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UNION AND DISTINCTION IN THE THOUGHT OF ST MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

Melchisedec Törönen

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To
Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov
(1896–1993)

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Acknowledgements

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Rel. mot.	*Relatio motionis*, CCSG 39, 13–51

Abbreviations

ABAW.PH	*Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Abteilung, Neue Folge (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1929 ff.)*
ACO	*Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum (Straßburg–Leipzig–Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, series prima 1914 ff., series secunda 1984 ff.)*
ACW	*Ancient Christian Writers: The Fathers of the Church in Translation (New York: Paulist Press, 1946 ff.)*
After Chalcedon	*C. Laga, J.A Munitiz, and L. van Rompay (eds.), After Chalcedon: Studies in Theology and Church History Offered to Professor Albert van Roey for his Seventieth Birthday (Leeuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1985)*
AHDL	*Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge Aristotle Transformed* *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and their Influence, ed. R. Sorabji (London: Duckworth, 1990)*
BZ	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
CAG	*Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca (Berlin: Busse, 1891–1903)*
CCCM	*Corpus Christianorum, cont. mediaevalis (Turnhout: Brepols)*
CCSG	*Corpus Christianorum, ser. graeca (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977 ff.)*
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum, ser. latina (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953 ff.)*
ChH	*Church History*
CM	*Classica et Mediaevalia*

Companion	*A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages, ed. J. J. E. Gracia and T. B. Noone (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003)*
CPG	*Clavis patrum graecorum, vol iii ed. M. Geerard and supplemention ed. M. Geerard and J. Noret (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979 and 1998)*
CSCO	*Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientalium (Louvain: L. Durbecq)*
Doctrina patrum	*Doctrina patrum de incarnatione verbi: Ein griechisches Florilegium aus der Wende des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts, first edited by Franz Diekamp in 1907, 2nd and rev. edn. by B. Phanourgakis and E. Chrysos (Münster: Aschendorff, 1981)*
ECS	*Early Christian Studies*
ÉOr	*Échos d'Orient*
GCS	*Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1897 ff.)*
GNO	*Gregorii Nysseni Opera, ed. Werner Jaeger (Leiden: E. J. Brill)*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JÖB	*Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*
JThS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
Loeb	*The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1912 ff.)*
MO	*Le Messager Orthodoxe*
MTh	*Modern Theology*
OCA	*Orientalia Christiana Analecta (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1935 ff.)*
OCP	*Orientalia Christiana Periodica*
OCT	*Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press)*

ODCC	*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997³)*
OLP	*Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*
PBR	*Patristic and Byzantine Review*
PG	*Patrologia cursus completus, series graeca (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857–1904)*
Philohistôr	*Philohistôr: Miscellanea in honorem Caroli Laga septuagenarii, ed. A. Schoors and P. van Deun (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1994)*
PL	*Patrologia cursus completus, series latina (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1844–64)*
PTS	*Patristische Texte und Studien (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1964 ff.)*
RAM	*Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*
RD	*Recherches et débats*
RDCCIF	*Recherches et débats du Centre Catholique des Intellectuels Français*
REB	*Revue des études byzantines*
REG	*Revue des études grecques*
RHE	*Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*
RMPh	*Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*
RSPhTh	*Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*
RSR	*Revue des sciences religieuses*
RThAM	*Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*
RTL	*Revue théologique de Louvain*
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1941 ff.)*
ScE	*Science et Esprit, Montréal*
SE	*Sacris erudiri*
SP	*Studia Patristica*
SVThQ	*Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*

Symposium	*Maximus Confessor: Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur. Fribourg, 2–5 septembre 1980, ed. F. Heinzer and Ch. von Schönborn (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1982)*
TU	*Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte altchristlichen Literatur (Leipzig–Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1882 ff.)*
VCh	*Vigiliae Christianae*

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Introduction

The present study explores the different ways in which St Maximus the Confessor (580–662) works out a theology of simultaneous union and distinction. The logic of union and distinction pervades all the major areas of Maximus' thought and it is the purpose of this book to present his synthesis in the light of this logic. The fundamental idea, which I shall here call the principle of simultaneous union and distinction, could be summarized in the following way: things united remain distinct and without confusion in an inseparable union. This is the starting point for our investigation. Not every pattern or idea in Maximus' thought matches exactly with it (and I have tried to avoid pushing things too far) but it does express the kind of architecture of his thought that can be traced in all the major areas of his theology. If it is borne in mind, in particular when reading some of the more technical chapters that follow, the actual coherence of the mosaic that Maximus' theology as a whole constitutes will become apparent.

While the principle of union and distinction remains the central theme of this study, I have avoided presenting it as having a single centre of gravity in Maximus' theology. And this because Maximus' theology is, as I said, a mosaic. It is a whole, yes—it was, after all, produced by one person—but it is a theology, or perhaps I should say, simply, theology (without the article), which was produced in a variety of contexts; contexts each of which gives a different twist to the theme. The principle of union and distinction finds, as it were, different 'embodiments' in all the various contexts. That it proves a useful weapon in the polemic against Severian Monophysitism does not make it less important for a rebuttal of Origenism; or again, the fact that Maximus makes use of this logic in his polemical writings by no means implies that it has emerged from such engagement only, and that it could thereby not play a role in, for instance, his exegetical treatises.

Most Maximian scholars since the Second World War have taken it for granted that the centre of gravity of Maximus' theology as a whole, with its characteristic emphasis on a 'union without confusion', lies in exploring the deeper mysteries, so to speak, of the Chalcedonian

Definition[1]—Hans Urs von Balthasar and Lars Thunberg having set up the signposts. This 'mystification' of Chalcedon is something which Maximus himself, I think, would have found a little strange, but it also, as I hope this study will show, places the emphasis of Maximus' theology in the wrong place. It is like taking a photograph of a landscape while focusing on a nearby signpost: important as the signpost is, it blurs the view of the landscape. Something similar happens here. If I were to put it simply: the Chalcedonian Definition is not the unique great fountainhead of theology and inspiration for Maximus as it has too often been thought to be. It is clear, of course, that Maximus in his Christology follows post-Chalcedonian theologians such as Leontius of Byzantium and Justinian, but it is far less evident that his cosmology, for instance, is one inspired by the Chalcedonian Definition; even if some distant echoes might be heard in some areas. Chalcedon is important for Maximus no doubt (though, let it be mentioned, he never quotes verbatim the Definition itself) but it is only a part, rather than the source, of a far wider and older tradition. It is, as it were, an 'eddy on the surface of a vast river that flows on majestically, irresistibly, around, beneath, and to either side of it' (to borrow a metaphor from Huxley), and one should be careful not to let this one single eddy dominate over the whole. 'The existence of the entire river as well as of the eddy'[2] is required to have a truthful picture.

This pan-Chalcedonianism, as one might call it, was introduced into the Maximian scholarship by von Balthasar in his monumental work the *Cosmic Liturgy*[3] where he, in an introductory chapter (I: 3b) under the subheading 'Christ and the Synthesis',[4] sets the path towards an all-encompassing Chalcedonian synthesis thus:

[1] ἀσυγχύτως, which is one of the four adverbs in the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon 451 describing the way in which the two natures in Christ are united, is usually translated as 'without confusion'.

[2] The two quotations are from Aldous Huxley, *Music in the Night, and Other Essays including 'Vulgarity in Literature'* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1949), 14.

[3] *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, translation and foreword by B. E. Daley (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003). This is a translation of the second and revised German edition of 1961: *Kosmische Liturgie: Das Weltbild Maximus' des Bekenners* (Einsiedeln, Trier: Johannes Verlag, 2nd and rev. edn. 1961, 1988[3]). The work was originally published in 1941. For the first edition I have consulted the French translation: *Liturgie cosmique: Maxime le Confesseur*, trans. L. Lhaumet and H.-A. Prentout (Paris: Aubier, 1947).

[4] This can be found in the second and revised edition only (*Cosmic Liturgy*, 65–73). Instead, in the first edition (so at least in its French translation) there is an epigraph

Only in this context does the remarkable, even unique historical role of this thinker become apparent. The time had come to set forth antiquity's conception of the universe in a final, conclusive synthesis. … And why should not that decisive christological formulation, seen in its deepest implications, also serve as the right model for the world? That, at least, is how Maximus understood it. No one could have done this before Chalcedon, and it took a further two centuries before the implications of Chalcedon had been fully thought through.[5]

A little later von Balthasar quotes two long paragraphs from the *Mystagogia*[6] both of which do contain the idea of an unconfused union but which, frankly, can hardly have anything to do with Chalcedon. Von Balthasar nevertheless concludes: 'These texts are enough to give us a notion of the way in which the Christological formula [of Chalcedon] expands, for Maximus, into a fundamental law of metaphysics.'[7] This rather blunt statement would have required a little more detailed explanation. It is as if this terminology had never existed before Chalcedon, or outside its Christological penumbra, and as if Maximus could not have drawn on other sources for this terminology (which is the more likely option), and as if Chalcedon and a single line of its Definition remained the only originator of this kind of thinking and the sole source of inspiration that could provide a metaphysical principle for Maximus' synthesis. All this is too clear-cut, somehow crude and polished at the same time; and however positively one may think of Chalcedon, one can only agree with Brian E. Daley who in the foreword to the English translation of the *Cosmic Liturgy* reveals something of the agenda von Balthasar had in mind when writing his oeuvre:

In 1941 and even in 1961[8] von Balthasar's concern was to find in the Catholic dogmatic tradition—in patristic thought, but also in the Thomist tradition, as seen through the lenses of Joseph Maréchal and Erich Przywara—an intelligent and convincing answer to the seductive call of German idealism to let the concrete reality of creation dissolve into being nothing more than the phenomena experienced by the thinking human subject. Even in his reading

at the very beginning of the book (*Liturgie cosmique*, 5) which states in block capitals: '*ΑΣΥΓΧΥΤΩΣ* (Council of Chalcedon)'. See also *Cosmic Liturgy*, 126, 161, 207, and 275.

[5] Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 65–6.

[6] (*a*) Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 68–69: *Myst*. 1 (Soteropoulos), 150: 6–52: 10 [= PG 91, 664D–665C]; (*b*) Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 70: *Myst*. 7 (Soteropoulos), 186: 14–23 [= PG 91, 685AB].

[7] Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 70.

[8] See n. 3.

of Maximus, von Balthasar's questions are the questions of Hegel, and his answers those of a christologically focused version of the *philosophia* and *theologia perennis*: the real distinction between essence and existence, the analogies of faith and being, the resolution of the inherent tension between finite and infinite being in the personal unity of Christ, as expressed in the formula of the Council of Chalcedon.[9]

'It is', Daley concludes, 'clearly a risky business to approach the works of a thinker from another age and culture with such a clear-cut intellectual and theological agenda.'[10] If von Balthasar cleared the ground for the pan-Chalcedonian idea to accommodate a Christological *theologia perennis*, then it was Lars Thunberg who—four years after the publication of the second and revised edition of the *Cosmic Liturgy*—in his own classic, the *Microcosm and Mediator*,[11] built the house for the idea by setting the whole of Maximus' thought within a Chalcedonian, Christological, framework.[12] At the very outset of his exposition, in chapter 1A, 'the Chalcedonian Heritage and Maximus' Theology of the Incarnation', Thunberg argues that because the very core of Maximus' theology is—as Polycarp Sherwood has very correctly stated—'the mystery of Christ'[13] and because of the omnipresence of what Thunberg calls 'the Chalcedonian key terms'[14] in the Confessor's works, 'his dependence upon Chalcedon and its theology', so Thunberg claims, 'does not find its most prominent expression in an intentional repetition of the council's formula but in *a theological reflection upon its Christological content which thus proves to be decisive in a variety of theological contexts*.'[15] In the immediately following chapter, dedicated to cosmology, Thunberg goes on to state that '[Maximus'] view of creation is in fact best understood in relation to

[9] *Cosmic Liturgy*, 17.

[10] Ibid. 18.

[11] *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Chicago: Open Court 1995[2]; first published 1965).

[12] The 'Chalcedonian Definition' theme can be found throughout Thunberg's work. See ibid. 21–2, 33–4, 36, 48, 173, 323, 329–31, and 434–5.

[13] Ibid. 21. Sherwood makes this point in his *St Maximus the Confessor: The Ascetic Life. The Four Centuries on Charity* (ACW 21, New York: Newman Press, 1955), 29 where he also says that 'the lodestone of all his thought … was the mystery of the Incarnation. This is for him the mystery of love' (91). Thunberg acknowledges this but his interests lie elsewhere.

[14] *Microcosm*, 21.

[15] Ibid. 22; italics mine.

the central dogma of Chalcedonian Christology: the definition of the union of the two natures in Christ as without confusion, change, division and separation but in mutual communication.'[16]

In the same chapter, Thunberg also examines some of the related terminology. Interestingly, one of the terms in our title, namely, 'distinction'—which is really quite widespread in Maximus,[17] as well as in Gregory of Nyssa and especially in Dionysius the Areopagite—is not mentioned at all. Possibly, Thunberg did not include it because it was not in the Chalcedonian Definition and so it did not fit his agenda. But this is precisely where the problem lies: not everything Maximus says is an elaboration of the Chalcedonian Definition. In other words, the Chalcedonian Definition simply cannot be the starting point for an exposition of Maximus' theology as a whole.

The mystery of Christ which the Maximus mosaic depicts, and to which Sherwood was referring, rather than simply being an elaboration of the Definition, is much more that of the transfigured Christ who becomes the symbol of himself;[18] the resurrected Christ who commands Mary Magdalen not to touch him so as to lead her to himself as God;[19] the Christ who becomes his own image and likeness in order to point from and through himself as incarnate to himself as he is in his eternal glory; the Christ who as the recapitulation of the mystery of love draws all to himself so that through love we might be united with him and with one another in a union without confusion, and thus, making manifest the mystery of God's embodiment in ourselves, reveal the mystery of deification as the fulfilment of whole of the divine economy.

Second, the terminology of 'unconfused union' has a long history and Maximus clearly was familiar with this language from a host of other sources.[20] The works of the Cappadocians, Cyril of Alexandria[21] and especially Dionysius the Areopagite (who for Maximus was a

[16] Ibid. 49. Thunberg pushes things even further when he claims that even the so-called *tantum-quantum* formula is 'obviously' regarded by Maximus 'as being the decisive insight of the Council of Chalcedon' (ibid. 31).

[17] See e.g. *Ambig.* 41 (PG 91), 1312C; and *Ambig.* 10. 19 (PG 91), 1136B.

[18] Cf. *Ambig.* 10. 31c (PG 91), 1165D–1168A.

[19] Cf. *Qu. Theop.* (PG 90), 1400B–D; and *Ambig.* 10. 18 (PG 91), 1132CD.

[20] See Chapters 1 and 8, here below.

[21] See Ch. 8, here below.

first-century author)[22] would have been sufficient to provide him with this language had the Chalcedonian Definition never been written. And Maximus may have been acquainted, to say the least, with some of his contemporary Neoplatonic literature also (literature which teems with this type of language), although this is far more difficult to prove.

It should also be acknowledged that the Monophysites, too, made use of the language of 'union without confusion'. (The bone of contention in the Monophysite controversy was mainly focused on the distinction between nature and hypostasis.) Von Balthasar was aware of the Monophysite question but he sweeps the 'problem' under the carpet with a single sentence when he says: 'But this is either due to unawareness (just as many Lutheran liturgies remain close to the Roman mass) or is an external adoption of words, without any thoughtful realization of their content.'[23]

To summarize this proposal for a refocusing of Maximus' theology of union and distinction: 'yes' to Chalcedonian Christology, 'no' to pan-Chalcedonianism; 'yes' to the language of 'without confusion', 'no' to its Chalcedonian monopoly.

As to the content of the present study, here is a brief survey. Part I introduces the logical tools and settings of which Maximus makes use in his thought, including imagery and metaphors that express a 'union without confusion'. These preliminary chapters are there to assist us in understanding why Maximus theologizes in the way he does, and to see how union and distinction work in areas where this is not that obvious. For example, the distinction between the universal and the particular, or essence and hypostasis, one of the basic tools, is at the heart of the whole of Maximus' Trinitarian and Christological thought; and the logic provided by the Tree of Porphyry, another essential tool, proves indispensable when grappling with some of Maximus' insights

[22] It is intriguing how von Balthasar argues on terminological grounds that Dionysius was a Chalcedonian: 'As a thinker, Pseudo-Dionysius is unconditionally and unexceptionably a Chalcedonian. The terms "unconfused" (fourteen times) and "inseparable" are not incidental in his vocabulary but are conciously emphasized' (*Cosmic Liturgy*, 49–50). Indeed, there are two (!) instances which could well support the adherence of Dionysius to Chalcedon: *D.n.* 1.4 (PTS 33), 133; and *E.h.* 3.11 (PTS 36), 91: 12. As for the rest, von Balthasar's statement simply hangs in the air.

[23] *Cosmic Liturgy*, 50.

into cosmology, and even with such remote areas as the unity of virtues and the architecture of soul.

Part II embarks on the actual theological journey. After setting the basic rules of Maximus' Trinitarian theology and Christology, there follows a more detailed discussion on the notion of hypostasis. Although this concept has received a fuller development in the context of Christology, especially in the sixth century, it is discussed at this point both because it draws heavily on earlier Trinitarian doctrine and because its correct understanding is essential for speaking of Maximus' theology in general. The reason for discussing the notion of hypostasis/person in more detail arises from the need to break away from the current trend to read modern personalist theologies back into the patristic tradition, and to Maximus in particular. A closer reading, I argue, reveals a rather different picture from what one might expect on the basis of contemporary personalist interpretations.

Maximus' Trinitarian theology achieves a very careful balance of Monad and Triad based on the distinction between the universal and the particular which the Cappadocians began to implement in this context in the fourth century. Maximus is, however, very careful in keeping the Trinity at a safe distance from logical categories: these are applied to God only 'in a manner of speaking', that is, by analogy. At the end of part one, there follows a chapter on spirituality[24] as a corollary to Maximus' theology of Monad-in-Triad culminating in the realization of the *imago Trinitatis* in the soul of the deified person.

With Part III the study moves on to Christology. As with the Trinity, so also with Christ distinction between the universal and the particular is fundamental. Christ is one concrete and particular being incorporating two universal realities; he is one hypostasis in two natures. Unity goes with the hypostasis, that is, the particular, and difference goes with the natures, that is, the universal. This is the fundamental pattern. Activities and wills belong to the realm of the universal or the natural, as Maximus argues, and thus his dyophysite Christology naturally unfolds into a theology of two activities and wills. But that is not the whole story. The corollary here is that the two natures and their constituent activities and wills are united in the one particular being that Christ is, and are united in a way which allows

[24] This is an account limited to the study of texts with Trinitarian content only.

them to retain their wholeness as natures, natural wills, and activities: they are united 'without separation and without confusion'.

With Part IV a different kind of thinking is encountered. Three successive chapters expound aspects of unity and differentiation in the universe, the Church and Scripture. The common denominator in all these areas is God's being the principle of unity behind the multiplicity. The contingent functions as a prism which makes the divine accessible to human beings; just as a prism which refracting the unified white light makes it visible and multicoloured to the eye. There is movement, a dynamic, in a perspective of eschatological fulfilment, from and through the multiplicity of the visible things to the unity of the invisible.

The first one of these three chapters discusses the connection between God and creation which in Maximus' view is a kind of union and distinction through the *logoi* of beings. This is a form of participation which, although it draws on Neoplatonic language, is significantly different from it. In Maximus' understanding of the cosmos, there is immanence but not emanation; there is God's creation but not God's unfolding into the beings. Where Maximus comes much closer to Neoplatonic thinking, even if not its metaphysics, is in his vision of the unconfused union of the many *logoi* in the one Logos, which is strongly reminiscent of Plotinus' theory of the Universal Intellect. A reflection of the unconfused union of the *logoi* can be seen in the harmony of the universe itself. This is another kind of simultaneous union and distinction where wholes and parts through God's providence and judgement make up a harmonious manifold.

The following chapter discusses the Church as forming a harmonious unity-in-diversity with its hierarchically arranged ranks. The ranks are defined by a variety of gifts of the Holy Spirit and it is in the Spirit that they find their unity. Furthermore, just like the universe, so also the Church is an entity made up of diverse members, not separated by their differences but united without confusion by virtue of their faith in Christ—a unification which is realized within the Eucharistic Liturgy as an image and foretaste of the kingdom of the age to come.

