that are represented (modern art). When almost everyone is concerned with the question of how to survive in the age of automation, the ecclesial art remains a powerful tool. Our culture so badly needs “information asceticism” and “digital apophatism,” by which we mean abstinence from giving the ultimate priority to virtual reality. It is also an antidote to secularization.

But, what is secularization?

It is the absolutization of the “forms” (των μορφωμάτων) of history, those that come and go, such as nations, states, and social institutions. The Church does not reject these *forms* (μορφώματα), but transforms them with an eschatological breath, which underlines their relativity and derives from them what is destined to live forever, to survive in the eschaton. Secularization, therefore, is not only a matter of methods, but also of spirit and mentality. That is, it is not enough that the Church does not rely on the means and methods of this world, but also that it does not engage in aspirations of a secular character, as if she is “of this world”²⁸.

That gave Metropolitan John a reason to ask the question of the Internet. He was the first one, as far as I am aware, to raise this question at a theological level.

Where does the danger of secularization begin and where does it end when the Church adopts the methods of this world? What is happening, for example, with the use of the Internet and methods (methods of communication)?... Can the Church convey, for example, a message against globalization by adopting and, in essence, sanctifying technological means by using the same ones that are superior and to their nature encourage globalization in its rawest and most leveling form?²⁹

Aware of the problem, Zizioulas says that the answer to it, unfortunately, cannot be so simple and easy. Just as it is not a simple and easy answer whether there is a “neutral” technology. And then he asks the question: what should

²⁸ Ζηζιούλας, 2016, p. 526.

²⁹ Ζηζιούλας, 2016, p. 527.

the Church do in this case in order to avoid secularization? Let us listen to what this Orthodox hierarch, who spent a large part of his life in the West, has to say about it.

The first thing I think we should do is to understand that the means of technology, communication, etc. they are not innocent, but extremely dangerous for the very message that the Church wants to convey through them. Like any historical reality, these media contain evil in their nature, much more so today when the development of these media threatens our freedom, sanctity and dignity of our person and our natural environment. This will, if nothing else, make the Church more vigilant in the use of these means.³⁰

Having pointed out this first important aspect by which the Church protects itself from secularization through technology, Zizioulas moves on to the next.

The second thing the Church must do in order not to secularize itself by using these means is to keep them away from those institutions and acts of its life which are by their very nature destined to convey the eschatological message to this world. There are primarily two such institutions in the Church: monasticism and the Divine Eucharist. Monasticism, by its very nature, has been a voice of protest against the secularization of the Church since its inception.³¹

Metropolitan John states that during a visit to Mount Athos, in one of the monasteries, they proudly showed him a room with the latest computers and said: “These are the most modern computers in the world, and we were the first to get them.” According to him, it is contrary to the monastic vocation.

“It is not by chance that a monk dresses in a black robe and takes a vow (oath) to withdraw from the world and die for the world. It represents an oxymoron, reaching the point of grotesqueness, that a monk uses worldly methods to attract people to Christ. Missionary work is not a monk’s job. His job is to be “the voice of one crying in the wilderness,” a silent but very loud reminder to all of us that “the form of this world is passing away,” If monasticism is secularized, it will lose its power to protect the Church from secularization”³².

As for the Divine Liturgy, John Zizioulas presents the following argument against secularization—televising the Liturgy.³³

The same applies to the divine Eucharist. We have seen that it is par excellence the eschatological event of the Church. By its nature, it is a “gathering in one place,” a personal and bodily community among people, as it will be in the

³⁰ Ζηζιούλας, 2016, p. 527–528.

³¹ Ζηζιούλας, 2016, p. 528.

³² Ζηζιούλας, 2016, p. 528.