With Scripture, examined in the next chapter, the pattern becomes less obvious. The simile of light refracted through a prism, perhaps, best describes this pattern. Here, the letter and the contingent is

bound to multiplicity. Unity lies in the Logos who is behind the individual words of Scripture. Realizing the transparency of the words and syllables, their unity in the one Logos becomes apparent. This, however, entails an entire process of spiritual endeavour, a process of turning every type and symbol (whether in Scripture, the universe, or the senses) into vehicles which carry the person from the fluctuating reality of the present age to the unified truth of the age to come. Both cosmology and scriptural interpretation find their true expression in the transformation of the human person in the image and likeness of God.

Finally, Part V discusses some particular aspects of Maximus' spirituality: the unity of virtue and of the commandments; and the fragmentation and unification of humanity. Unity of virtue is seen in the context of the Porphyrian Tree in which love is the all-embracing generic genus of virtues and of God's commandments. Keeping the commandments (united in the twofold commandment of love), or failure to do so, has its implications. Failure properly to love God and one's neighbour leads by an inexorable logic to a simultaneous fragmentation and confusion both of human kind as a whole and of the individual soul. Here confusion is understood as an unhealthy kind of union of the mind with the irrational parts of the soul and with things perceived through the senses, and a cause of distortion in the architecture of the human being. The soul's powers need to be distinguished so that the hierarchical structure of the soul can be re-established. Only then can one truthfully love both God and one's fellow man and in this way create a unified humanity constituted of individuals with true integrity. Distinction and unification at the level of the individual, therefore, leads to unification at the level of the humanity as a whole, too.

Drawing together all the different ways the principle of union and distinction features in Maximus theology, it could be argued that simultaneous union and distinction is nothing less than the principle of truth of all reality in Maximus' thought, the content of what he calls the *logos* of truth. But whether that is too much to say is a question left to the reader to decide.

Translations of Maximus' texts are to a large extent my own. I have quoted some unpublished translations by Pauline Allen and Adam Cooper by their kind permission. I have freely made use of the existing

English translations listed in the bibliography, including some extracts translated in monographs and articles by various people (such as Paul Blowers, Brian E. Daley, Stephen Gersh, and Norman Russell). Only where I have adopted a translation verbatim, or with some minor changes, have I acknowledged the source. I have followed the same principle with respect to all the other translations. The sole exception is the translation of the *Ascetic Life* and the *Chapters on Love* by Polycarp Sherwood, which I have used throughout this study.

Where an ancient authority has been quoted, the abbreviated Latin form of the title has been given in a footnote. This is followed by chapter number or equivalent, the edition used, and pagination. Where the edition provides line numbers, these have been included after the relevant part of the text, whether page, chapter, paragraph, or the treatise itself. Note that line numbers are always preceded by a colon. References are made to the editions used in this study. In the case of *Mystagogia*, reference also to the edition of J. P. Migne, PG 91, is provided. The abbreviations, with a very few exceptions, follow those given in G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961) and H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones, and R. McKenzie (eds.), *A Greek–English Lexicon, With a Supplement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940[9], supplement 1968).

Part I

Logic

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1

Tools

BACKGROUND

In all probability, St Maximus was born in 580 in Constantinople. We encounter him for the first time as a high-ranking official in the Byzantine court where he worked as the head of the Imperial Chancellery[1] during Heraclius' reign from 610 onwards. He left his post some three years later to enter a monastery in the vicinity of the capital city. Having spent a decade there he moved to another monastery, this time in the peninsula of Cyzicus (modern Kapidaç, on the southern shore of the sea of Marmara) where again he left under the pressure of the Persian invasion. Passing through Crete (and possibly Cyprus) he finally settled in a monastery near Carthage in North Africa. During the fifteen years of his sojourn there he carried out much of his literary activity. Later, his involvement in the Monothelite controversy took him to Rome where, together with Pope Martin I, he played a central role in the preparations of the Lateran Council of 649, which condemned the Monothelite and Monenergist heresies. This eventually led to Maximus' own condemnation by the imperial authorities in Constantinople in 655, but it was not until seven years later when his final condemnation

[1] See Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), 5. Although it is very likely that Maximus was the head of the Chancellery, it is improbable that his title was *protoasekretis*, since this title only emerged in the middle of eighth century. It seems, therefore, to have been given to Maximus anachronistically. See Andreas Goutziokostas, *Η εξέλιξη του θεσμού των ἀσηκρῆτις και του πρωτοασηκρῆτις στο πλαίσιο της αυτοκρατορικής γραμματείας*, in *Byzantina*, 23 (Thessaloniki, 2002–3), 73–6.

was carried into effect and Maximus was mutilated and exiled to the fortress of Schemaris[2] east of the Black Sea in Lazica (present-day Georgia).[3] He died soon after that, on 13 August 662, having reached a ripe 82 years of age.[4] In the vicinity of the site, a monastery dedicated to the Confessor kept the memory of the saint alive. It was still functioning in the eighteenth century[5] and whatever the state of the monastery is today, modern Georgians continue to consider Maximus as one of their own.

The Tradition

The years of his secular and monastic formation gave Maximus the opportunity to read extensively in the Church Fathers,[6] but also in philosophy and history. He is very well versed in such authors as Gregory Nazianzen,[7]

[2] Tsikhe-Muris, in modern Lechkumi near Tsageri in Western Georgia.

[3] For the place names and a map see the introduction of Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil to their *Scripta saeculi vii vitam Maximi Confessoris illustrantia,* with a Latin translation by Anastasius Bibliothecarius (CCSG 39, Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), xliv–xlix.

[4] For the latest discussion on Maximus' life see Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen (eds. and trans.), *The Life of Maximus the Confessor: Recension 3* (ECS 6, Strathfield, Australia: St Paul's Publications, 2003). *The Syriac Life of Maximus*, which is a kind of anti-Maximian propaganda pamphlet of Maronite provenance, gives a rather different picture of Maximus. The Maronites maintained, adamantly, the Monothelite doctrine and they regarded Maximus as the originator of the Dyothelite doctrine calling it the heresy of the Maximianists. This *vita* presents Maximus as the hydra of heresies. Most importantly he is seen as the source of the 'pernicious belief' of the Dyothelites which he malevolently instigated throughout the empire, 'ensnaring' even the pope of Rome, for which reason 'the wrath of God [in the form of the Arab invasion] punished every place that had accepted his error'. See Sebastian Brock, 'An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor', in *Analecta Bollandiana*, 91 (1973), 299–346 [= *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), XII].

[5] See George Berthold's introduction to his *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*, introduction by J. Pelikan (The Classics of Western Spirituality, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 31 n. 32.

[6] For the importance of the biblical, patristic, and conciliar tradition for Maximus see Jaroslav Pelikan, '"Council or Father or Scripture": The Concept of Authority in the Theology of Maximus Confessor', in *The Heritage of the Early Church: Essays in Honor of the Very Reverend Georges Vasilievich Florovsky* (OCA 195, Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1973), 277–88.

[7] One of his major works, the *Ambigua*, is a series of interpretations of passages from Gregory Nazianzen (except one which is from Dionysius the Areopagite).

Dionysius the Areopagite,[8] and Evagrius of Pontus.[9] Also the other two Cappadocians, Gregory of Nyssa and Basil the Great,[10] as well as Leontius of Byzantium, Cyril of Alexandria,[11] Clement of Alexandria,[12] Nemesius of Emesa[13] and Origen,[14] to mention some of the most important ones, feature in his work. But also spiritual writers, such as, Macarius/Symeon,[15] Mark the Ascetic[16] and Diadochus of Photike[17] have left their mark on him.

[8] The *Scholia* on the *Corpus Areopagiticum*, sometime attributed to Maximus, are for the most part the work of a sixth-century commentator John of Scythopolis, and owe very little, if anything, to Maximus. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'The Problem of the Scholia to Pseudo-Dionysius', in *Cosmic Liturgy*, 359–87; Beate Regina Suchla, 'Die Überlieferung von Prolog und Scholien des Johannes von Skythopolis zum Griechischen Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum', *SP* 18/2 (1989), 79–83; and Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). However, Dionysius' influence comes through in much of Maximus' authentic work, not least in the *Ambigua*. On the influence of Dionysius on Maximus see Andrew Louth, 'St Denys the Areopagite and St Maximus the Confessor: A Question of Influence', *SP* 27 (1993), 166–74; and Enzo Bellini, 'Maxime interprète de pseudo-Denys l'Areopagita', in *Symposium*, 37–49.

[9] See M. Viller, 'Aux sources de la spiritualité de S. Maxime: les œuvres d'Évagre le Pontique', *RAM* 11 (1930), 156–84, 238–68, 331–6; George C. Berthold, 'History and Exegesis in Evagrius and Maximus', in *Origeniana Quarta* (Innsbruck, 1987), 390–404; and Irénée-Henri Dalmais, 'L'Héritage évagrien dans la synthèse de saint Maxime le Confesseur', *SP* 8 (TU 93, 1966), 356–62.

[10] George C. Berthold, 'The Cappadocian Roots of Maximus the Confessor', in *Symposium*, 51–9.

[11] See e.g. *Ep.* 12–18 (PG 91), 460A–589B.

[12] See e.g. *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1085A.

[13] Nemesius' influence is particularly noticeable in *Ambig.* 10 (PG 91), 1105C–1205C; see Louth, *Maximus*, 45, 205–12.

[14] See e.g. Paul M. Blowers, 'The Anagogical Imagination: Maximus the Confessor and the Legacy of Origenian Hermeneutics', in *Origeniana Sexta* (Leuven, 1995), 639–54; id., 'The Logology of Maximus the Confessor in his Criticism of Origenism', in *Origeniana Quinta* (Leuven, 1992), 570–6; and Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of Saint Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism* (Studia Anselmiana 36, Rome: Orbis Catholicus, Herber, 1955).

[15] See Marcus Plested, *The Macarian Legacy: The Place of Macarius-Symeon in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 213–54. See also *Opusc.* 7 (PG 91), 69C; *Qu. Thal.* 62: 331 (CCSG 22), 135; and Louth, *Maximus*, 25.

[16] See the introduction to Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken, *St Maximus the Confessor: The Cosmic Mystery of Christ. Selected Writings*, introd. P. Blowers (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 40.

[17] Édouard des Places, 'Maxime le Confesseur et Diadoque de Photicé', in *Symposium*, 29–35.

Maximus, of course, learned not only through reading but also directly from his mentors. As such he explicitly mentions Sophronius[18] whom he must have met in North Africa sometime in the early 630s, that is, after his departure from Cyzicus and before 634 when Sophronius was elected patriarch of Jerusalem.[19] He also mentions 'a certain great elder' (in the *Mystagogia*),[20] 'a blessed elder'[21] or 'a wise elder' (in the *Ambigua ad Iohannem*),[22] and 'a devout monk' (in the *Opuscula*)[23] whom he apparently regarded as a great authority in matters of theology and spiritual life. These three may or may not be one and the same person, and whether he (or any one of them) should be identified with Sophronius is still an open question. Be that as it may, living tradition was for Maximus a true source of authentic theology. Good examples demonstrating this are his treatise on the Eucharistic liturgy, the *Mystagogia*, and the definition of natural will of the 'devout monk' found in *Opusculum* 16 and reproduced in *Opusculum* 1.[24]

What seem to be Neoplatonic trends in Maximus are almost invariably themes which reach him filtered through the Fathers; Dionysius, Clement, and Cyril of Alexandria come to mind in the first place. It is

[18] See *Ep.* 13 (PG 91), 533A.

[19] See Louth, *Maximus*, 4–5.

[20] *Myst.* pro. (Soteropoulos), 140: 10 and 146: 1 [= PG 91, 657C and 661B]; and *Myst.* 24 (Soteropoulos), 222: 5 [= PG 91, 701D].

[21] *Ambig.* 43 (PG 91), 1349B.

[22] *Ambig.* 28–9 (PG 91), 1272BD. There are a number of other references in the *Ambigua*: see Theodor Nikolaou, 'Zur Identität des *Μακάριος Γέρων* in der Mystagogia von Maximos dem Bekenner', *OCP* 49 (1983), 415–16.

[23] *Opusc.* 16 (PG 91), 185D, 192D, 196A.

[24] (PG 91), 185D and 12C. John D. Madden in his article 'The Authenticity of Early Definitions of Will (*thelêsis*)', in *Symposium,* 61–79, argues on the basis of *Opusc.* 26 (PG 91, 276A–280B) that Maximus is found guilty of fabricating a number of definitions of will attributed to ancient authors. Madden's argumentation might have some strength were it not based solely on this *Opusculum* for the simple reason that its authenticity, as he himself gives perfect reasons to believe (63), lies on very thin grounds. Instead, in treatises whose authenticity is beyond doubt, namely *Opusc.* 16 and 1, Maximus attributes the definition of will to a 'devout monk', or reproduces it without any indication as to its provenance; while in the *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, when discussing some of the finer points, he refers to Diadochus of Photike (PG 91, 301C) and Clement of Alexandria (317C) for authority—in this case the Clement quotation does seem to suffer from lack of authenticity. When considered from this angle, Madden's article only strengthens the argument against the Maximian authorship of *Opusc.* 26 and, by the same token, highlights the importance of 'the devout monk' for Maximus, as well as—the point the article wants to make in conclusion—the contribution Maximus had in the development of the theology of will.

unlikely, although not impossible, that Maximus had read any such authors as Plotinus, Iamblichus, or Damascius.[25] Yet, at first reading his treatment of the *logoi* of beings, for instance, appears to strike a very Neoplatonic note, and it is only when seen in context that it becomes clear that what Maximus is pursuing is genuinely Christian. In general, principles such as the distinction between the uncreated and the created, sanctification both of soul and body, and the twofold commandment of love, that are characteristic of the Christian faith—and not of Neoplatonism—are pivotal to Maximus' thought and seem never to leave his mind.

The Neoplatonic Aristotelian Commentaries

There is, however, a philosophical tradition which stands out in Maximus' works, that of the Neoplatonic Aristotelian commentaries,[26] a tradition Maximus knew directly.[27] Unlike Boethius or Abelard in the Latin-speaking world,[28] or indeed the fifteenth-century Greek patriarch Gennadius Scholarius,[29] Maximus was not an Aristotelian

[25] The thesis of Pascal Mueller-Jourdan, *Typologie spatio-temporelle de l'ecclesia byzantine: la Mystagogie, de Maxime le Confesseur dans la culture philosophique de l'Antiquité tardive* (Ph.D. thesis, Fribourg University, 2003) makes a significant step towards establishing concrete links between Maximus and the Neoplatonists.

[26] For general surveys on this tradition, see Richard Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and their Influence* (London: Duckworth, 1990); Klaus Oehler, 'Aristotle in Byzantium', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 5 (1964), 133–46; Linos G. Benakis, 'Commentaries and Commentators on the Logical Works of Aristotle in Byzantium', in R. Claussen and R. Daube-Schackat (eds.), *Gedankenzeichen: Festschrift für Klaus Oehler zum 60. Geburtstag*, (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1988), 3–12; and L. G. Westerink's introduction to *Prolégomènes à la philosophie de Platon*, ed. L. G. Westerink and trans. into French by J. Trouillard (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990).

[27] See Mueller-Jourdan, *Typologie spatio-temporelle*, 47–50.

[28] See e.g. ch. 3, 'The old logic', in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy: From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism 1100–1600*, ed. N. Kretzmann, A. Kenny, J. Pinborg, and E. Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 99–157.

[29] Much of his work consists of translations of Abelard and Aquinas. See Gennade Scholarios, *Œuvres complètes*, vols. vi and viii, ed. L. Petit, X. A. Siderides, and M. Jugie (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1933 and 1936).

commentator himself. He, nevertheless, was acquainted with this tradition and made a considerable use of it as a tool to serve his own primarily theological and exegetical purposes. His concern, we should not forget, was to continue, not the philosophical tradition of the Aristotelian commentators, but the theological one of the Fathers. In *Opusculum* 21, in which he discusses the notions of property, quality, and difference, Maximus makes a point characteristic of his stance:

> The meaning of these terms in the secular philosophers is very complex, and it would take [too] long to expound [all] their subdivisions. One would have to extend the account so much that it would no longer comply with letter-writing but would become a business of book-writing. In contrast, the explanation of these [terms] by the divine Fathers is compact and brief, and is not done in relation to some substratum, that is, essence or nature, but in relation to the things that are considered in essence, and indeed, in hypostasis.[30]

Clearly, Maximus knew what the 'philosophers' were saying, although he abstains from expounding their doctrine. The philosophical tradition I am referring to here was inaugurated in the third century by Porphyry in the form of an introduction to logic (known as the *Isagoge*)[31] and commentaries on the *Organon*. These texts were taught and new commentaries continued to be written both in Athens[32] and in Alexandria well into the sixth century. In Alexandria, some of the latest representatives of the school were Christians,[33] notably, John Philoponus,[34] Elias, David,[35] and Stephen.

The last of these commentators, Stephen of Alexandria, presents a more immediate interest to us since he is the only one who was still alive

[30] *Opusc.* 21 (PG 91), 248BC.

[31] The title is the Latin transliteration of the Greek original meaning 'introduction'.

[32] On the date of the closing of the Academy at Athens see H. J. Blumenthal, '529 and its Sequel: What Happened to the Academy?', *Byzantion*, 48/2 (1978), 369–85.

[33] See Richard Sorabji, 'The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle', in *Aristotle Transformed*, 14; L. G. Westerink, 'Elias on the Prior Analytics', *Mnemosyne*, ser. 4, vol. 14 (1961), 126–33; and id., 'The Alexandrian Commentators and the Introductions to their Commentaries', in *Aristotle Transformed*, 338–41.

[34] H.-D. Saffrey, 'Le Chrétien Jean Philopon et la survivance de l'école d'Alexandrie au VI[e] siècle', *REG* 67 (1954), 396–410.

[35] David's works were translated into Armenian at an early stage and they played an important role in introducing this tradition to the Armenian speaking world. See Avedis K. Sanjian (ed.), *David Anhaght': The Invincible Philosopher* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1986).

and actively teaching in the early seventh century. (He died sometime after 610.) He has been identified also with Stephen of Athens, Stephen the Sophist (mentioned by John Moschus), and Pseudo-Elias.[36] Stephen was summoned by the Emperor Heraclius to teach philosophy in the capital at a time when Maximus was still in office at the imperial court. We also know this same Stephen from a Christological controversy which took place within the Jacobite community and was caused by his opinions on 'difference' and 'nature', with the result that two of his students converted to Chalcedonian orthodoxy.[37]

It is very likely that Maximus knew Stephen, but whether Maximus actually studied with him or read his works is again a question far more difficult to answer. He quite certainly knew the kind of material Stephen was teaching, and Maximus' argumentation against Severan Monophysitism is strongly reminiscent of that of Stephen and his disciples.

GENUS AND SPECIES

I shall now turn to examine some of the logical tools Maximus makes use of in his works, beginning with Porphyry and his famous 'Tree'.

[36] This has been argued by Wanda Wolska-Conus in her ground-breaking article, 'Stéphanos d'Athènes et Stéphanos d'Alexandrie: essai d'identification et de biographie', *REB* 47 (1989), 5–89. Mossman Roueché has expressed some reservations concerning this identification. See his 'The Definitions of Philosophy and a New Fragment of Stephanus the Philosopher', *JÖB* 40 (1990), 107–28. See also Karl-Heinz Uthemann, 'Stephanos von Alexandrien und die Konversion des Jakobiten Probos, des Späteren Metropoliten von Chalcedon: Ein Beitrag zur Rolle der Philosophie in der Kontroverstheologie des 6. Jahrhunderts', in *After Chalcedon*, 381–99. If Stephen and Pseudo-Elias are indeed one and the same person then also the following two items will be of interest: Pseudo-Elias (Pseudo-David), *Lectures on Porphyry's Isagoge*, introd. and ed. L. G. Westerink (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1967); and H. J. Blumenthal, 'Pseudo-Elias and the Isagoge Commentaries again', *RMPh* 124 (1981), 188–92. Stephen seems to have played a role at the beginnings of the Armenian story, too. See Jean-Pierre Mahé, 'Quadrivium et cursus d'études au VII^{e} siécle en Arménie et dans le monde byzantin: d'aprés le "K'nnikon" d'Anania Sirakac'i', *Travaux et mémoires*, 10 (1987), 159–206.

[37] See Albert van Roey, 'Une controverse christologique sous le patriarcat de Pierre de Callinique', in *Symposium Syriacum 1976* (OCA 205, Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1978), 349–57; and here below, Ch. 6: 'A Sixth-century Controversy over Natural Difference'.

Porphyry (a third-century Phoenician erudite, student and biographer of Plotinus, editor of his *Enneads*, and a heavyweight opponent of Christianity),[38] with his above-mentioned short treatise entitled the *Isagoge*,[39] wants to furnish his reader with the necessary means needed for studying logic in the Peripatetic tradition. Porphyry does this by discussing what later became known as the 'five terms': genus, difference, species, property, and accident. Out of these five terms the first and the third, that is, genus and species, make up a framework within which all the beings that constitute the universe can be considered.

The hierarchy of genera and species is commonly known as the Porphyrian Tree. Its description as a tree is not Porphyry's own idea, but it does convey in a tangible way the idea of hierarchy of predication which Porphyry presents in his treatise. The Porphyrian Tree was drawn, not as the ramifications of branches into twigs of an oak tree, but as a subordinate succession of branches ending with the roots as with a spruce tree, the left-hand-side and the right-hand-side branches representing the contrasting elements of each subdivision.[40] After all, the individual things that are being predicated with the help of this structure lie right at the end of the last subdivision. (Maximus is explicit about the fact that reality consists of particulars, and that if all the particulars are destroyed, the universals are destroyed with them.)[41]

In whatever way one wishes to picture this tree, in terms of logic what is generic is at the top and what is specific is at the bottom. At the very top, then, there is what Porphyry calls the 'most generic genus'. This 'most generic genus' is divided or differentiated by 'dividing/constitutive differences' into species. The same differences are called both 'dividing', because they divide the genus into species, and 'constitutive',

[38] See, for example, Robert Louis Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003², first published in 1984), 126–63.

[39] CAG 4/1. See Jonathan Barnes, *Porphyry: Introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003) which includes a translation and an extensive commentary on the *Isagoge*. On Maximus and the *Isagoge* see the discussion of Torstein Tollefsen in his thesis, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor: A Study of his Metaphysical Principles* (Oslo: Unipub forlag, 2000), 104–34; and Ch. 9: 'The Universe and the Tree of Porphyry', here below.

[40] See Barnes, *Porphyry*, 110.

[41] See *Ambig.* 10.42 (PG 91), 1189CD.

because they are the particular ingredient that makes the species what they are *qua* species. Every species which has other species subordinate to it is by the same token regarded as a genus. Thus all the intermediary classes are in fact species/genera. Only the very last species, which Porphyry calls 'most specific species', do not have the status of genus; instead, these 'most specific species' include the actual 'individuals'. In summary, from the top to the bottom the Porphyrian Tree has: 'the most generic genus', 'species/genera' and 'the most specific species' which include 'the individuals'.

The fundamental rule of predication in this pattern is that the higher ones, that is, the more generic ones, are predicated of the lower ones, and never the reverse. Another similar rule is that the higher ones 'contain' the lower ones, and the lower ones are 'contained' by the higher ones. For example, the species 'human being' belongs to the genus 'living being', but the reverse is not true since also the species 'cat' or 'elephant', for example, belong to the genus 'living being'. Thus the genus 'living being' includes and is predicated of the species 'human being', 'cat', 'elephant', and so on. Similarly the 'most specific species' is predicated of the individuals that it includes. The species 'human being', for example, is predicated of 'John', 'Anna', or any other 'human individual'. We find Maximus to be a faithful adherent to these principles of predication when he, in *Ambiguum* 17, says:

> The particular things are never predicated of the universal, or the species of the genera, or the contained of the containing, and for this reason the universal things do not relate conversely to the particular, or the genera to the species, or the common to the individual, or, in sum, the containing to the contained.[42]

Difference

One of the five terms particularly rich in the *Isagoge*[43] is the notion of 'difference', and of the several kinds of difference Porphyry

[42] *Ambig.* 17 (PG 91), 1225BC.

[43] See *Isag.* 3a: 13 ff. (CAG 4/1), 8–12. There is a diagram in Barnes, *Porphyry*, 168; and in Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology*, 126 n. 417.

expounds the one which seems to have the greatest importance for theology is what is called the '*ἰδιαίτατα*-difference' or 'the most specific[44] difference'. This is a difference which makes a difference in species. In Porphyry's terms it makes something *ἄλλο*,[45] and *ἄλλο*, as is well known, is a technical term central to the Cappadocian theology.

This raises the question of a possible patristic interpretation of the '*ἰδιαίτατα*-difference'. Is there an expression in the patristic tradition denoting a difference constitutive of a particular nature that would correspond to this notion? A Byzantine logic handbook[46] (dating just after Maximus) would suggest that there is. The unknown author of the compendium writes: '"Difference" is a *logos* in accordance with which the substrata differ one from another, and which is indicative of the "how it is", in other words, it is indicative of the flesh being by nature and essence what it is.'[47] The author, then, clarifies which difference it is that he is speaking of: 'Difference is what is called *ἰδιαίτατα* by the philosophers, which also is *essential*.'[48]

This confirms two things. First, that the *ἰδιαίτατα*-difference (one of the many in the Neoplatonic school) was indeed identified with the 'essential difference' of the Christian theology; and second, as a consequence of the first, that the 'species' (*εἶδος*), and more precisely 'the most specific species', of the Aristotelian commentaries corresponds to the notion of 'essence' or 'nature' in Byzantine

[44] Although this is an adverb in the original, I have rendered it as an adjective. Barnes translates it as 'most proper(ly)' (*Porphyry*, 155).

[45] *Isag.* 3a: 26 (CAG 14/1), 8.

[46] Mossman Roueché, 'Middle Byzantine Handbook of Logic Terminology', *JÖB* 29 (1980), 71–98. This and a number of other short texts published by Roueché in 'Byzantine Philosophical Texts of the Seventh Century', *JÖB* 23 (1974), 61–76, are attributed to Maximus in the manuscripts. I have not treated them as authentic. Although it is not entirely unlikely that they were written by Maximus himself, they nevertheless remain notebook summaries of the *Isagoge*, of Aristotle's categories, and of some other logical works, with a very few comments.

[47] "*διαφορά ἐστι λόγος, καθ' ὃν ἀλλήλων διαφέρει τὰ ὑποκείμενα, καὶ τοῦ πῶς εἶναι δηλωτικός τουτέστι τὸ εἶναι τὴν σάρκα τῇ φύσει καὶ τῇ οὐσίᾳ ὅπερ ἐστίν*" (*Definitions*: 37–8, Roueché 1980, 91).

[48] *Definitions*: 40–1 (Roueché 1980), 91. There is a similar case in the seventh-century *Doctrina patrum* 33 (Diekamp), 255: 8–10.

theology.[49] All this features strongly in the Christological debates of the sixth and seventh centuries.[50]

Maximus is also aware of the patristic usage of 'constitutive difference' and we find Maximus himself using it at least once.[51] In *Opusculum* 21, already referred to, he points out that 'the Fathers say that "difference" is constitutive and defining of beings, whence also they name it thus, calling it a "constitutive difference"'.[52]

In the same *Opusculum*, Maximus summarizes the patristic interpretation of the terms 'quality', 'property', and 'difference'. He regards them as virtually synonymous, making only some very fine points as to how they differ.

> Consequently, the Fathers say that these, I mean 'quality', 'property' and 'difference', are identical one with another, and that they hold the *logos* of accidents, but not that of a substratum, that is of an essence. They [also] say that these terms differ in the sense that 'quality' is more universal, and is applied to all beings, since no being, God excepted, is without quality—beings are not incomparable—or without form; and in the sense that 'property' is more particular, as it is said of a certain essence and not of every essence. It is said of a certain kind of essence, of this one essence and not of another.[53]

Maximus makes two further distinctions which are essential for the exposition of the Christian doctrine. The first is the distinction between essential and hypostatic differences. (In Porphyry, there is the distinction between species and individual, but in the *Isagoge* he deals mainly with terms which, as he puts it, 'are predicated of many'.[54])

> The Fathers, then, say that an 'essential quality', in the case of the human being, for instance, is rationality, and in the case of horse, neighing. A 'hypostatic quality', on the other hand, of a particular human being is, [for instance],

[49] Lambros Ch. Siasos makes the same observation in relation to John Damascene's *Dialectica*. See his *Πατερικὴ κριτικὴ τῆς φιλοσοφικῆς μεθόδου* (Thessalonica: *Πουρναρᾶς*, 1989), 47 where he gives two elucidating diagrams. See also *Doctrina patrum* 6.17 (Diekamp), 42: 10–13; and Maximus, *Qu. Thal.* 13: 22–3 (CCSG 7), 95: "*οὐσιώδης κατ' εἶδος διαφορά*"; and *Qu. Thal.* 60: 15 (CCSG 22), 73: "*κατὰ φύσιν οὐσιώδης διαφορά*". Maximus, though, seems to make a very fine distinction between *ousia* and *eidos*. See *Ep.* 12 (PG 91), 488BC.

[50] Cf. Maximus, *Ep.* 12 (PG 91), 469AB.

[51] See *Ambig.* 25 (PG 91), 1264D.

[52] *Opusc.* 21 (PG 91), 248C.

[53] *Opusc.* 21 (PG 91), 249BC.

[54] *Isag.* 4a (CAG 4/1), 13.

being snub-nosed or hook-nosed, and that of a particular horse, being dapple-grey or chestnut. Similarly, 'quality' is considered in all the other created essences and hypostases, commonly and individually, that is, in general and in particular, and by it the difference, that exists between species and between individuals, is made known, as it clarifies the truth of things.[55]

The second distinction is that between the created and the uncreated, and the question that arises here when discussing Porphyrian logic in relation to theology is, can these logical concepts be applied to the uncreated God? Maximus qualifies his position by saying that qualities or differences are applied 'in a proper sense' to the created order but to God only 'in a manner of speaking' (καταχρηστικῶς).

Now, with regards to the uncreated and monarchic nature, 'quality' cannot be said, properly speaking—if at all. For the divine is not out of an essence and accidents, since it would [in such case] be created, being composite and compounded of these. Instead, 'quality' is made use of, with regards to the divine, in a manner of speaking (καταχρηστικῶς) and to the extent we are able to conjecture what is beyond us from what is within the scope of our capacities; since we are in any case scarcely capable of taking in knowledge of them even faintly, and of explaining this if only in some measure and not completely.[56]

He, then, enumerates the essential and hypostatic differences of God, even if applied only 'in a manner of speaking'.

Natural qualities[57] are God's being: all-holy, omnipotent, all-perfect, more than complete, self-sufficient, self-ruling, all-ruling, and the like natural and divine things that are said, things proper to God alone as being beyond being. 'Hypostatic qualities' are: that of the Father, unbegottenness; that of the Son, begottenness; and that of the Holy Spirit, procession. [Both kinds of qualities] are also called 'properties', on the grounds that they naturally or hypostatically belong to this one [nature or hypostasis] and not to another. Out of these [qualities] are put together essential and hypostatic differences, and as I said, they are applied properly speaking to all created beings by nature, but only in a manner of speaking to God.[58]

[55] *Opusc.* 21 (PG 91), 248C–249A.
[56] *Opusc.* 21 (PG 91), 249A.
[57] The text has it in the singular.
[58] *Opusc.* 21 (PG 91), 249AB. I have not regarded the marginal note inserted in the Migne edition (249B9) as part of the authentic text.

Porphyrian logic is, then, made use of by Maximus but with caution and with modifications.

THE UNIVERSAL AND THE PARTICULAR

The distinctions referred to in the last quotation bring us to one of the most fundamental principles in Maximus' theology: the distinction between the universal (*τὸ κοινόν*) and the particular (*τὸ ἴδιον*). Maximus derives his understanding of the universal (or common) and the particular from the Cappadocian Fathers following their theological distinction between essence and hypostasis. In *Letter* 15, Maximus writes: 'Common and universal, that is to say generic, is, according to the Fathers, the essence and nature, for they say that these two are identical with each other. Individual and particular is the hypostasis and person, for these too are identical with each other.'[59] In the sequel, Maximus quotes a whole sequence of texts from the Cappadocians illustrating this principle.

The question that arises is, how far does Maximus want to take the identification of the universal with essence and the particular with hypostasis, and how far does he want to take the distinction between essence and hypostasis which this pattern implies? Maximus begins with the created order and argues that the particular instances of created natures differ according to hypostasis, not according to nature:

> Beings that are united according to one and the same nature or essence (that is, beings that are of one and the same nature) are distinguished one from another according to hypostasis or person, as is the case with angels and men, and with all the created beings that are considered in species (*εἶδος*) and in genus (*γένος*).[60]

Porphyry's logic is lurking at the back here. As we saw above, Maximus is reluctant to apply such logical categories to God; they apply only by analogy. Here he only just dares to attribute to God the distinction between the universal and the particular, or better that between

[59] *Ep.* 15 (PG 91), 545A. [60] *Ep.* 15 (PG 91), 549C.

essence and hypostasis, and only after quoting Basil who reminds his reader that this distinction between essence and hypostasis in God is *like* that between the universal and the particular.[61]

> And our account will dare to say something much greater, which is that even in the case of the first creative and beginningless cause of beings we do not regard nature and hypostasis to be identical with each other, since we recognize one essence and nature of the Godhead which exists in three hypostases different from one another in particularities, and three hypostases in one and the same essence or nature of the Godhead. For that which we worship is a Monad in Triad and a Triad in Monad:[62] Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God.[63]

How Aristotelian this understanding of the universal and the particular is, is not the question to ask in relation to Maximus. For him it is a Christian formulation concerning questions in Christian theology; a theology which makes use of commonly accepted terminology. Having said that, it should be noted that Maximus never speaks in terms of the first and the second *ousia* of Aristotle's *Categories*.

Logos and *Tropos*

An extension of the universal and the particular is the pair *logos–tropos*. The Cappadocian distinction between the *logos* of nature and the *tropos* of existence within the Trinitarian theology is well known and needs no further comment. In Maximus' thought, however, the pair obtains a very wide-ranging usage. It is there in the Trinitarian theology as well as in Christology, including the question of activity and will, but it can also be found in contexts such as the knowledge of God, the Gospel commandments, the differentiation of virtues, the consequences of the Fall, and so on.

Tropos often expresses the individual aspect, that which differentiates the particular from the general, while *logos* stands for the universal. With rational beings endowed with free will, this differentiation can

[61] See *Ep*. 15 (PG 91), 545AB.

[62] *μονάς ἐν τριάδι καὶ τριάς ἐν μονάδι*. An alternative translation would be 'a Unity in Trinity and a Trinity in Unity'.

[63] *Ep*. 15 (PG 91), 549CD–552A.

be viewed also within the moral context. Sin and virtue are a matter of what one makes of one's natural capacities; they are the *tropoi* of the application of one's *logos*. Although the usage of *tropos* in Trinitarian theology, on the one hand, and in the moral context, on the other, are closely related, it can be misleading to take *tropos* as a straightforward synonym of *tropos hyparxeôs*. This becomes more evident when speaking of *tropos* more 'ontologically', for example, in the context of the Fall and restoration where the *tropos* represents the state or the condition of a nature. The renewing effect of the Incarnation on humanity, and in particular with respect to virgin birth, is seen to take place at the level of *tropos* rather than of *logos*.[64] The *logos* remains unchanged.[65]

Maximus also distinguishes the reality, the *logos*, of thinking creatures into three modes, *tropoi*. These are being, well-being, and eternal-being. The first and the third, he says, are a given and are intrinsic to the human nature—Maximus can say this since he considers the soul to be immortal by nature. The middle one is something which depends on the way in which humans make use of their free will. This is what the *tropos* is really all about. The positive and free response to God's love produces well-being, and in its eschatological dimension coupled with the third mode, the eternal-being, it becomes eternal-well-being: eternal participation in him who alone truly is, ever is, and is good *par excellence*. The opposite, misuse of one's natural powers, leads to an ill-being and ultimately to an eternal-ill-being: an inability to participate in God's love and grace.[66]

The *logos–tropos* distinction is also central to Maximus' understanding of will and activity as properties of nature. The actual qualified willing and

[64] See *Ambig*. 42 (PG 91), 1341D–1345A; *Ambig*. 5 (CCSG 48), 27; and Irénée-Henri Dalmais, 'La Fonction unificatrice du Verbe Incarné d'après les œuvres spirituelles de Saint Maxime le Confesseur', *Sciences écclesiastiques*, 14 (1962), 454–5. Cf. *Ambig*. 31 (PG 91), 1273D–1276D, 1280A–C: on the law of nature.

[65] See *Ambig*. 42 (PG 91), 1345A–C.

[66] Cf. *Ambig*. 65 (PG 91), 1392A–D; *Ambig*. 7, 1073C, 1084BC; *Ambig*. 42, 1325BC; *Cap. theol*. I. 56 (PG 90), 1104C. See also Jean-Claude Larchet, *La Divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1996), 165–74; and Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 368–73. On the eternal-ill-being, see *Ambig*. 42 (PG 91), 1329AB; *Ambig*. 65 (1392CD); *Qu. Thal*. 59: 163–70 (CCSG 22), 55; and on its content, see *Ep*. 1 (PG 91), 381BD, 388A 389AB; *Ep*. 4, 416B–417A; *Ep*. 24, 612BC; and *Qu. Thal*. 2: 22–32 (CCSG 7), 89–91. See also Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003^2; first published in 1991), 202.

acting is distinguished from the simple natural capacity of willing and acting. In the following passage, Maximus scrutinizes the misconception of Theodore of Pharan concerning activity.

I read the book of Theodore of Pharan on essence and nature, hypostasis and person, and the rest of the chapters; and as an introduction it is perhaps not altogether useless. But in the chapter on person and hypostasis, rather than following the rules concerning them, he seems to be following himself, as he calls the activity hypostatic.

And it is in this that he has let his reason grow dark, namely, in giving to the person *qua* person the activity which characterizes nature; and not the mode (*tropos*) of 'how' and the 'what kind of mode' of its fulfilment, according to which is made known the difference as to whether those who act and their actions are according to nature or contrary to nature. For each one of us acts firstly as being *something*—that is, as a human being—, not as being *someone*. As someone, Peter or Paul for instance, one forms the mode of activity (*tropos tês energeias*) … Consequently, the difference in person is made known through the manner (*tropos*) in the action, whereas the unchangeability of the natural activity is made known through the *logos*. For no one person is more active or rational than another but we all possess the same reason and its respective natural activity.[67]

Thus, it is the mode, the *tropos*, which indicates the individual differences in the actions of different persons, whereas the *logos* always remains undifferentiated as an ingredient of nature. The distinction between the universal *logos* and the particular *tropos* as expressing unity and difference respectively is evident. The Cappadocian formulation finds here a new level in Maximus' theology of the divine activity.

UNION, DISTINCTION, DIFFERENCE

The two pairs 'union and distinction' (ἕνωσις and διάκρισις) and 'union/unity[68] and difference' (ἕνωσις and διαφορά) do not have a

[67] *Opusc.* 10 (PG 91), 136C–137A. On the distinction between (natural) will and qualified will, see *Pyrr.* (PG 91), 202D–203B.

[68] I have sometimes preferred 'unity' to 'union' when translating ἕνωσις.

clearly defined place in Maximus' thought, although they do reflect the sources where Maximus would have found them. The pair 'union and distinction' is fundamental to Proclean as well as Dionysian metaphysics;[69] whereas the pair 'union and difference' plays a significant role in Christology, in particular the Christology of St Cyril of Alexandria. In Maximus' theology, they come through as ways of expressing integrity or wholeness in various areas of his thought.

In his understanding of the structure of reality, Maximus regards wholeness or integrity to be of major importance. The question of wholeness arises when things are united or are regarded in unity, and this can take place either at the level of the particular or at the level of the universal. For example, the way in which the basic ontological divide between the created and the uncreated is bridged in Christ represents a union at the level of the particular, and the way in which the individual *logoi* of beings are united in the one Logos represents a union at the level of the universal. In both cases, there is a simultaneous union and distinction, unity and difference. But the pair union and distinction finds its way also into Maximus' Trinitarian theology as well as into his vision of the blend of the intelligible and the sensible realities.

At the level of the universal, integrity is seen in the nature or the essence of the things united. This becomes evident especially in Christology, but also in the doctrine of the deification of man. Concepts such as 'union without confusion', applied by Porphyry to discuss the union of body and soul, and 'difference', a particularly significant notion in the *Isagoge*, as we saw above, became the basic tools for Christian theologians to express the fact that in Christ, after the union, the natures did not lose that natural *difference* which made them what they were *qua* natures.[70] The natures are united and distinguished simultaneously. They are united but not confused, distinguished but not separated.

[69] Dionysius copies Proclus' terminology but he at the same time modifies its usage to suit his own metaphysical framework, which is significantly different from that of Proclus. On union and distinction see Proclus, *Inst.* 28–30 (Dodds), 32–4; and Dionysius, *D.n.* 2. 4–11 (PTS 33), 126–37.