³³ “Consequently, it is contrary to the nature of the Eucharist as image of the Kingdom to broadcast it over television or radio, whether for pastoral reasons or for the purpose of mission (a way of broadcasting and advertising the ‘richness’ and ‘beauty’ of our worship). In the Eucharist, one participates either ‘gathered in one place’, or not at all. Participation at a distance has no meaning. As for those who are sick or unable to come to the gathering, the Church’s very ancient practice is to bring them the fruit of the gathering (Holy Communion, antidoron, etc.), and not the gathering itself, either aurally or visually”. Zizioulas, 2011, p. 48.

Kingdom of God. When this physical gathering is not realized, for example when it is transmitted via television, then the eschatological message of the Church is lost. The most eschatological moment of the Church is secularized³⁴.

There is nothing to object to this argument.

If, therefore, the worldly technology of individualism and digital reality is used in order to transmit the eschatological message of the Church, then that message will be absorbed and disappear by the means by which it was transmitted. Therefore, to the question of whether the Church should avoid technological means in order not to secularize itself, the answer is: it can use these means if it preserves unadulterated from these means those institutions and acts which by their nature are carriers of the eschatological character of the Church in order to give through them testimony of the eschaton.³⁵

This sobering voice of John of Pergamon comes at the right time.

The Church has always used the things of this world, but has always developed eschatological antibodies (ἀντισώματα). Bishops, for example, who exercise governance have always used the world's means of governance. However, when they serve the Liturgy, they transfer the eschaton to history. So let them preserve that service unadulterated by worldly means (media). This is the only way to protect the Church from secularization³⁶.

In bringing his remarks on secularization to their conclusion, Zizioulas wanted to emphasize that the concern behind these remarks is not to refuse technology. He ended the lecture by reminding: “*In the world*’, but ‘*not of the world*’. *The Church must never forget this*”³⁷.

Conclusion

These have been only some suggestions on a crucial subject of the mission of the Church today, inspired by a beautiful theological vision of Metropolitan John. His profound commitment to the mission of the Church is, of course, very much in evidence here. At the same time, he argued that the Church is not merely a human institution bound by historical measures but rather a divine reality intimately connected to the presence and work of the Kingdom of God. According to this view, the Church's nature necessitates the incorporation of the eschatological reality, or the “last things,” into the fabric of history. This perspective emphasizes that the Church should not be confined to a purely human or temporal understanding of its purpose and mission. Instead, it is called to manifest the transformative presence of the Kingdom of God within the context of history. “Although human logic always seeks to impose a program

³⁴ Ζηζιούλας, 2016, p. 528.

³⁵ Ζηζιούλας, 2016, p. 528–529.

³⁶ Ζηζιούλας, 2016, p. 529.

³⁷ Ζηζιούλας, 2016, p. 533.

on history, the Church must resist that logic (λογοκρατία) which represents her greatest temptation in history and refer everything to the Holy Spirit”.

May the theological vision of this theological pioneer who has left his mark on the present continue to enlighten the future of Orthodoxy and Christianity.

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Педесетница и мисија Цркве данас

Са посебним освртом на теологију митрополита Јована Зизијуласа

У раду аутор критички разматра поглед митрополита пергамског Јована (Зизијуласа) на питање мисије Цркве у односу на савремени свет и његове изазове. Почевши од конкретног простора, Западне Европе, аутор износи ставове митрополита о питању места Цркве као реалности односа православног предања и западног хришћанства. У тим оквирима, аутор се фокусира на догађај Педесетнице, као догађаја еклисијалне пројаве *ad extra* у односу на свет. Суштинско питање овог дела рада јесте: шта је, заправо, мисија, етос или суштинска карактеристика коју Црква пружа свету, отварајући перспективу питања литургијско-кинонијског идентитета Цркве којим се мери сваки њен покрет. На тим основама аутор, у другом делу рада, посматра мисију Цркве у нашем времену, износећи неколико параметара аутентичног односа Цркве и света. Последњи део рада посвећен је опасностима и изазовима са којима се сусреће Црква, где аутор износи конкретне ставове и предлоге митрополита Јована Зизијуласа.

Key words: Педесетница, мисија Цркве, Јован Зизијулас, етос, Западна Европа.

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