[70] See also Ch. 8, here below.

In a union between natures or essences, if the natural integrity is to be preserved, the 'essential difference' of each constituent must necessarily remain. As we shall see later, there is in such a case union according to one and the same hypostasis or person, but differentiation according to nature. The *logos* of nature, its essential difference and its integrity go hand in hand. This is true not only of the union between the created and the uncreated but also, in Maximus' words, of the 'union of the mind with the senses, and the union of the heaven with the earth, and the union of the sensible things with the intelligible, and the union of the nature with the *logos*.'[71] All these are unions within the realm of the created.

If we now move from the level of the universal to that of the particular, we shall see that there too both simultaneous union and distinction is required. For example, Maximus speaks of the *logoi* of beings that are united in the one Logos without confusion.[72] The *logos* of each and every being remains distinct from the other *logoi* even in their supreme union in the one Logos. They retain their individual particularity and do not cease to be particular *logoi*. Maximus even states: 'Who … would not recognize that the one Logos is many *logoi* distinguished in the undivided difference of created things through their *unconfused individuality* in relation to each other and themselves?'[73] Similar logic prevails in Maximus' Trinitarian theology and ecclesiology, too.

THE UNIVERSAL INTELLECT

A striking parallel to Maximus' view of the union of the *logoi* in the One Logos can be found among the Neoplatonists in their description of the world of Forms. For example, Plotinus' understanding of the Universal Intellect has been described by Hilary Armstrong as 'a unity-in-diversity, … a living system of Forms or a world in which Mind, minds and objects of intellection interpenetrate and are one.'[74] It is in Plotinus' own words

[71] *Qu. Thal.* 48: 188–9 (CCSG 7), 341. See also Part IV, here below.

[72] See *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1077C.

[73] *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1077C.

[74] A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 80.

'a quiet and undisturbed movement, having all things in itself and being all things, a multiplicity which is undivided and yet again divided'.[75] The Universal Intellect is at the same time one and many, a unity-in-multiplicity.[76] It is one as the image of the One and as the all-encompassing intelligible universe in which the true beings, the Forms, exist in an undivided unity without confusion. Armstrong calls such unity a 'spiritual interpenetration'.[77] And in fact this unity without confusion is the very structure of the Intellect since it does not simply *contain* the Forms, as if the Forms were something separate from it, but it actually *is* the Forms. Also, Soul, the third primary hypostasis in Plotinus' system, reflects this unity-in-multiplicity at the level of discursive, consecutive thought, and in turn projects it into the natural world by means of the forming principles, the *logoi*.[78] For much of this there is a parallel in Maximus' thought, as we shall see when discussing his cosmology in more detail.[79] Another Neoplatonist, Syrianus, says about the Universal Intellect 'that the divine and intellectual Forms are united with one another and pervade one another in a pure and unconfused fashion'.[80] What Syrianus describes here is a very sublime reality, but for him it still is not the ultimate. For the Neoplatonists (and the same is true of the Origenists) the ultimate is where all differentiation, and therefore all multiplicity, disappears. The crucial difference is, then, found here. Where for the Neoplatonist differentiation is something undesirable, for the Christian the *integrity of the particular* forms the criterion of a true union, that is, of an undivided union within which there also is differentiation.

[75] *Enn*. VI. 9. 5: 14–16 (Amstrong 7), 318; I have adopted Armstrong's translation in the same edition throughout this chapter. See also *Enn*. I. 8. 2, III. 8. 9, VI. 6. 7, and VI. 7. 14.

[76] See R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972), 55–9.

[77] See Armstrong, *The Architecture*, 65–81.

[78] Cf. *Enn*. V. 9. 6: 11–15 (Armstrong 5), 302.

[79] See Ch. 9, here below.

[80] *In Metaph*. 119: 27–30; quoted in Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 95.

WHOLES AND PARTS

One more tool which Maximus uses to discuss union and distinction in a variety of contexts is the pair 'whole and parts'. He has a fascinating, if dense, discussion of the creation in *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 2 where the structure wholes/parts overlaps with Porphyrian logic. The question presented to Maximus runs as follows: 'If God in six days created all the species which constitute the universe, why does the Father continue to work after this? For the Saviour says *My Father works still, and I work*.[81] Is he not, perhaps, referring to the preservation of species once created?'[82] In one sentence (in the original Greek), Maximus captures a whole cosmology. Time, providence, free will, universal substances, parts, harmony, movement, well-being and deification, all find their place in his answer—a good example of how Maximus can be both immensely demanding and at the same time rewarding to his reader.

> God completed the first *logoi* of creatures and the universal substances of all beings at one time (as he himself knows how), and he is still at work effecting not only their preservation in their very existence, but also the actual creation, bringing-forth and constitution of the parts that are potentially in them. Moreover, he is at work bringing about the assimilation of the particular parts to the universal wholes through providence. This he does until he might unite the self-willed urge of the particular parts to the more universal natural *logos* of rational substance through their movement towards well-being, and thus make them harmonious and of identical movement with one another and with the whole, so that the particular beings have no difference of will from universal beings, but that in all one and the same *logos* becomes apparent; a *logos* that is not severed by the modes [of action] of those of whom to an equal measure it is predicated. And in this way he demonstrates as effective the grace that deifies all.[83]

Parts, as the individual instances of the universal substances, that is, the wholes, are created by God in due time. He directs his providence to the parts of the universal rational substance, to the particular human individuals, with a view to creating a harmonious world.

[81] John 5: 17.
[82] *Qu. Thal.* 2: 2–6 (CCSG 7), 51.
[83] Ibid. 2: 7–22 (CCSG 7), 51.

The parts conform to the universal and by the same token maintain a harmonious unity among themselves.

The Human Composite

A different case is that of the human being understood as a composite of body and soul. Body and soul are the essential parts which constitute every instance of the human species; body and soul constitute the human *eidos*. Neither part on its own can be the *eidos* which the human being is: both are needed.[84] The whole, a concrete individual composed of body and soul, possesses the *eidos* and can be predicated of as a human being. In *Ambiguum* 7,[85] where he argues against the Origenist doctrine of pre-existence of souls, Maximus makes a very subtle point about this matter. There can be no pre-existence of souls, Maximus argues, because a particular human being comes into being only when the human *eidos* or form comes into existence, and for this both body and soul are needed. The parts, body and soul, can be spoken of *only* in relation to the whole, a particular human individual, John or Anna, for example. Therefore, when speaking even of the dead body of John, we speak of it as the body *of John*, which is to say that we predicate it of the whole, because the body is a constitutive part of it. Similarly, the soul can be predicated only of the whole which possesses the *eidos*, and this cannot be the case with a pre-existent soul. Maximus, therefore, maintains that both body and soul come into being simultaneously at the moment of their union.

Christ

Let me take one last example of whole and parts, from Christology this time, where it plays a role of some importance. For Maximus, it is essential to maintain that Christ is one hypostasis, that is to say one concrete and particular being. It is equally important for him to

[84] For a possible Neoplatonic influence see R. A. Norris, *Manhood and Christ: A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 22–3.

[85] *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1100A–1101C.

maintain that Christ incorporates two different natures within this concrete and particular being, for through the natures Christ is in an essential communion with his divine Father and his human mother. The parts, then, that constitute the one Christ are his two natures, and the whole is, not a new composite nature, but a composite hypostasis or 'person'.

> He, one and the same, remained unchanged, undivided and unconfused in the permanence of the parts of which he was constituted, so that he might mediate according to the hypostasis between the parts of which he was composed, closing in himself the distance between the extremities, making peace and reconciling, through the Spirit, human nature with God the Father, as he in truth was God by essence and as in truth he became man by nature in the Dispensation, neither being divided because of the natural difference of his parts, nor confused because of their hypostatic unity.
>
> But, on the one hand, being united according to nature with [his] Father and mother by virtue of the principle (*logos*) of the essential community of his constituent parts, he proved to have preserved the difference between the parts of which he was constituted.
>
> On the other hand, by virtue of the hypostatic particularity of his own parts, he was distinguished from his extremities, I mean from his Father and mother, and he proved to have kept the oneness of his own hypostasis totally undifferentiated and always unified in the extreme personal identity of his own parts one with another. For the essential community of one of the parts with the extremities in the unity of the one hypostasis, preserves unconfused the differentness of the other part's nature.[86]

The pair 'whole and parts', then, covers a whole spectrum of Maximus' thought from cosmology to anthropology and Christology.

To summarize: Porphyrian logic with its genera, species, and difference; the universal and the particular; union and distinction, unity and difference; and parts and wholes, all serve our author in the creation of a mosaic which often with extraordinary subtlety depicts a vision of God and his creation that is characterized by a simultaneous union and distinction. For this, Maximus also made use of special imagery, and it is to this we shall now turn.

[86] *Ep.* 15 (PG 91), 556AB.

2

Imagery

FIRE AND LIGHT

St Cyril of Alexandria, in his *Commentary on Isaiah*, observes: 'It is customary in the inspired Scriptures to compare the divine nature to fire.'[1] Cyril relates how God was seen by the ancient Israelites as fire on Mount Horeb on the day of assembly,[2] and how he appeared to Moses in the desert in the form of a burning bush.[3] He also interprets the biblical image of a burning coal from Isaiah 6: 6.[4] 'Fire' remains the most important metaphor of God for Maximus, too, and the two contexts in which we find 'fire' imagery in Maximus' thought are Christology and the deification of man.

In the Christological context, Maximus prefers to connect it with the image of incandescent iron, and in some cases, a red-hot sword.[5] Here the context dictates the language. The 'sword' simile proves far more useful as a Christological metaphor in demonstrating natural

[1] *In Is*. 1. 4 (PG 70), 181B; translation in Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London: Routledge, 2000), 77.

[2] Cf. Deut. 4: 10–11. [3] Cf. Exod. 3: 1–6.

[4] 'Now the coal is by nature wood, only it is entirely filled with fire and acquires its power and energy. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, in my view, may very appropriately be conceived of in the same way. *For the Word became flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn. 1: 14). But although he was seen by us as a man, in accordance with the Dispensation of the Incarnation, the fullness of the Godhead nevertheless dwelt in him, by means, I would emphasize, of the union. Thus it may be seen that he has the energies most appropriate to God operating through his own flesh' (*In Is*. 1. 4, PG 70, 181BC; translation in Russell, *Cyril*, 77). See also Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. ii, part 2, trans. J. Cawte and P. Allen (London: Mowbray, 1995; original German edition 1989), 39–40.

[5] See, for instance, *Ambig*. 5 (CCSG 48), 33; and *Pyrr*. (PG 91), 337C–340A.

activity or operation than that of a burning coal, preferred by St Cyril. One can speak of the effect or activity that a sword has. In other words, one can say that the sword as it were *does* something: it cuts when applied.[6] The same is not so true of a piece of coal. A red-hot sword possesses activity simultaneously at two different levels. It has a capacity both to cut and to burn, and this provides a very practical tool for discussing two activities in Christ. In contrast, the 'burning coal' image, although adequate for describing the reality of the natures in union, could hardly serve this purpose.

The Deified Human Person

The image of incandescent iron we find also in the context of deification of the human person. In *Ambiguum* 7, Maximus develops a sequence of the rational being's movement towards God, its final stage being the union in which the person finds himself 'wholly in the whole desired one'.[7] One of the two metaphors used to describe such a state is precisely that of incandescent iron: the deified person becomes 'like an iron wholly permeated by the whole of the fire'.[8]

The other image used in this context is that of 'air wholly illuminated by light'.[9] In Chapter 14, we shall see how Maximus presenting Melchisedec as the figure *par excellence* of the deified person depicts the reality of the union and simultaneous distinction of God and the deified person in these terms. In parallel with this image, we also find the simile of mirror, but to that we shall return later. As for the image of air illuminated by light, one of the earliest students of Maximus in the Western world, John Scotus Eriugena, has something interesting

[6] By 'activity' is meant precisely the capacity to produce a certain effect that the sword possesses, rather than an act of cutting.

[7] *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1073D.

[8] 'Whole in whole' (ὅλος ἐν ὅλῳ) is a very widespread theme in Maximus. See, for example, *Cap. theol.* II. 1 (PG 90), 1125A–C; *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1073D–1076A, 1076C, 1088A–C; *Ambig.* 10. 3, 1113B; *Ambig.* 10. 19, 1137B; *Ambig.* 33, 1285D; *Ambig.* 47, 1361A; *Myst.* prol. (Soteropoulos), 146: 12–13 [= PG 91, 661C]; 2, 158 [= 669BC]; 21, 210 [= 697A]; *Or. dom.*: 392 and 779 (CCSG 23); *Qu. Thal.* 2: 27–8 (29–30) (CCSG 7), 51. Cf. Porphyry, *Sent.* 33 (Lamberz), 35–8. See also *Ambig.* 10. 20a (PG 91), 1141B; *Ambig.* 21, 1249C and 1252A; and *Ambig.* 31, 1280BC.

[9] *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1076A, and 1088D. Cf. *Ambig.* 10. 20a, 1140C.

to say. In a passage from his *Periphyseon* quoted here below, Eriugena manages to capture the quintessence of Maximus' understanding of deification developing, at the same time, the metaphor of air permeated by light in a way that is worthy of note.

> For just as air illuminated by the sun seems to be nothing else but light, not because it loses its own nature but because light predominates in it so that it is believed itself to be light,[10] thus human nature united with God is said to be God totally,[11] not because its nature ceases to be, but because it achieves participation in divinity so that God alone appears within it. Likewise the air is dark when there is no light, while the light of the sun is comprehended by no bodily sense when it exists through itself. Yet when sunlight blends with air it begins to appear, so that in itself it is incomprehensible to the senses, but when mingled with air it can be comprehended.[12]

What is important to notice here is that, as Stephen Gersh has pointed out, in these texts of Maximus and Eriugena, 'the blending involves no loss of the original separate identities,' and 'that each of the two natures blends as a whole with the other'.[13] Once again, wholeness or integrity proves to be of great importance.

BODY AND SOUL

The metaphor of air permeated by light was also used by some Neoplatonists as one that well described the reality of the union of body and soul.[14] In the same way the Christians, including Maximus, utilized the body–soul analogy, in turn, to emphasize the fact that in Christ divinity permeates the whole of his human nature without confusion. As Maximus puts it in *Ambiguum* 42: 'It is impossible for

[10] Maximus has also the idea that the light of the rising sun overpowers the light of stars, but this appears in an entirely different context (*Myst*. 1, Soteropoulos, 150: 22–4 [= PG 91, 665AB]).

[11] Cf. *Ambig*. 10. 20a (PG 91), 1140C.

[12] *Periph*. I: 331–40 (CCCM 161), 14; quoted in Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus*, 195. I have drawn on his illuminating discussion on these metaphors on 193–203.

[13] Gersh, *From Iamblichus,* 196–7.

[14] See Norris, *Manhood and Christ*, 71.

God himself who has become flesh—in the way the soul is united with the body, wholly but without confusion permeating it at the moment of the union—to fall away from deification.'[15] There is a significant precedence to this metaphor, and we shall come back to discuss that in more detail later. At this point, suffice it to point out that what is common to the metaphors[16] we have seen so far, is that they can accommodate realities where two essentially different natures are brought into union; a union within which the natures retain their integrity *qua* natures.

The body–soul metaphor, however, lends itself equally well to overcoming the difficulties of verbally reconciling simultaneous unity and multiplicity.[17] The reason for this can be found in the Late Antique understanding of the nature of soul, a view according to which the soul (owing to the incorporeality of its nature) possesses the capacity to remain single and simple while at the same time penetrating the diverse members of the body—being entirely present in the whole body and in each of its members at once. 'The soul is an immaterial entity: … it is indivisible, imperceptible, and capable of simultaneous and total presence to any number of parts of a divisible corporeal substance.'[18] In a similar vein, Maximus writes:

> The whole soul penetrates through the whole of the body and gives it life and motion. Being simple and incorporeal by nature it is not severed into pieces or cut off with the body … but is wholly present in the whole of the body and in each of its members.[19]

This analogy, then, Maximus applies to the ever-challenging question of God's immanence in the cosmos, here through grace in the deified person:

[15] *Ambig.* 42 (PG 91), 1320B.

[16] An odd one, not included here, is the metaphor of 'reason and concept' which appears only once in Maximus' works. It is used in a Christological context (*Pyrr.,* PG 91, 337CD).

[17] For metaphors describing the unity and diversity of virtue, see Ch. 2, here below.

[18] Norris, *Manhood and Christ*, 25.

[19] *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1100AB.

It is on account of this grace that God the Word become man says, *My Father is working still, and I am working*:[20] the Father approving, the Son effecting and the Holy Spirit completing substantially the approval of the Father and the effecting of the Son, so that the God-in-Trinity may be one through all and in all—God entire being observed proportionally in each and in all of those made worthy by grace; just as the soul exists naturally in the whole and in each part of the body without diminution.[21]

CIRCLE, CENTRE, AND RADII

To this latter category of imagery belongs also the simile of a central point of a circle and its radii.[22] Since the problem of the One and the many was a major question in Neoplatonism, it is not surprising that we find it in Plotinus[23] and in Proclus. Proclus, for instance, in his commentary on Euclid writes:

> Let us conceive the centre among them as a totally unified, undivided, and steadfast transcendence, the distances from the centre as the processions from this unity towards infinite plurality according to its potency, and the circumference of the circle as the reversion towards the centre of those things which have proceeded.[24]

After the pagan Neoplatonists we find this simile twice in Dionysius' *On the Divine Names*,[25] where the second instance is connected with the theme of the *logoi*. Maximus moves along the same lines. In *Ambiguum* 7, he uses our metaphor to describe the unity of the many *logoi* in the one Logos with reference to Gregory Nazianzen's problematic phrase 'we are a portion of God'.[26]

[20] John 5: 17. [21] *Qu. Thal.* 2: 22–30 (CCSG 7), 51.

[22] See the discussion of this metaphor in Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology*, 86–104; Gersh, *From Iamblichus,* 251–3; 72–4; and Mueller-Jourdan, *Typologie spatio-temporelle*, *passim*.

[23] See *Enn.* I. 7. 1, V. 1. 11, V. 9. 6, VI. 4. 7, VI. 8. 18, and VI. 9. 8.

[24] *In Eucl.* 153. 21 ff.; quoted in Gersh, *From Iamblichus*, 74.

[25] *D.n.* 2. 5 (PTS 33), 129: 6–7 and *D.n.* 5. 6 (PTS 33), 185: 4–11.

[26] *Or.* 14. 7 (PG 35), 865C.

And the many *logoi* are the one Logos as it brings them all together by virtue of the reference and providence which returns and guides the many into the One, like as into an all-governing principle or a centre which contains the beginnings of the radii that derive from it. Thus, we are and are called 'a portion of God' on account of the fact that the *logoi* of our being pre-exist in God.[27]

In *Centuries on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation* II. 4, he again refers to the *logoi* and their unity in God, but this time in the context of spiritual knowledge.

The centre of a circle is regarded as the indivisible source of all the radii extending from it; similarly, by means of a certain simple and indivisible act of spiritual knowledge, the person found worthy to dwell in God will perceive pre-existing in God all the *logoi* of created beings.[28]

This simile is also found in an ecclesiological context, in connection with the biblical metaphor of body and members. The fragmenting effect of difference and diversity of the members of the Church is overcome by the reference and relation of all to the one source.[29]

It is he who encloses in himself all beings by the unique, simple, and infinitely wise power of his goodness. As the centre of radii that extend from him he does not allow by his unique, simple, and single cause and power that the principles of beings become disjoined at the periphery but rather he circumscribes their extension in a circle and brings back to himself the distinctive elements of beings which he himself brought into existence. The purpose of this is so that the creatures and products of the one God be in no way strangers and enemies to one another by having no reason or centre for which they might show one another any friendly or peaceful sentiment or identity, and not run the risk of having their being separated from God to dissolve into non-being.[30]

[27] *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1081C.

[28] *Cap. theol.* II. 4 (PG 90), 1125D–1128A; translation in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, vol. ii, compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth, ed. and trans. by G. E. H. Palmer, P. Sherrard, and K. Ware (London: Faber & Faber, 1981), 138.

[29] Maximus adds one more metaphor to the list to describe the reality of the Church body: the manifold universe, or more precisely, God as the Creator of a manifold universe in which unity, harmony, and diversity coexist in peace. See *Myst.* 1 (Soteropoulos), 150–4 [= PG 91, 664D–668C]; in particular on the metaphor of circle and radii, see 154: 4–6 [= PG 91, 668A].

[30] *Myst.* 1 (Soteropoulos), 154: 2–12 [= PG 91, 668AB]; translation in Berthold, *Selected Writings*, 187.

Of all the metaphors, this is the most conspicuously Neoplatonic one. In each case, it revolves around the problem of unity and multiplicity, and it also works with the central Neoplatonic doctrine of procession and return. Despite that, in Maximus' hands it simply becomes a tool which he employs within the boundaries of his Christian metaphysics.

MULTIPLE LIGHTS, SINGLE ILLUMINATION

Stephen Gersh refers to one more 'light' metaphor, popular among the Neoplatonists, to describe unity-in-multiplicity: the metaphor of several lights forming a single illumination.[31] Here we find the Neoplatonists painting an intriguing picture of a union without confusion. The early fifth-century thinker Syrianus in a discussion on the Stoic understanding of corporeality arguing for the interpenetration of two 'immaterial' bodies (or of one material body and an immaterial one)[32] gives us a fine example:

> They say that it is absolutely impossible for two material and resistant bodies to occupy the same place, but that the immaterial ones are like lights which, being emitted from different lamps, have interpenetrated throughout the chamber and gone through each other without being confused or divided. For though one would call these lights incorporeal, they are nevertheless, through being extended and stretched out together with bodies in three dimensions, not prevented from occupying the same place as each other and as bodies, for no other reason than that they are elementary and immaterial and are not split up when divided, but through being joined together with their source and attached to it, they exist as long as it irradiates, but when it departs they go away together with it.[33]

This 'image' was taken over by Dionysius the Areopagite who applies it to the Trinitarian context;[34] and as a Trinitarian simile it is one of the

[31] See Gersh, *From Iamblichus*, 197.

[32] Cf. Shmuel Sambursky, *The Concept of Place in Late Neoplatonism* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982), 18.

[33] *Metaph.* 85 (CAG VI/1); translation in Sambursky, *The Concept of Place*, 59.

[34] See Ysabel de Andia, 'La Théologie trinitaire de Denys l'Aréopagite', *SP* 32 (1997), 290–5.

very rare examples before John of Damascus which contains the idea of interpenetration.

> Even as the lights of lamps being in one house and wholly interpenetrating one another, severally possess a clear and absolute distinction each from each, and are united in distinction and distinct in union. Even so do we see, when there are many lamps in a house, how that the lights of them all are unified into one undifferentiated light, so that there shines forth from them one indivisible brightness. … And even if any one takes out of the dwelling one of the burning lamps, all its particular light will therewith depart from the place … For as I said, the entire and complete union of lights one with another brought no commixture in any of the parts.[35]

This metaphor is not found in Maximus' own works[36] but it is a vivid image expressing the logic that is so characteristic of his thought and it echoes throughout the intellectual environment that Maximus is so close to.

STONE AND COLOURS

Finally, an entirely different metaphor for discussing simultaneous oneness and multiplicity can be found in one of Maximus' Christological *Letters*. Here he demonstrates how a particular object can be at once one and many, at different levels no doubt. He takes the example of a stone in which one can observe different colours and concludes that the multiplicity of colours does not make the stone to be many stones.[37] Number neither unites nor divides, is his basic rule. Here is his argumentation.

> When we speak of a two-coloured or five-coloured stone (or of any multi-coloured one) we do not divide the one stone into two or five stones. Nor do we sever the colours that exist in the stone one from another, but without confusing them we indicate their being this many around the stone and in the stone as the subject. And there neither has come about, nor can be, any

[35] *D.n.* 2. 4 (PTS 33), 127: 4–9, 13–14, and 127: 15–8: 1.
[36] However, cf. *Cap. theol.* II. 1 (PG 90), 1125A–C.
[37] He extends it to flowers and animals, too, in *Ep.* 12 (PG 91), 476D.

division or cutting of the stone on account of the continuous quantity of colours counted with respect to it, just as there is no confusion or mingling of the colours on account of the stone's being one subject. For this shows the singleness of the subject which the stone possesses, and the quantity of colours which it has without division.

In a similar way also, the colours of the same stone, as they differ one from another in respect of quality and [thus] possess quantity, they again have singleness without confusion by virtue of their constituting by composition the subject of the stone: the stone remains one and the same, neither being divided by the quantity of the colours nor confounded by the singleness of the subject. The stone possesses existence that is defined by different *logoi*, and with respect to one *logos* it admits number, with respect to the other it does not.[38]

To conclude, the two categories of 'images' and metaphors we have seen here, on the one hand, express a union without confusion of two (or more) intrinsically different substances, and, on the other hand, they express simultaneous oneness and multiplicity. Some of the metaphors fall within the first category only: those of red-hot iron and air permeated by light; some fall within the second category only: the metaphors of centre and radii, of a subject and colours, and of a multiplicity of lights forming a single illumination; whereas yet one expresses both: the body–soul analogy.

The 'images' of the first category express a union which respects the integrity or wholeness of the constituent parts and which for that reason can be called a 'union without confusion' at the level of substance. Union and distinction exist simultaneously in the realities they denote. In particular, they denote a reality of a union between the created and the uncreated which does not annul the essential difference between the two realms but preserves their fundamental distinction. Similarly, the 'images' of the second category present a union within which the integrity of the particular is safeguarded: the many are united in their reference to the one while at the same time remaining distinct one from another.

[38] *Ep.* 12 (PG 91), 476A–C.

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Part II

Trinity

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3

The Principles

'THE RULES' OF THEOLOGY

Maximus' Trinitarian theology and Christology follow certain clear principles, or 'rules'[1] as Maximus calls them, which, although relatively simple, are of such importance that a failure to give due attention to them will inevitably result in misunderstanding and distorting not only Maximus' theology but also that of the whole of the Byzantine tradition. I shall here very briefly sketch out how these rules came about and to what they amount, and I shall then discuss the notion of hypostasis/person in an attempt to show why the contemporary personalist approach is problematic, and by so doing enable a more historically sensitive reading of Maximus' theology.

By the time of Maximus—within the Chalcedonian tradition to which he adhered—there had emerged a reasonably well-defined structure of theology with its own terminology. The actual story of how this emerged is long and arduous but a few glimpses from it will give us an idea of the principles and the structure that I wish to highlight here, and which is very clear in Maximus' own theology.

The fundamental question in both Trinitarian theology and Christology was how to reconcile simultaneous unity and difference. If Christ was God and the Father was God, how, then, could there be only one God and not two Gods (or even three when the Holy Spirit was included in the disputes)? And if Christ was both God and man, how could it be explained that he was one and not two?

[1] Maximus speaks of 'rules' in this sense in *Opusc.* 10 (PG 91), 136CD and in *Pyrr.* (PG 91), 316A.

Some of the early solutions to the Trinitarian dilemma were attempts to secure unity in God by compromising the concrete and distinct reality of the Son and the Spirit. These trends are conventionally gathered under the title monarchianism. One such solution was promoted by Sabellius in the third century who maintained that God was one single person acting, as it were, three different roles in history.[2] The next century brought with it Arianism, which in its various forms saw the solution in radically differentiating between the Father—who alone was God by essence properly speaking—and the Son and the Spirit. In the Arian perspective, as R. P. C. Hanson has put it: 'There is no common nature shared by Father, Son and Spirit, no divine "substance" which they all possess. … The Three are not equal, their difference of nature entails a difference of degree.'[3]

In the latter half of the fourth century, the Cappadocian Fathers made an attempt to sail between these two tendencies,[4] and although their theology was to become normative, it did not pass without reactions: they were challenged with charges of Tritheism. As the erudite men of their time they cast their counter-arguments in the form of commonly accepted notions. They argued that as with human beings there can be observed unity at the level of the universal and differentiation at the level of the particular, so also with God something analogous can be perceived. Unity and differentiation could, then, be viewed as simultaneous at different levels or, one might say, from different aspects. God could be said to be—'in a manner of speaking' no doubt—absolutely one at the level of the universal and, at the same time, three or a triad at the level of the particular.

Terminology denoting the different aspects was not established and the so-called Cappadocian settlement was an attempt to establish one. There were dangers. Virtually any expression could be misinterpreted

[2] 'Thus the one godhead regarded as creator and law-giver was the Father; for redemption it was projected like a ray of sun, and was then withdrawn; then, thirdly, the same godhead operated as Spirit to inspire and bestow grace.' J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1977, 5th and rev. edn.), 122.

[3] R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 104. See also Manlio Simonetti, *La crisi Ariana nel IV secolo* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum "Augustinianum", 1975).

[4] See Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 74–89 and 231–47.

by one or another party. Sabellianism and Arianism were for the theologian the Scylla and Charybdis of the time, and the Cappadocians proposed terms and distinctions which could function as the true *via media*.

What was the choice of terminology, then? With regard to the universal, the term 'essence' (οὐσία) presented no ambiguities. It was a cognate of the verb 'to be' thus signifying being in general but also corresponding to the revelation of God to Moses as 'He Who Is' (ὁ ὤν).[5] Latin had no such word and thus *essentia* was, according to St Augustine, coined from the verb *esse* on the basis of the Greek οὐσία.[6] Also Nicene anti-Arian theology with its key concept ὁμοούσιον[7] and Athanasius' phrase ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρός had secured the place of 'essence' in the theological parlance of the fourth century.[8]

Another term which could serve the same purpose was ὑπόστασις, the literal Latin translation of which was *substantia*. In Tertullian's formulation, for example, God was *una substantia, tres personae*.[9] But in Greek ὑπόστασις was beginning to take on the meaning of the particular, and thus things were not that straightforward. To say in Greek one ὑπόστασις, three πρόσωπα—which corresponded literally to the Latin *una substantia, tres personae* of Tertullian—sounded, at least in St Basil's time, dangerously Sabellian. The term πρόσωπον meant 'mask' or 'face' and lacked somehow the requisite concreteness.[10] The formula 'one ὑπόστασις and three πρόσωπα' was therefore too susceptible to a Sabellian interpretation to mean one God with three different faces or roles.

For this reason Basil insisted that the only way out was to distinguish between οὐσία and ὑπόστασις. These corresponded to the universal and the particular respectively: 'Those who say that

[5] Exod. 3: 14 LXX.

[6] *De civ. Dei* 12. 2 (CCSL 48), 357.

[7] See Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*, trans. M. Westerhoff and ed. A. Louth (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1993; original German edition 1985), 104.

[8] For a recent discussion on these two notions see the article of Lewis Ayres, 'Athanasius' Initial Defense of the Term Ὁμοούσιος: Rereading the *De Decretis*', *JECS* 3/12 (2004), 337–59.

[9] *Adversus Praxeas* 11–12 (PL 2), 1670D.

[10] The term ἐνυπόστατον was first used precisely in this context to emphasize the concrete reality of the divine persons as opposed to accidental reality.

essence and hypostasis are identical are compelled to confess that there are only different masks (*πρόσωπα*).'[11] Basil maintained that the creed of the council of Nicaea 325 AD. distinguishes between hypostasis and essence when it declares anathema on 'those who allege that the Son of God is of another hypostasis (*ὑπόστασις*) or essence (*οὐσία*)'[12] [than that of the Father]. 'For it is *not* said therein,' Basil argues, 'that essence and hypostasis are the same thing. For if the words revealed one and the same meaning, what was the need of each separately?'[13] This was not necessarily the best of arguments, and also, these terms had quite clearly been identical at the time of the council—for St Athanasius, for example—and they still were so in the minds of the so-called Old Nicenes.[14] Basil's distinction, therefore, was met with objection.

Basil, however, had a perfectly legitimate reason to make this 'innovation'. His target was to find a way of expressing the distinction and true subsistence of the three divine 'somethings' without falling into Sabellianism, on the one hand, or to Tritheism or Arianism, on the other hand. Saying that God was one essence and three *πρόσωπα* was what Sabellius had said and was clearly a dangerous thing to do. The Arian, or Eunomian, line of thinking maintained that there were three different essences, and consequently, identifying hypostasis with essence and thus speaking of three hypostases (= essences) meant falling into the other trap. Distinguishing between *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις* was the only way out.

Although he could distinguish between these two terms, Basil was not happy identifying *ὑπόστασις* and *πρόσωπον*, as André de Halleux has convincingly argued.[15] Again, this was owing to the danger of Sabellianism. It was Basil's friend Gregory Nazianzen and his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa who established this correspondence. The former is somewhat tentative when he says that 'God is three in regard to distinctive properties, or hypostases, or, if you like, persons

[11] *Ep*. 236 (Deferrari 3), 402.

[12] *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Tanner), 5: 22–5.

[13] *Ep*. 125 (Deferrari 2), 262.

[14] See the article of André de Halleux, '"Hypostase" et "Personne" dans la formation du dogme trinitaire (*ca* 375–381)', (reprinted as article 5) in *Patrologie et oecuménisme*, 113–214 [= *RHE* 79 (1984), 311–69; 623–70].

[15] See de Halleux, '"Hypostase" et "Personne"', 114–30.

(πρόσωπα); for we shall not quarrel about the names, as long as the terms lead to the same conception.'[16] Gregory of Nyssa, in contrast, states plainly that 'the Scripture … safeguards the identity of the godhead in the particularity of the three hypostases, that is to say, persons (πρόσωπα).'[17] He does not stop there, however, but makes another identification: 'When we say particular (μερικὴ οὐσία) or individual essence (ἰδικὴ ουσία), we do not wish to denote anything else than individual (ἄτομον), which is person.'[18] Thus, in actual fact, for Gregory of Nyssa all the three notions—hypostasis, person, and individual—are identical, and this identification will in due time become the standard in the Chalcedonian theological tradition. In *Institutio elementaris*, a treatise attributed to St John of Damascus (8th century), the author summarizes this by saying that 'hypostasis, person, and individual are the same thing'.[19] There will, of course, be some nuances to the individual notions, and clearly their etymologies are entirely different, but their basic usage in the context of theology becomes identical from this time onwards.[20]

What I wish to demonstrate with this brief outline is that the Trinitarian mystery was discussed, or began to be discussed, by the Cappadocians within the framework of the universal and the particular, and that as the result of their efforts certain terms, which gradually became standard, were designated to the one or the other of these two realms. Maximus was, as I said earlier, careful not to transgress the borderline of mystery with respect to the Trinity. But that did not imply that these distinctions could not be applied to Trinitarian theology; on the contrary, it was imperative that they should be made use of in that context. They were always an analogy, of course—used in 'a manner of speaking'—but the fact they were an analogy did not mean that they could not provide discussions on the Trinity or

[16] *Or.* 39. 11 (SC 358), 170–1.
[17] *Comm. not.* (GNO 3, part 1), 26.
[18] Ibid. 23. Cf. Barnes, *Porphyry*, 78.
[19] *Inst. el. α*: 3 (PTS 7), 21.
[20] For such nuances see *Doctrina patrum* 6. 16–21 (Diekamp), 39–46. See also the critical article of Lucian Turcescu, '"Person" versus "Individual", and other Modern Misreadings of Gregory of Nyssa', *MTh* 18/4 (2002), 527–39, where he rightly argues against the tendency of reading back into the Fathers the distinction between person and individual—popular in some modern theology, non-existent in Late Antiquity.

Christ[21] with certain tools or 'rules' of theologizing.[22] Maximus sums up the terminology in a single sentence thus:

> Common and universal, that is to say generic, is, according to the Fathers, the essence and nature, for they say that these two are identical with each other. Individual and particular is the hypostasis and person, for these too are identical with each other.[23]

This for Maximus was the tradition of the Fathers, and these were the principles or 'rules' according to which he argued. To spell out the rule: that which is common to certain beings is their essence or nature, or an essential property; and thus common, universal, and essential go together.[24] That, again, which is particular to one individual being, something which it does not share with other members of its kind, is what characterizes the hypostasis or person; therefore, particular, individual, personal, and hypostatic go together. Any confusion between the universal and the particular, that is, the essential and the personal (in the patristic sense) leads to problems in doctrine.

HYPOSTASIS

Let us then examine a little more closely what is meant by 'hypostasis', bearing in mind that this is an immensely weighty term.[25] We have

[21] The kind of ambivalence that the term 'hypostasis' presented in the Trinitarian disputes, the term 'nature' continued to have in Christology. Chalcedon and its aftermath is an obvious case in point. In the Chalcedonian tradition 'nature' was identified with 'essence', and thus by the time of Maximus Trinitarian and Christological languages could be discussed within a unified conceptual framework.

[22] See also Andrew Louth, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 97.

[23] *Ep*. 15 (PG 91), 545A.

[24] 'What is predicated of certain things commonly and generically is the definition of their essence' (*Ambig*. 2: 38–9, CCSG 48, 9).

[25] Marcel Richard in his article 'L'Introduction du mot "hypostase" dans la théologie de l'Incarnation', in *Opera Minora*, vol. ii (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), article 42, p. 5, says characteristically: 'Des mots consacrés par la théologie un des plus importants est sans contredit le mot grec ὑπόστασις. Son emploi par l'Église dans les définitions des dogmes de la Trinité et de l'Incarnation l'ont rendu si lourd de sens qu'il est devenu pratiquement intraduisible et très malaisément définissable. Des pages et des pages lui ont été consacrés du IV^e^ siècle à nos jours qui, réunies, formeraient plusieurs gros volumes.'

seen that St Basil established its place as denoting the particular. Here is his own statement, as quoted by St Maximus at the beginning of *Letter* 15.

If we, too, are to express briefly what we think, we shall say that what the universal is in relation to the particular, this the essence is in relation to the hypostasis. For each one of us both participates in being by virtue of the common principle (*logos*) of essence, and is so-and-so by virtue of the particularities which are around the principle (*logos*) of essence. In the same way there too the principle of essence is common, like goodness, godhead, or any other concept, but the hypostasis is considered in the property of fatherhood, sonship or sanctifying power.[26]

The principle of essence is what is common to all the particulars but the particulars have some characteristic features of their own which individuate them in relation to one another. If we consider some other definitions of 'hypostasis', coming from a Christological context, we shall see that they all make the same point. Leontius of Byzantium (6th century), for example, says the following.

Nature admits of the predication of being, but hypostasis also of being-by-oneself, and the former presents the character of genus, the latter expresses individual identity. The one brings out what is peculiar to something universal, the other distinguishes the particular from the general. To put it concisely, things sharing the same essence and things whose structure of being is common are properly said to be of one nature; but we can define as 'hypostasis' either things which share a nature but differ in number, or things which are put together from different natures, but which share reciprocally in a common being.[27]

Maximus moves along the same lines in his definition of 'hypostasis' in *Letter* 15: '"Hypostasis" is that which exists distinctly and by-itself, since they say that "hypostasis" is an essence together with particular properties and it differs from other members of the same genus in number.'[28] The core of the definition is virtually identical with that of

[26] St Basil, *Ep.* 214 (Deferrari 3), 234; Maximus, *Ep.* 15 (PG 91), 545A.

[27] *Nest. et Eut.* (PG 86), 1280A; quoted in Brian E. Daley, '"A Richer Union": Leontius of Byzantium and the Relationship of Human and Divine in Christ', *SP* 24 (1993), 247.

[28] "*Τὸ γὰρ καθ' αὐτὸ διωρισμένως συνεστώς ἐστιν ὑπόστασις εἴπερ ὑπόστασιν εἶναί φασιν οὐσίαν μετὰ ἰδιωμάτων, ἀριθμῷ τῶν ὁμογενῶν διαφέρουσαν*" (*Ep.* 15, PG 91, 557D).

Leontius. And one could add a whole host of similar definitions from the sixth and seventh centuries only to come to the same conclusion: that the term 'hypostasis' denotes the particular.[29]

From these few examples we could draw the conclusion that a hypostasis is an instance of a nature, distinguished in number from other individual instances of the same nature by its particular properties. It shares with the other instances of the same essence their essential properties but is differentiated from them in its particular personal properties. It is, therefore, not something opposed to essence but a concrete and particular instance of it: 'an essence with particular properties'.[30]

But here arises a question: if hypostasis is simply 'a particular', an essence with particular properties, can simply any particular being be a hypostasis or a person? Is there no distinction between thinking creatures (that is, self-conscious subjects) and dumb animals or plants? Is it that these weighty terms are, in the end, merely grammatical tools in the toolkit of a Byzantine logician?

What the sources themselves seem quite strongly to suggest is, in fact, that there is no such distinction. The modern personalist would find the following statement of Gregory of Nyssa rather disappointing, even off-putting.

> One thing is distinguished from another either by essence or by hypostasis, or both by essence and hypostasis. On the one hand, a man is distinguished from a horse by essence, and Peter is distinguished from Paul by hypostasis. On the other hand, such-and-such a hypostasis of man is distinguished from such-and-such *a hypostasis of horse* both by essence and hypostasis.[31]

Clearly, Gregory is making a logical distinction here. Even a particular horse is a hypostasis (person) in Gregory's understanding.

But could someone like Maximus really agree with such a statement? As the following quotation plainly shows, he not only could agree with it but would also further develop and systematize it.

[29] For example, 'Pamphilus', *Solutio* I (CCSG 19), 127–33; Anastasius of Antioch, *Philosophical Chapters* 54–61 (Uthemann), 350–2; Anastasius the Sinaite, *Viae dux* II. 3 (CCSG 8), 50–79; Theodore of Raithu, *Praeparatio* (Diekamp, OCA 117), 204–6 [= *Doctrina patrum* 6. 17, Diekamp, 41–2].

[30] *Ep*. 15 (PG 91), 557D.

[31] *Comm. not*. (GNO 3, part 1), 29; italics mine.

Beings that are united according to one and the same nature or essence (i.e. beings that are of one and the same nature) are distinguished from one another by *hypostasis* or *person*, as is the case with angels and men, and with all the created beings that are considered in species (εἶδος) and in genus (γένος). For an angel is distinguished from an angel, a man from a man, an ox from an ox and a dog from a dog, *not* according to nature or essence, but *according to hypostasis*.[32]

For Maximus, then, the individual instances of 'all the created beings that are considered in species (εἶδος) and in genus (γένος)' are hypostases or persons.[33]

CAN A MOUSE BE A PERSON?

Somewhere Lewis Carroll writes that 'the Mouse … seemed to be a person …'.[34] Carroll would have been rather surprised to find out that a Byzantine theologian could have agreed with him. Clearly, it is entirely nonsensical to say today that a mouse could be a 'person' (or a hypostasis)—and, of course, Lewis Carroll *was* writing nonsense. But for Maximus, as we saw above, a particular mouse would simply be a 'hypostasis of mouse' or a 'mouse person'; this being an entirely legitimate usage of these technical terms—as, indeed, saying 'an individual mouse' would be today.

But in the modern context, 'person' is such a charged notion that even to suggest that, perhaps, in earlier times it had a very limited, almost merely grammatical or logical, function seems a virtual impossibility. And yet, if we are to understand the theological discussions in the Greek-speaking world of the first millennium, we must come to terms with this merely logical notion of the 'person'.

The reason why doing so may seem difficult is because we tend to attach a number of attributes to the idea of 'person', and perhaps also because, when we speak of ourselves as 'persons', tampering with this

[32] *Ep*. 15 (PG 91), 549C; italics mine.

[33] See also *Opusc*. 21 (PG 91), 248B–249A.

[34] *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There,* ed. Roger L. Green with illustrations by John Tenniel (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 24.

term seems like tampering with our very being. We understand this notion in a certain way, and, as I argue, this way does not match with the content it had in Byzantine thought. We cannot, of course, force the contemporary language but we should at least be aware of the difference there is between then and now.

Of the various theories of personhood, the kind of personalist theology that has been popular during the last century concentrates, it seems to me, on four notions which are most commonly linked with being a 'person': rationality, freedom, relatedness, and self-consciousness.[35] (A fifth one, particularity, will be added later.) If we consider these four concepts in the light of the logic of universal and particular, we shall soon realize that they all are, directly or indirectly, connected with, not the personal, but the common and universal. ('Relation' is the only exception when taken as a personal difference.) Let me make a brief survey.

Rationality is perhaps the most conspicuous feature which distinguishes human beings from animals. In early Christian undertanding, among created beings only angels and men have this property, all animals being regarded as irrational. Rationality is a property that resides in the human intellect and reason, and as such it is a faculty within the structure of the human soul. (Here by 'rationality' I do not mean simply 'brain' as a faculty for discursive thinking. Rather, the 'rational part of the soul' comprises all the aspects of man's intellectual and spiritual being.)

The seat of freedom,[36] in turn, lies within the rational capacities (the *νοῦς* or the *λόγος*). And the patristic concept of free will or self-determination, *αὐτεξούσιον*,[37] is closely related to that of *λογικόν*, and is even identified with that of 'will' (*θέλημα*) by Maximus.[38] Here again we may note that rationality and freedom are characteristic features of the human (as well as of the divine) nature, that is, of the human being *qua* human being, rather than *qua* person, that is, *qua* John or

[35] See e.g. Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997[2]; first published in 1991); and Kallistos Ware (of Diokleia), 'The Human Person as an Icon of the Trinity', *Sobornost*, 8/2 (1986), 6–23.

[36] I am not, of course, referring to any form of social or political freedom.

[37] In Maximus, also self-determined movement, *αὐτεξούσιος κίνησις*. See *Pyrr.* (PG 91), 301C, 304CD.

[38] *Pyrr.* (PG 91), 324D.

Anna.[39] They are essential properties which all divine and human persons share; and properties without which God is not God nor a man, man. As Maximus so strikingly states in the *Dispute with Pyrrhus*: 'If, therefore, man is an image of the divine nature; and the divine nature is *autexousios* [self-governed, endowed with free will], then also the image, since it preserves the likeness to the archetype, is *autexousios* by nature.'[40] Consequently, rationality and freedom, in patristic terms, are not personal properties. Nor are they constitutive of persons as features common and not particular to many individuals: they are constitutive of rational and free natures, of which individual human persons are instances.

In the modern 'dialogist' perspective, only a person, endowed with freedom and rationality, can relate. And relationship is seen as constitutive of personhood. There is no 'I' where there is no 'Thou'. Relationship makes us persons in the dialogist parlance—and rightly so when taken as an antidote to Cartesian rationalism. But when we speak of personal relations today, we in fact mean a certain *kind* of relatedness; a relatedness which is governed by freedom, rationality, and psychological and emotional aspects peculiar to human beings.

But, one may ask, is not the way in which different plants, trees, and other creatures form an ecosystem a *kind* of relationship? Is not the interdepence of the species in nature, and the way in which they seek for light, nutrition, or protection, a kind of relationship or relatedness? Of course, these types of relations are bound to certain natural processes. Their relations, as Maximus would put it, are governed by their *logos* of essence and the 'law of nature'. But a certain relatedness is undeniable. (Also Maximus' cosmology, as we shall see later on, would support this understanding.) What this implies, I would argue, is that there are different kinds of relatedness conditioned by the natural capacities of each subject. Human beings relate humanly, other creatures, say, for instance, mice, relate in a mouse-kind-of-way, trees in a tree-kind-of-way, and so on.

[39] Cf. *Opusc.* 10 (PG 91), 137A.

[40] "*Εἰ οὖν εἰκὼν ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς θείας φύσεως αὐτεξούσιος δὲ ἡ θεία φύσις ἄρα καὶ ἡ εἰκών, εἴπερ τὴν πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον σώζει ὁμοίωσιν, αὐτεξούσιος φύσει τυγχάνει*" (*Pyrr.*, PG 91, 324D). See also George C. Berthold, 'The Cappadocian Roots of Maximus', in *Symposium*, 53.

Moreover, 'relationship' (πρός τι, σχέσις) in ancient philosophy meant more than anything else a relationship of comparison: what one thing is in relation to another; rather than an interpersonal relationship. Say, for example, this stone is twice as big as that stone, or Aristotle is the student of Plato, or the Earth is a part of the Solar System.[41] This, as I said earlier, can be regarded as a personal difference.

Finally, what makes us think that we are persons, is our awareness of our own existence and uniqueness. We observe a certain centre of self-consciousness somewhere deep inside us—something which we cannot really determine but which at the same time makes us feel that we are persons, and that 'I am I' and nobody else. Yet, here too we should point out that, although one's self is entirely personal, self-consciousness itself is an ingredient of the human *qua* human being. There is no human individual without this property (even if it is sometimes 'switched off') and thus it is common to all humans. Therefore, from the standpoint of Byzantine thought, as I have presented it here, self-consciousness, too, is constitutive, not of the personal, but of the essential.

If we at this point look at these four ingredients, we notice that they are all directly or indirectly linked with essence or nature (when understood in the light of the patristic rules of common and particular). In sum, it is rationality as the seat of free will which is at the heart of all these qualifications.[42]

The only real qualification for person/hypostasis that remains—a fifth one, which we have not yet discussed—is particularity. This is where an existentialist type of personalism and Greek patristic theology converge. Particularity and its integrity is for both of immense importance. Unity which annihilates the particularity of those united

[41] Cf. *Ambig.* 20 (PG 91), 1237A; and Aristotle, *Cat.* 7 (Loeb 325), 6a: 37 ff.

[42] It is interesting to note that the only Late Antique definition of person which limits the use of the term 'person' to rational beings alone—namely the famous definition of Boethius (5th–6th century) *persona est naturae rationalis individua substantia* (*Contra Eutychem* 3, PL 64, 1343CD)—makes it explicit that we are speaking of a natural quality. However, early Greek theology that we know of never made this delimitation, though Boethius thinks differently when he a little after this definition says that the Greeks use the word ὑπόστασις for *persona* and that they never apply it to irrational animals (*Contra Eutychem* 3, PL 64, 1343D and 1344D). Admittedly, he may have known sources that we have no knowledge of but he quite clearly was not aware of Gregory of Nyssa's point referred to earlier in this chapter.

cannot be true unity. The common unites the particulars, but without confusion. And yet, particularity is not a psychological entity. Otherness does not depend on our ability or disability to observe or to be conscious of it.

In St Maximus' vision of the cosmos, otherness is a matter of difference; a difference rooted in the *logoi*, in God's intentions for his creatures:

> If the beings which have come into being are many, they necessarily are also different, since they are many; for it is not possible that the many are not also different. And if the many are different, then, also the *logoi* by means of which they exist in substance are to be understood as different. [It is] by means of these *logoi*, and even more so because of them, that the different beings differ [from one another]. For the different beings would not differ from one another, had the *logoi* by means of which they have come into being no difference.[43]

In addition to this, personal differentiation, according to Maximus, is made manifest through the *tropos*: through the way in which each and every one makes use of their natural being.

What we can conclude from all this is that when we say 'person' or 'hypostasis' today we tend to mean much more than when the Fathers[44] used the same words. There seems to be a shift from the universal to the particular; a shift which was pointed out already a century ago by Adolf Trendelenburg,[45] and which shift strongly resonated, for instance, in the early twentieth-century German theology.[46] Thus, in the modern understanding of the notion of person/hypostasis, we attribute features to it which (apart from particularity) belong to the essence, or the universal, and when we speak of these features we speak of them as being 'personal' (or 'hypostatic').[47]

[43] *Ambig.* 22 (PG 91), 1256D.

[44] This is so even if we include Boethius.

[45] 'A Contribution to the History of the Word Person', trans. Carl H. Haessler, *Monist*, 20 (1910), 336–63. Trendelenburg attributed this shift to Immanuel Kant.

[46] See Samuel Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 219–21; and Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 215.

[47] It is, perhaps, not out of place here to point out that in Greek there is no word which corresponds to 'personhood'. In Modern Greek, the phrase 'notion of person' (ἡ ἔννοια τοῦ προσώπου) is used instead. Also the form with the Germanic ending *-hood* (*-heit*) suggests a universal quality rather than a differentiating one.

4

Monad and Triad

MONAD IN TRIAD, TRIAD IN MONAD

Let us now move on to St Maximus and his understanding of the Trinity. Despite the fact that Maximus is so very frugal when it comes to saying anything about the Trinity, he does address the pivotal question of unity and differentiation in God in the following way: 'How does extreme union possess both identity and otherness, that is to say, identity of essences and otherness of persons or *vice versa*? … For instance, in the Holy Trinity, there is identity of essence and otherness of persons; for we confess one essence and three hypostases.'[1]

As we have seen above, the Cappadocians spoke of unity and difference in God in terms of the universal and the particular. This logic forms also the foundation for St Maximus' Trinitarian theology. The most obvious example of this can be found in his *Letter* 15,[2] which we have already quoted earlier. In this letter, after identifying the universal with essence and nature, and the particular with hypostasis and person, Maximus goes on to speak of the distinction between essence and hypostasis first in the created order[3] and then also in the Trinity.[4] The conclusion Maximus draws from this gives him a logical pattern for unity and differentiation of consubstantial beings, the Holy Trinity being the most sublime example.

[1] *Opusc.* 13. 2 (PG 91), 145B. [2] *Ep.* 15 (PG 91), 544C.
[3] Ibid. 549B ff. [4] Ibid. 549CD.

Therefore, beings that are united according to one and the same essence or nature (i.e. beings that are of one and the same essence or nature) are necessarily consubstantial with one another and of different hypostases (ἑτερουπόστατα). They are, on the one hand, consubstantial by virtue of the *logos* of the essential community which is considered in them unalterably in their natural identity. According to this *logos* no-one exceeds others with respect to quiddity or name, but they all admit of one and the same definition (ὅρος) and *logos* of essence.[5] On the other hand, they are of different hypostases (ἑτερουπόστατα) by virtue of the *logos* of personal otherness which distinguishes one from another. The hypostases do not coincide in their characteristic distinguishing marks, but each one by virtue of the sum of its characteristic properties bears a most particular *logos* of its own hypostasis, and in accordance with this *logos* it admits of no community with those that are connatural and consubstantial with it.[6]

Although Maximus discusses the doctrine in logical concepts, his favourite terms for the Trinity are Monad and Triad, which he ultimately finds in the context of worship, and it is worship that forms the basis for the correct understanding of God: 'For that which we worship is Monad in Triad and Triad in Monad:[7] Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God.'[8]

The two texts in which Maximus expounds in some length his understanding of Monad and Triad, *On the Lord's Prayer*[9] and *Mystagogia* 23,[10] are both associated with liturgical prayer and an elevated state of spiritual knowledge. In the former, Maximus speaks of how 'mystical theology teaches us, who through faith have been adopted by grace

[5] Cf. Aristotle, *Cat*. 5 (Loeb 325), 3b–4a.

[6] *Ep*. 15 (PG 91), 552BC.

[7] μονὰς ἐν τριάδι καὶ τριὰς ἐν μονάδι. As mentioned earlier, an alternative translation would be 'a Unity in Trinity and a Trinity in Unity'. The language of Monad and Triad has a considerable precedence in Gregory Nazianzen (*Or*. 6. 22, 23. 8, 25. 17, 26. 19, and 27. 2; *Carm*. I. 1. 3, II. 1. 10–12). See Arnis Redovics, 'Gregory of Nazianzus (*Or*. 29. 2) in Maximus the Confessor's *Ambigua*', *SP* 37 (2001), 255 n. 27. It also forms the core of the Trinitarian sections in, for instance, the *Ep. syn*. of Sophronius of Jerusalem (see ACO ser. 2, vol. ii, part 1, 418: 17–430: 9) as well as in Justinian's *Conf*. (see Schwartz, 73: 13–28). Moreover, it is strongly reminiscent of the Latin credal document, the so-called Athanasian Creed.

[8] *Ep*. 15 (PG 91), 549D–552A.

[9] *Or. dom*.: 414–67 (CCSG 23), 51–4.

[10] *Myst*. 23 (Soteropoulos), 216:12–18:10 [= PG 91, 700C–701B].

and brought to the knowledge of truth, to recognize one nature and power of the divinity, that is to say, one God contemplated in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.'[11] And in the latter, he says: 'Now as the soul by a simple and indivisible power through its instruction, has already encompassed by knowledge the principles of both sensible and intelligible things, the Word then leads it to the knowledge of theology….'[12] Theology here is, of course, *theologia* in the strict sense of the word: the knowledge of the Trinity, which Maximus specifies as the knowledge of 'one God; one essence, three hypostases; tri-hypostatic Monad of essence and consubstantial Triad of hypostases; Monad in Triad and Triad in Monad.'[13]

How Monad and Triad, essence and the hypostases, relate to each other is carefully presented. Maximus makes it clear that Monad and Triad are a single reality. God, one and the same, is simultaneously *both* Monad *and* Triad. In *Ambiguum* 67, contemplating on number twelve and its factors, he very interestingly says that 'the divine essence is expressed through number three, as it is triadically praised for the sake of its tri-hypostatic existence. For the Monad is Triad as being complete in three complete hypostases, that is to say, by mode of existence; and the Triad is truly Monad by the *logos* of its essence or being.'[14] Neither the Monad nor the Triad has any 'ontological priority' over the other but both are aspects of a single reality and are in balance with each other. God is Monad in Triad and Triad in Monad, Maximus explains,

> not one thing and another thing; | but the same
> or one *above* the other, | in itself and
> or one [existing] *through* the other; | by itself,
> or one *in* the other, | upon itself,
> or one [derived] *from* the other; | by virtue of itself.[15]

This perhaps slightly enigmatic sequence of statements from the *Mystagogia* finds some explanation in our second extract. Here, too,

[11] *Or. dom.*: 439–42, CCSG 23, 53.
[12] *Myst.* 23 (Soteropoulos), 216: 12–17 [= PG 91, 700C].
[13] Ibid. 216: 17–19 [= PG 91, 700D].
[14] *Ambig.* 67 (PG 91), 1400D–1401A.
[15] *Myst.* 23 (Soteropoulos), 216: 19–22 [= PG 91, 700D].

we have a similar sequence of statements but in this case each statement is followed by an explanatory comment. The order also is slightly different—in the text here below, statement four, which speaks of 'quality', comes first.[16]

> Mystical theology teaches us to recognize God as Triad in Monad and Monad in Triad,
> not, however, as one *in* the other:
> for the Triad is not in the Monad as an accident is in a substance, or *vice versa,* since God is without qualities;
> or as one thing *and* another thing:
> for the Monad does not differ from the Triad by otherness of nature, being a simple and single nature;
> or as one being *above* the other:
> for the Triad is not distinguished from the Monad by inferiority of power, or *vice versa*,
> or like as something which is common and generic, considered merely conceptually [abstracted] from the particulars subordinate to it: it is a self-existent essence *par excellence* and a truly self-empowered power.
> or as one [existing] *through* the other:
> for that which is altogether the same and non-relative has no such mediating relationship as an effect has with its cause;
> or as one derived *from* the other:
> for the Triad is not derived from the Monad by production or by bringing forth, since it is ungenerated and self shown-forth.[17]

Here Maximus is first and foremost underlining consubstantiality within the divine being, but he is also drawing the line between the created and the uncreated, so crucial to his theology as a whole. Monad and Triad are both on the side of the uncreated. They are neither two different natures or beings in union, nor subordinate to each other, nor deriving one from or through the other in such a way which would introduce otherness of essence within the divine, or, indeed, any kind of otherness which would cause separation between the Monad and the Triad.

[16] The reason for this difference is probably the fact that here Maximus is speaking of the theological errors in the Greek and the Jewish religions. More precisely, with the latter, he maintains, God 'only possesses word and spirit as qualities, without itself being Intellect, Word and Spirit' (*Or. dom.*: 436–8, CCSG 23, 52–3). For the Christian, God is Triad of 'essentially subsistent' Intellect, Word and Spirit, as opposed to mere qualities (*Or. dom.*: 443 ff., CCSG 23, 53).

[17] *Or. dom.*: 446–61 (CCSG 23), 53–4.

Accidents play a significant role in the context of the Porphyrian Tree within which Maximus often discusses the created order. Since accidents have no real place in the divine, he makes it plain that Monad and Triad are not accidental qualities. Also the generic is something substantial in God rather than simply a conceptual idea abstracted from the subordinate individuals, as can be observed within the Porphyrian Tree: in other words the Monad truly is a monad, 'a self-existent essence *par excellence*', and not an abstraction.

The corollary of *Mystagogia* 23 brings us to the heart of the issue, the union and distinction in the one God: 'The same [is] *both* Monad *and* Triad, possessing union uncompounded and without confusion, and possessing distinction undivided and without parts.'[18] The 'union' is uncompounded because it is not a synthesis or composition of separate parts brought together to constitute a whole; and it is without confusion because the hypostases are not conflated into a non-differentiated Monad as the safety-valve of 'distinction' preserves the integrity of the hypostases. Simultaneously, the 'distinction' of the hypostases does not divide the Monad into separate parts because the Triad truly is a Monad.

> It is identical with itself, yet in two different ways; for the Holy Triad of hypostases is Monad by virtue of its essence and by virtue of the simple *logos* of its essence, and the Holy Monad is Triad by virtue of the hypostases and the mode of existence.[19]

God is, Maximus summarizes, 'Monad according to the *logos* of essence or being (not, however, by synthesis, conflation or confusion of any kind); Triad according to the *logos* of how it exists and subsists (nevertheless not by separation, alienation or any kind of division).'[20] And this Monad-Triad that simultaneously possesses unity without confusion and distinction without separation communicates itself to us, Maximus concludes, as

> one and sole godhead, undivided and without confusion, simple, undiminished and unchangeable, completely the same, one thing and the

[18] *Myst.* 23 (Soteropoulos), 216: 22–3 [= PG 91, 700D].
[19] Ibid. 218: 2–4 [= PG 91, 701A].
[20] Ibid. 216: 23–7 [= PG 91, 700D–1A]. See also *Ambig.* 40 (PG 91), 1304A.

other in different ways, understood (as we have said) according to one *logos* and the other, being all Monad according to the essence and the same being all Triad in hypostases, uniformly shining forth one ray of threefold light.[21]

If union and distinction are the key words of sound doctrine, then also the opposite is true: separation and confusion are the signs of error. Thus Maximus maintains that the ancient heresiarchs Arius and Macedonius rejecting the consubstantiality within the Triad severed the Monad.[22] 'We anathematize Arius, not for proclaiming the hypostatic difference in the Trinity, but for not declaring the natural union.'[23] Here the Triad causes a split in the Monad.

Sabellius, on the contrary, professed the Monad but regarding it as uni-personal rejected the Triad.[24] 'We anathematize Sabellius,' he writes, 'not for proclaiming the natural unity in the Holy Trinity, but for not declaring the hypostatic difference.'[25] Here, the Monad confuses the Triad.

Tritheism[26] represents a more subtle type of separation.

> The tritheists who separate the Father from the Son, go off the deep end either way. For they either say that the Son is coeternal with the Father, but separate one from the other and so are forced to say that He was not born of Him and to go off the deep end—that there are three Gods and three origins; or else … [: Arianism].[27]

Maximus argues that 'when the Lord says: *I am in the Father and the Father in me*,[28] he shows the inseparableness of the persons,' and that there is in God a certain wondrous undivided division and a conjunction with distinction. 'Therefore,' he concludes, 'both the division and the union are extraordinary. But what is there extraordinary, if as one man with another, so likewise the Son and the Father, is both united and separate and nothing more?'[29]

[21] *Myst.* 23 (Soteropoulos), 218: 5–10 [= PG 91, 701AB].
[22] *Opusc.* 13. 1 (PG 91), 145A.
[23] Ibid. 13. 4 (PG 91), 148B.
[24] Ibid. 13. 1 (PG 91), 145A.
[25] Ibid. 13. 5 (PG 91), 148B.
[26] Polycarp Sherwood argues that the tritheism Maximus has in view here is that of John Philoponus, a sixth-century Monophysite and Aristotelian commentator. See his *St Maximus*, 255 n. 104.
[27] *Carit.* II. 29 (PG 90), 993A.
[28] John 10: 38.
[29] *Carit.* II. 29 (PG 90), 993AB.

TODAY

In the modern context, there has emerged a question as to whether the Greek Fathers (in particular the Cappadocians) in their Trinitarian theology are personalists or essentialists. This is a question which, it seems to me, once again throws the Monad and the Triad on the scales.

In an important article devoted to this issue, André de Halleux[30] has pointed out some of the more serious difficulties this discussion involves. De Halleux concentrates on the Cappadocian Fathers, and on the claim by modern Eastern theologians that the Cappadocians have made a personalist revolution in ontology by introducing the distinction between hypostasis and essence.[31]

According to de Halleux, the Cappadocians did not wish to give priority to either the Monad or the Triad, since both possess an equal importance.[32] (And as we have seen, the same is true of St Maximus.) In that sense the Fathers were, at once, both personalists and essentialists. But these notions, de Halleux, argues, bear too strong modern connotations to be applied to the patristic era. The promotion of the *subjectivité de l'esprit* into the category of ontology, let alone the philosophy of the *intersubjectivité de la personne,* are very recent phenomena. The risk, therefore, of anachronism, when reading existentialist values into the Fathers, is great. Subjectivity and dialogism in the modern sense were hardly issues in their agenda. What was at stake then, de Halleux maintains, was 'the paradox of distinction and union of a God considered as the Transcendent rather than of a God considered as the absolute Subject.' 'The "ontological revolution", too generously attributed to the Cappadocian Fathers, does not inaugurate personalism in the modern sense of the word.'[33] In one sentence de Halleux captures the central themes of the personalist current.

[30] 'Personnalisme ou essentialisme trinitaire chez les Pères cappadociens?' (reprinted as article 6) in *Patrologie et oecuménisme: recueil d'études* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 215–68 [= *RTL* 17 (1986), 129–55, 265–92]. See also the perceptive and critical article of Karen Kilby, 'Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity', *New Blackfriars* (Oct. 2000), 432–45.

[31] He also discusses the accusation by some Western theologians that these same Fathers are essentialists, but our interest lies in the former.

[32] Cf. 'Personnalisme', 265 ff. [33] Ibid. 266.

It is necessary to remind those who interpret the Cappadocian theology as an existential and communal ontology, allergic to the language of essence, that Basil and the two Gregories spoke of the essence and consubstantiality as eagerly as they spoke of the hypostases and the 'monarchy' of the Father, and that what they denoted by the intradivine *koinônia* was the common nature and not the 'dialogical' interpersonal relations.[34]

It is interesting to notice that what de Halleux says about the *monarchia* of the Father versus essence finds a striking parallel in Maximus. In chapter 4 of the *Capita xv*, Maximus writes: 'One God, [is] Father, the begetter of one Son and the source of one Spirit; Monad without confusion and Triad without division; Mind without beginning, the only begetter *by essence* of the only Logos without beginning, and the source of the only everlasting Life, that is, of the Holy Spirit.'[35] But in the immediately following chapter, he states: 'God [is] one, for there is one godhead, a Monad without beginning, simple, beyond being, without parts and undivided.'[36] In the former Maximus would appear to be more of a personalist and in the latter more of an essentialist. But, as de Halleux emphasizes, these terms are not applicable to patristic theology.

Maximus professes the *monarchia* of the Father without being allergic to the language of essence. The doctrine of the Father's monarchy is in no way opposed to that of the one essence or, indeed, vice versa. In God there is unity 'for there is one godhead', the only source of which, that is the μόνη ἀρχή, is the Father. 'The Father's οὐσία is the ἀρχή of the Son' and of the Spirit.[37] Essence and person are distinguished from but not opposed to each other.

[34] 'A ceux qui interprètent la théologie cappadocienne comme une ontologie existentielle et communionnelle, allergique au langage de l'essence, il faut rappeler que Basile et les deux Grégoire parlaient de l'ousie et du consubstantiel aussi volontiers que des hypostases et de la "monarchie" du Père, et que ce qu'ils designaient par le terme de *koinônia* intradivine était la nature commune, et non des relations dialogales interpersonnelles' (Ibid. 265).

[35] *Cap. xv* 4 (PG 90), 1180A.

[36] *Cap. xv* 5 (PG 90), 1180A. Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or*. 31. 14 (SC 250), 302.

[37] Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd and rev. edn. 2000; first published 1994), 174.

The question of the *filioque* in relation to Maximus is one which would require a special study. Here we can only say that Maximus was not an advocate of the *filioque*-clause understood as double-procession, which he explicitly rejects (PG 91, 136AB). He only defended what he saw as the contemporary Roman position in accordance with

The universal, the common essence, never stands alone, of course. As St Basil says, 'we must add the particular to the universal and thus confess the faith. The godhead is universal, the paternity particular, and combining these we should say: "I believe in God the Father".'[38] Or as Gregory Nazianzen puts it: 'The godhead is one in the three, and the three are one, in whom the godhead is, or, to speak more accurately, who *are* the godhead.'[39] Or again St Maximus:

> Neither is the Son Father, but he is *what* the Father is, nor is the Spirit Son, but he is *what* the Son is; for the Son is all that the Father is, apart from unbegottenness, since he is begotten; and the Holy Spirit is all that the Son is, apart from begottenness, since he proceeds; while the unbegottenness, begottenness and procession do not sever the one nature and power of the inexpressible godhead into three unequal or equal essences or natures, but characterize the persons or hypostases, in which or which the one godhead (i.e. the essence and nature) is.[40]

which this expression (not yet included in the creed) meant that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *through* the Son, which in turn implied the consubstantiality of the three divine persons. This does not mean that Maximus regarded as *unorthodox* those who did not speak in terms of *filioque*—as this would have included himself, too—but that he saw how this expression could admit of an orthodox interpretation, as well as of an unorthodox one (cf. *Opusc.* 10, PG 91, 136AB). This explains how the council of Hatfield 679, chaired by Theodore of Tarsus, the (Greek) archbishop of Canterbury who probably knew Maximus, could without any difficulty say in its definiton 'glorificantes Deum Patrem …, et Filium …, et Spiritum Sanctum procedentem ex Patre et Filio inerrabiliter' (Bede, *Hist. eccl.* 4.17, PL 95, 199B).

Cf. *Qu. Thal.* 63 (CCSG 22: 155): 'For just as the Holy Spirit is by nature and in essence the Spirit of God the Father, so is he by nature and in essence the Spirit of the Son, since he proceeds substantially and in an ineffable way from the Father through the begotten Son'; and *Qu. dub.* I. 34, CCSG 10, 151. See also Jean-Claude Larchet, *Maxime le Confesseur: Médiateur entre l'Orient et l'Occident* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1998), 11–75; George C. Berthold, 'Maximus the Confessor and the *Filioque*', *SP* 18/1 (1985), 113–17; Alexander Alexakis, 'The *Epistula ad Marinum Cypri Presbyterum* of Maximos the Confessor (*CPG* 7697.10) Revisited: A Few Remarks on its Meaning and its History', *BZ* 94/2 (2001), 545–54; Michael Lapidge, 'The Career of Archbishop Theodore', in id. (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on his Life and Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 24; and in the same volume, Henry Chadwick, 'Theodore, the English Church and the Monothelite Controversy', 88–95.

[38] *Ep.* 236 (Deferrari 3), 402.

[39] *Or.* 39. 11 (SC 358), 172. See also Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1957; original French edition 1944), 52–3.

[40] *Ep.* 15 (PG 91), 549D–552A.

5

Knowing the Trinity

So far we have been discussing issues that are related to theological formulations and ideas. The bulk of Maximus' work, however, is concerned with spiritual life and the knowledge of God, and so in this chapter we shall develop themes that can shed some light on the way in which the principle of simultaneous union and distinction, within the context of Maximus' theology of Monad-in-Triad, is reflected in his understanding of the spiritual life.

MOVING FROM THE MONAD TO THE TRIAD

In his exegesis of two difficult passages of St Gregory Nazianzen[1]—passages which appear to suggest that there is movement involved in the eternal mode of existence of the Trinity, something entirely incongruous with a theology that regards movement as a central feature of creatureliness—Maximus leads us into his theological epistemology.

The texts in question are these:

Oration 29. 2

For this reason the Monad having from the beginning moved into the dyad stopped in the Triad.[2]

[1] Maximus discusses these passages in four texts: *Ambig.* 1 (CCSG 48), 6–7; *Ambig.* 23 (PG 91), 1257C–1261A; *Qu. dub.* 105 (CCSG 10), 79–80; and *Ep. sec. Th.* (CCSG 48) 40–1. For a discussion see Andrew Louth, 'St Gregory the Theologian and St Maximus the Confessor: The Shaping of Tradition', in S. Coakley and D. A. Pailin (eds.), *The Making and Remaking of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honour of Maurice Wiles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 117–30; and Redovics, 'Gregory', 250–6.

[2] *Or.* 29. 2: 13–14 (SC 250), 180.

Oration 23. 8

[I honour] a perfect Triad out of three perfect [hypostases]; the Monad has moved on account of richness, dyad has been transcended on account of matter and form (out of which also bodies are made), and the Triad has been defined on account of its perfection; for the first transcends the composition of dyad, …[3]

Undoubtedly, the texts refer to the Trinity in itself, and clearly 'movement' has a part to play here. But the question is, what is that part? 'Movement' in Maximus' understanding belongs exclusively to the realm of the created. 'Everything that by nature is moving,' he says, 'necessarily moves for the reason of a cause; and everything that moves for the reason of a cause, necessarily also exists because of a cause.'[4] And he makes it plain that movement has no place in the godhead as such: 'If what is without cause is certainly without movement, then the divine is without movement, as having no cause of being at all, but being rather the cause of all beings.'[5]

He then suggests three different ways in which movement can be taken in relation to God. The godhead is said to move:

1. as the *cause* which makes us move towards knowing it;
2. on account of those who move towards it;[6]
3. on account of his gradual revelation as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Speaking of God as the cause of movement Maximus first elaborates Dionysius' idea of God as Desire and Love and says that God 'moves (κινεῖται) by installing an inward relation of desire and love in those who are receptive of them; and he moves (κινεῖ) as attracting by nature the desire of those who move towards him.'[7] In short: 'He moves and is moved as thirsting to be thirsted, and as desiring to be desired, and as loving to be loved.'[8]

What is significant here is that it is God himself who first installs an inward disposition in us. He, as it were, creeps into our being to make

[3] *Or.* 23.8: 8–13 (SC 270), 298. [4] *Ambig.* 23 (PG 91), 1257C.
[5] Ibid. 1260A. [6] Cf. *Qu. dub.* 105: 15–17 (CCSG 10), 79.
[7] Note that the first form of the verb 'moves' (κινεῖται) is intransitive and middle, and the second (κινεῖ) is transitive and active.
[8] *Ambig.* 23 (PG 91), 1260C.

us move towards knowing him, and it is his desire that we do so. Yet, it is we who have to make the move. We move in relation to God rather than God in relation to us. We move as we deepen our knowledge in God; and yet God enables this movement. This, then, is the first way in which God can be said to 'move'.

God first illumines us of the fact *that* he exists. (Maximus maintains that 'to think of God without illumination is an impossibility.')[9] 'The godhead moved itself *in us* so that we might know that there is a certain cause of all.'[10] Once we have become aware of the fact *that* God is, he then helps us to move on to find out *how* he subsists. Thus, here we have the second kind of movement which is our 'epistemological motion' from 'that' to 'how', from *logos* to *tropos* in the Divine Being. For this move, from 'that' to 'how', God gives us 'devout starting-points'[11] which we may discover through the contemplation of nature, reflection on creation, and which in turn will make it possible for us to reflect on God as Trinity.[12]

The third kind of movement in relation to God is his gradual revelation as Trinity in history. Gregory himself advances this idea in the fifth *Theological Oration* where he says: 'The Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly, and the Son more obscurely. The New Testament manifested the Son, and suggested the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit himself dwells among us, and supplies us with a clearer demonstration of himself.'[13] The goal of this gradual revelation is, Maximus says, 'to lead those who are being taught to worship the perfect Triad in perfect Monad, that is, to worship one essence, divinity, power and operation in three hypostases.'[14]

THE WAY TO THE VISION

The person's movement towards worshipping the true God, the Monad-in-Triad, and his union with God, becomes more accentuated

[9] Ibid. 1260D–1261A.
[10] *Qu. dub.* 105: 18–19 (CCSG 10), 79.
[11] Ibid. 105: 14 (CCSG 10), 79.
[12] Cf. Ibid. 136 (CCSG 10), 97.
[13] *Or.* 31. 26: 4–7 (SC 250), 326.
[14] *Ambig.* 23 (PG 91, 1261A).

in Maximus' reflection on Scripture and scriptural personages, on Abraham in particular. Illuminating are also his interpretations of the passages where God speaks in the first person plural (the creation of Adam, the condemnation of Adam, the tower of Babel),[15] or where he appears in a threefold form (hospitality of Abraham).[16] All of these cases Maximus discusses in *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 28. Again we shall see how union and distinction characterize truth and holiness, whereas separation and confusion are the distinguishing marks of their opposites.

There is a kind of gradation of the knowledge of God, and the different levels are shown by God through the Scriptures. In *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 28, the lower levels are occupied by the builders of the tower of Babel (polytheists) and the summit is reserved for Abraham (Trinitarian monotheist). Maximus' main hermeneutical principle here is that 'the holy Scripture moulds God in accordance with the underlying condition of those for whom he cares in his providence' and that 'accordingly, God is multiplied or unified in scriptural formulations in accordance with the underlying cause'.[17]

This means that in the case of the tower of Babel when God says *Come, let us go down, and confuse their tongues,* he, through the scriptural formulation, wants to show that the builders of the tower had fallen into polytheism.

> And since they placed together the *logoi* of each belief, like some bricks, and built, as it were a tower, their polytheist godlessness, reasonably then God, who disbanding the agreement of the evil concordance of the people who had been led astray, calls himself in the plural on account of the condition of those who were the object of [his] providence; a condition fragmented and split into innumerable beliefs. By so doing God showed that while he was one, he had been divided into many parts in them.[18]

[15] Gen. 1: 26, Gen. 3: 22, and Gen. 11: 7 respectively. [16] Gen. 18: 2.

[17] *Qu. Thal.* 28: 4–6, 39–41 (CCSG 7), 203–5. And: 'In the same way in each place where Scripture moulds God in divers manners, if you carefully and with understanding examine the words, you will discover that the reason for the considerable variation of the divine images lies within the state of those who are the object of providence' (*Qu. Thal.* 28: 22–5, CCSG 7, 203).

[18] Ibid. 28: 30–7 (CCSG 7), 203–5.

Here untruth fragments the one God, and God communicates this through Scripture by speaking in the plural. When, on the other hand, the underlying condition of those in question is good and holy, then Scripture refers 'to the most holy three hypostases mystically indicating the mode of existence of the most holy and beginningless Monad, since according to its essence the most sacred and worshipful Triad of hypostases is Monad.'[19] This clearly is the case with Abraham receiving the visitation of three angels.[20]

The Missing Angel

Later in the narrative where Abraham receives this visitation, the angels appeared also to Lot. Lot, however, saw only two angels,[21] which then raises the question of the missing angel; a question posed in *Quaestiones et dubia* 39.[22] To address this issue we need to go back to the question of movement from Monad to Triad. And to be more precise, we need to consider the middle term 'dyad', and the two angels seen by Lot. In his oration *For Peace*, quoted above, St Gregory says that 'dyad has been transcended on account of matter and form—out of which also bodies are made'.[23] Maximus highlights the idea that 'dyad' in the first place is associated with composition, material things, and, in general, things perceived through the senses. 'Dyad' represents the phenomenal world, something that must be transcended if the intelligible or the divine realms are to be reached.

Lot with his vision of the two angels represents the person who has not transcended the dyad; hence the two angels. He is someone who is still spiritually immature and has no capacity to pass beyond the phenomena. Maximus explains:

[19] Ibid. 28: 59–62 (CCSG 7), 205.

[20] Gen. 18: 2–33. See also the article of Lars Thunberg, 'Early Christian Interpretations of the Three Angels in Gen. 18', *SP* 7 (TU 92, 1966), 560–70.

[21] Gen. 19: 1–26.

[22] *Qu. dub.* 39: 1–2 (CCSG 10), 32.

[23] *Or.* 23. 8 (SC 270), 298; and Maximus, *Qu. dub.* 105 (CCSG 10), 79.

In the case of Lot, who had not yet rendered his mind pure of the composition of bodies but was still attached to their generation from matter and form believing that God was the fashioner of the visible creation only, there God appeared as two (dually), not as three (triadically). He, thus, showed in the things through which he shaped himself, that Lot had not yet detached his ascending mind from matter and form.[24]

Maximus does not see Lot altogether negatively, however. Lot's mind *is* ascending, and even though his mind was still attached to matter and form (the dyad) and although his mind was at the level of contemplating the created order without reaching beyond this 'dyad', he nevertheless 'venerated the *divine* from visible things'.[25] Moreover, it was God who appeared to Lot, signified by the two angels. Their duality was the symbol of his venerating God as the creator of the visible creation; but that only. To come to the level of *theologia*, to reach the knowledge of Monad-in-Triad and to become 'another Abraham',[26] one has to leave all that behind, not because it is bad in itself but because it is something sequent to God rather than God himself.

But before we reach that point, let us consider one more text which has to do with the dyad and the Triad. In *Ambiguum* 10, Maximus interprets a passage from Gregory in which the Nazianzen speaks of the saints' passing through matter and the fleshly, becoming united to the divine light and, finally, being deified. This, Gregory says, 'is granted to those who genuinely live the philosophical life and transcend the material dyad for the sake of the unity the mind perceives in the Trinity.'[27] Here 'dyad', as Maximus interprets it throughout this long *Ambiguum*, stands not simply for what is perceived through the senses, but it also stands for the two passionate parts of the soul, that is the desiring and the incensive parts, as well as for their negative and distorted aspects: attachment to the senses, passions, and actual sin.

What the saints, including Abraham, have done, is that

they have set aside the relationship of the soul to the flesh, and through the flesh to matter, or—to put it more generally—they have put off the natural conformity of sensible being with what can be perceived through the senses

[24] *Qu. Thal.* 28: 15–21 (CCSG 7), 203.
[25] *Qu. dub.* 39: 9–10 (CCSG 10), 32.
[26] *Ambig.* 10. 21 (PG 91), 1148A.
[27] *Or.* 21. 2 (PG 35), 1084C.

and genuinely acquired a desire for God alone, on account, as I said, of the unity the mind perceives in the Trinity.[28]

Similarly, then, he who emulates Abraham in this respect, 'he who through ascetic struggle overthrows the flesh, sense and the world, through which the relationship of the mind to the intelligible is dissolved, and by his mind alone through love comes to know God: such a one is another Abraham.'[29] Thus, breaking away from the flesh, the passions, and the senses themselves he will liberate the intellect from being fragmented by the multiplicity of the sensible reality. It becomes in this way unified and able to reflect the unity perceived in the Trinity. Abraham's vision of God in the form of three men conversing with him as one shows not only Abraham's spiritual perfection but also that anyone who reaches such detachment and purity will know God as Monad and Triad. Here the simultaneity of unity and distinction becomes a conspicuous feature of Abraham's theological insight.

Thus, when he appeared to Abraham, who was perfect in knowledge and had completely detached his mind from matter and its impressions, God taught him that the immaterial word (*logos*) concerning the Triad is *in* the word (*logos*) concerning the Monad. And it was for this reason that God then appeared as three and conversed as one.[30]

THE IMAGE OF THE ARCHETYPE

But there is more to it. With Abraham we arrive at the final stage of knowing the Trinity: *theologia*. Maximus, clearly drawing on Evagrius, calls this state the state of 'pure prayer' or 'undistracted prayer'.[31] This is a state in which the mind, completely detached from 'matter and its impressions', desires God alone and is wholly united to him alone.[32] It is a state in which 'the mind is rapt by the divine and infinite light, and

[28] *Ambig.* 10. 43 (PG 91), 1193D; translation in Louth, *Maximus*, 147.
[29] *Ambig.* 10. 21 (PG 91), 1145D–1148A; translation in Louth, *Maximus*, 120.
[30] *Qu. Thal.* 28: 10–15 (CCSG 7), 203.
[31] *Carit.* II. 4 (PG 90), 985A: 'undistracted prayer'; II. 6 (PG 90), 985AB: 'pure prayer'. See also M. Viller, 'Aux sources de la spiritualité de S. Maxime: les oeuvres d'Évagre le Pontique', *RAM* 11 (1930), 250–1, 253.
[32] Cf. Ch. 14, here below.

is conscious neither of itself nor of any other creature at all, save only of him who through charity effects such brightness in it.'[33]

The mind, when it knows things, somehow reflects them in its being; it is conformed to them. Knowledge of the Trinity has a similar effect. 'In contemplating him who is simple, it becomes simple …'[34] God's unity becomes manifest in the soul, but also its triadic structure as mind, reason, and spirit becomes a vehicle of understanding the Trinity.

The unification of the soul, its union with God, its knowledge of God as Unity, and its conformity to this unity, are all reciprocally bound together. The more one detaches one's mind from the multiplicity of the material world, the more the soul becomes unified; and becoming more unified it is drawn closer to God. In this way, the mind's knowledge increases and it is conformed to the object of its knowledge. Presenting Abraham as the example, Maximus takes the addition of the letter alpha to his name (from Ἄβραμ to Ἀβραάμ) as a symbol of such state.[35]

> By faith he was mystically assimilated to the *logos* concerning the Monad, according to which he became unified, … magnificently and wholly drawn up alone to God alone, bearing on him no imprint of knowledge of any scattered things, which shows the power of the letter alpha given as an addition to his name.[36]

The same idea is behind the *Centuries on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation* II. 8 in which Maximus speaks of the knowledge of the divine Monad.[37] A succession of detachments enables the person to

[33] *Carit.* II. 6 (PG 90), 985B. It must be noted that Maximus speaks of two states of pure prayer in this chapter: the one concerns those of the active life, the other those of the contemplative. Our quotation refers to the latter.

[34] *Carit.* III. 97 (PG 90), 1045D.

[35] Cf. Gen. 17: 5. The letter alpha is number one (1) in Greek arithmetic. Hence the allusion to the One, the Only One etc. reminiscent of Plotinus' *Enn.* VI. 9. Note also that the word μονάς (= monad) derives from the word μόνος (= the only one).

[36] *Ambig.* 10. 45 (PG 91), 1200B.

[37] See also *Cap. theol.* II. 16, PG 90, 1132BC: 'He who to some degree has been initiated into the *logos* of the Monad, invariably discovers the *logoi* of divine providence and judgement conjoined with it. That is why, like St Peter, he thinks it good that three tabernacles should be made within himself for those who have appeared to him. These tabernacles represent three stages of salvation, namely that of virtue, that of spiritual knowledge and that of theology.' In his commentary on this chapter, Hans Urs von Balthasar points out that the origin of the triad Monad–providence–judgement was developed by Evagrius and that in his understanding the term *monas* meant 'the primordial unity of all creatures in God' (*Kosmische Liturgie,* 521). Gabriel Bunge has discussed this notion in Evagrius. See his 'Hénade ou monade? Au sujet de deux notions centrales de la terminologie évagrienne', *Le Muséon*, 102 (1989), 69–91.

overcome his inner division and in this way gain wholeness, reaching in the end the knowledge of the divine Unity itself.

> If you are healed of the breach caused by the transgression, you are severed first from the passions and then from impassioned thoughts. Next you are severed from nature and the inner principles of nature, then conceptual images and the knowledge relating to them. Lastly, when you have passed through the manifold *logoi* relating to divine providence, you attain through unknowing the very *logos* of the divine Monad. By this *logos* the intellect, noticing its own immutability, rejoices with an unspeakable joy because it has received the peace of God which transcends all intellect and which ceaselessly keeps him who has been granted it from falling.[38]

The person who has attained the knowledge of the Monad also reflects and contemplates the Triad in his own soul. He, in fact, becomes able to see the mystery of the three-in-one, of Triad in Monad, in his own being. The trinitarian image in man Maximus sees in the soul's being a unity of mind, reason, and spirit (*νοῦς*, *λόγος*, *πνεῦμα*),[39] a triad which can be found also, for example, in Gregory Nazianzen, Symeon the New Theologian, and Gregory Palamas.[40] Of course, mind, reason, and spirit are always there by nature, and there is therefore a natural analogy between the Trinity and the human soul: 'We determined the Son and Logos of God as wisdom [and] the Holy Spirit as life, since also our soul, which was created after the image of God, is beheld in those three, that is, in mind, in reason and in spirit.'[41]

But seeing oneself in the *likeness* of God requires the unification of the soul and its union with God. The soul has in its nature a capacity to be united to God through the mind—which is the fundamental meaning of the 'image'. But being actually united to God, requires a free response aimed at fulfilling that which according to God's precepts is to be in his likeness—and being in his likeness ultimately means being

[38] *Cap. theol.* II. 8 (PG 90), 1128CD.

[39] See *Qu. Thal.* 32 (CCSG 7), 225; *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1088A; *Ambig.* 10. 43 (PG 91), 1196A; *Qu. dub.* 105 (CCSG 10), 79–80; and *Or. dom.*: 436–8 (CCSG 23), 52–3. See also *Qu. Thal.* 25 (CCSG 7), 161–3.

[40] Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 23. 11 (SC 270), 320; Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymns* 44 (SC 196), 70 ff.; Gregory Palamas, *Capita CL* 40 (Sinkewicz), 126–8.

[41] *Qu. dub.* 105: 22–6 (CCSG 10), 79–80.

transfused by his light, making God visible through one's transfigured being and actions.[42]

This precisely was the state of the saints of whom Maximus spoke in *Ambiguum* 10. Being united to God, they reflected the archetype and came to be in the likeness of the Monad-in-Triad: the simultaneous unity and distinction that is in the Monad-in-Triad now becomes their own reality.

> For since they knew that the soul is a middle being between God and matter, and has powers that can unite it with both—that is, it has a mind that links it with God and senses that link it with matter—they for that reason have completely shaken off the senses and everything perceived through them by means of the activity that relates and inclines it to them, and by the mind they have ineffably assimilated their soul to God and in it, being wholly united to the whole God in a marvellous manner possessing the image of the archetype according to the likeness in mind and reason and spirit, they beheld the resemblance so far as possible, and were mystically taught the unity understood in the Trinity.[43]

With this we have come to the end of our section on the Trinity. As we have seen, the principle of simultaneous union and distinction becomes most conspicuous in Maximus' interpretation of the Eucharistic liturgy, the *Mystagogia*. God who is worshipped in the liturgy is 'both Monad and Triad, possessing union uncompounded and without confusion, and possessing distinction undivided and without parts.'[44] This Monad-in-Triad is reflected in the human being, the image of the Trinity, and the ultimate assimilation of the human person to the One-in-Three is fulfilled when the image is wholly penetrated by the archetype in a simultaneous union and distinction of God and man in the deified human person.

[42] 'In the beginning humanity was created in the image of God in order to be perpetually born by the Spirit in the exercise of free choice, and to acquire the additional gift of assimilation to God by keeping the divine commandment, such that man, as fashioned from God by nature, might become son of God and divine by grace through the Spirit' (*Ambig*. 42, PG 91, 1345D; translation in Blowers and Wilken, *Cosmic Mystery*, 93).

[43] *Ambig*. 10. 43 (PG 91), 1193D–1196A; translation in Louth, *Maximus*, 147.

[44] *My st*. 23 (Soteropoulos), 216: 22–3 [= PG 91, 700D].

Part III

Christ

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6

Nature, Difference, and Number

Moving on to Christology now, we shall begin this section with a brief sketch of the historical background against which Maximus wrote his main polemical works. As the events evolved in the course of the seventh century, they gave a certain pattern to the unfolding of Maximus' Christological thought, too. Maximus had to respond first to the Severan theology of Christ's one (composite) nature,[1] then to the imperial doctrine of the one activity in Christ and, later on, to the doctrine of one will. There is a sequence from nature, to natural activity and natural will—the sequence we shall follow in the next three chapters. The principle of simultaneous union and distiction is almost self-explanatory here. In each case, Maximus defends the integrity of the natures and their operations and wills, all of which in an inseparable and unconfused union make up the one Christ, the Logos incarnate.

THE HISTORICAL SETTING

The council of Chalcedon 451 and its aftermath had left the Byzantine Empire fragmented.[2] This fragmentation continued to harass its political and religious life into the seventh century and beyond. Unity was desperately needed not least for reasons of defence as there was

[1] That the Severan community was still a living presence in the Greek-speaking world, see *Ep.* 12 (PG 91), 460A–465D; *Ep.* 18 (PG 91), 584D–585A; and *Opusc.* 3 (PG 91), 49C–52B.

[2] On the aftermath of Chalcedon, see Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. ii, part 1, trans. P. Allen and J. Cawte (London: Mowbray, 1987; original German edition 1985).

strong pressure coming from various directions and peoples: from the Persians in the east, the Avars and the Slavs in the north, and from the 630s onwards, from the Arabs in the southern regions of the empire. Egypt, for example, was the main source of cheap grain for the Byzantines—essential part of the empire's revenue which allowed them to sustain an army of reasonable size—and losing Egypt would have had (and eventually did have) fatal consequences.[3]

But on both sides of Chalcedon people were convinced of their own orthodoxy and of the heresy of their opponents. The Chalcedonians knew that the Severans confused the two natures of Christ, and the Severans had no doubt of their opponents' separating the natures and, therefore, leaning towards the heresy of Nestorius. Both claimed the authority of the Fathers, especially that of St Cyril of Alexandria, and both were certain of the correctness of their own interpretation.

How, then, could unity in Christ be understood correctly? And correctly in such a way as could be accepted by both sides? This was the question which awaited an answer. Such an answer, if successful, would unite the divided Christians and, by the same token, the empire.

For the Chalcedonian party Christ was *one* according to hypostasis and *two* according to nature. He was the Son and Logos of God, one of the Trinity, consubstantial with the Father according to his divinity and consubstantial with us according to his humanity. The Severans, for their part, could also see Christ's double consubstantiality but they could not admit two natures in him—St Cyril had said that there was *one* nature: "the one incarnate nature of God the Word"; and there was no arguing about that. This one nature was for Severus a "composite nature",[4] an expression which could accommodate natural diversity in Christ—so at least the Severans believed. For them there seemed to be no clear distinction between hypostasis and nature in the *oikonomia*. Thus accepting two natures meant automatically accepting two hypostases, which was the heresy of Nestorius.

There was no way out. In the sixth century, Justinian had tried to persuade the Severans to believe that the Chalcedonians were not Nestorian by condemning not only Nestorius himself, but also the

[3] See e.g. John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, rev. edn. 1997; first published 1990), 9–12.

[4] See Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. ii, part 2, 126–8 and 159–60.

so-called Three Chapters: Theodore of Mopsuestia, some works of Theodoret of Cyrus, and a Letter of Ibas the Persian.[5] He also made it explicit that Christ was 'one of the Trinity', that he was one hypostasis, the Son and Logos of God made flesh.[6] The Severans were not persuaded, and the situation remained pending.

In the seventh century, as Heraclius came to restore the empire after the rather unsuccessful rule of Phocas,[7] he, too, attempted to unite the divided Christians.[8] He did so by inaugurating new ways of looking at the problem. His first attempt was based on the idea that Christ had only one activity,[9] a "theandric" activity. This idea had already been expressed a century earlier by Severus himself[10] (drawing on, or rather misinterpreting, the fourth *Letter* of Dionysius the Areopagite) and later by the lesser-known Theodore of Pharan. When in 633 in Egypt, under the auspices of Heraclius, Cyrus of Phasis and Sergius of Constantinople drew up the Pact of Union[11] based on the doctrine of Christ's one activity, it was embraced by both sides. The long desired union was, quite suddenly, obtained. Even the pope of Rome Honorius approved of the union—and was condemned for this reason as a heretic in the Council of Constantinople in 681.

To the chagrin of the emperor and the patriarch, the monk Sophronius (the future patriarch of Jerusalem) happened to be in Alexandria when Cyrus released the *Nine Chapters*. Sophronius examined the document and, criticizing the phrase 'one activity',[12] he insisted on the necessity of the doctrine of two activities in Christ. Patriarch Sergius relates:

[5] See John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church 450–680 A.D.* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 235–45.

[6] See Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. ii, part 2, 338–43.

[7] See Mark Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium: 600–1025* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), 69–75.

[8] For a more detailed account see Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, 333–73. A chronologically arranged list of sources can be found in Freidhelm Winkelmann, 'Die Quellen zur Erforschung des monenergetisch-monothelitischen Streites', *Klio*, 69 (1987/2), 515–59.

[9] ἐνέργεια, also operation or energy.

[10] See his *Ep. 3 ad Johannem ducem*, in *Doctrina patrum* 41. 24 (Diekamp), 309; and Grillmeier, *Christ,* vol. ii, part 2, 170.

[11] The document is known as the *Nine Chapters* of Cyrus and its official title is *Satisfactio facta inter Cyrum et eos qui erant ex parte Theodosianorum* (*CPG* 7613). The text can be found in ACO ser. 2, vol. ii, part 2, 594: 17–600: 20.

[12] *Satisf.* 7 (ACO ser. 2, vol. ii, part 2), 598: 21.

With Cyrus, Sophronius examined the issues of these chapters, opposed and contradicted the chapter on the one activity, demanding that in every case one must teach the doctrine of two activities in Christ our God. … Cyrus asserted that since at the present time too the salvation of so many thousands of people was at stake, it was imperative not to contend argumentatively at all on the subject of that chapter because, as was already said, an expression of this kind was also uttered by certain inspired Fathers, and the rationale of orthodoxy had not suffered from it at all. The aforementioned Sophronius, dear to God, in no way accepted this arrangement.[13]

This meeting set the whole Monenergist controversy in motion. In the sequel, Sophronius went to Constantinople to see Sergius and demanded the notorious phrase to be removed from the document. It was a serious blow to the patriarch and he was obviously devastated. The pain and disappointment he felt come through in his letter to the pope:

We [Sergius] thought that this was harsh. How was it not harsh and exceedingly onerous when it was going to dissolve and destroy that whole excellent concord and unity which had come about in Alexandria, and in all her provinces, which at no stage up to the present had accepted even the name of our blessed and renowned father Leo or had made mention of the holy, great, ecumenical council of Chalcedon, while now with clear, loud voice they were proclaiming it in the holy mysteries?[14]

Soon the issue developed into a flaring controversy. Unity in the empire began to splinter. To stop the development, first, Patriarch Sergius published already the same year (633) the so-called *Psephos*[15] and half a decade later, in 638, Heraclius released his famous *Ecthesis*,[16] both of which forbade any discussion of either one or two activities.[17] The *Ecthesis* states:

The expression 'one activity', even if uttered by certain Fathers, nevertheless alienated and confused some who heard it, who supposed that it would lead to

[13] *Copy of the Letter of Sergius of Constantinople to Honorius, Pope of Rome* (ACO ser. 2, vol. ii, part 2), 538: 8–14; 538: 18–540: 3; unpublished translation, cited by kind permission of Pauline Allen.

[14] *Copy of the Letter of Sergius of Constantinople to Honorius, Pope of Rome* (ACO ser. 2, vol. ii, part 2), 540: 7–13; Allen's translation.

[15] See Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, 348–56.

[16] For the text of *Ecthesis* see ACO ser. 2, vol. i, 156: 20–162: 13.

[17] A similar imperial compromise policy was executed twenty years after Chalcedon with the publication of the *Henoticon*. See Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. ii, part 1, 247–88.

the destruction of the two natures which were hypostatically united in Christ our God. In a similar way the expression 'two activities' scandalized many, on the grounds that it had been uttered by none of the holy and approved spiritual leaders of the Church, but to follow it was to profess two wills at variance with one another, such that God the Word wished to fulfil the salutary suffering but his humanity resisted his will and was opposed to it, and as a result two persons with conflicting wills were introduced, which is impious and foreign to Christian teaching.[18]

With these lines the *Ecthesis* not only forbade any discussion of the activities but it also introduced the idea of one *will* into the discussions. Gradually new people became involved in the controversy, such as Pyrrhus (later the patriarch of Constantinople) in the imperial party, and most notably Maximus the Confessor and the pope of Rome, Martin I, in the opposition.

At one stage Maximus managed to convince Pyrrhus of the errors of the *Ecthesis* in a public debate in Carthage in 645, but only for a time.[19] When things had developed dangerously far and Monothelitism had already become the content of the imperial policy in the form of a document entitled the *Typos* (648), Martin convoked a council in Rome, at the Lateran (649). The council condemned Monenergism and Monothelitism along with their ecclesiastical promoters: Theodore of Pharan, Cyrus of Alexandria, and the patriarchs of Constantinople Sergius (610–38), Pyrrhus (638–41), and Paul (641–53).

Such a move could only ignite the rage of the emperor, the end result being that Martin and Maximus (along with his disciples) were brought to trial in Constantinople and sent into exile as heretics and traitors to the empire.[20] (In Maximus' eyes the Monothelites were

[18] *Ecthesis* (ACO ser. 2, vol. i), 160: 10–19; Allen's translation.

[19] Pyrrhus had been deposed from the patriarchal see four years earlier, and it may be that he was hoping to gain a position in Carthage where the debate took place under the auspices of the exarch of Carthage, George. Soon after the debate and the 'conversion' of Pyrrhus, George organized a rebellion. But when in 647 the exarch died in a battle against the Arabs, 'Pyrrhus—who had been anathematized by Paul following his rejection of Monothelitism …—now changed his position once more, returned to Monothelitism and claimed that his "conversion" had been obtained by duress' (Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 307).

[20] For a possible connection with the rebellion of the exarch of Carthage see Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 305–7.

traitors to God.)[21] Both died in exile, Martin in 655 in Cherson in the Crimea and Maximus in 662 in Lazica.

The unity, which the emperors—first Heraclius (610–41), then Constans II (641–68)—hoped to achieve, did not eventuate and is still waiting to be achieved to this day. Heraclius, in fact, a few months before his death admitted that the *Ecthesis* had been a failure and washed his hands of it by attributing its authorship to Patriarch Sergius; an action which Maximus acknowledged and recommended to Constans, too.[22]

The Chalcedonian side cleared the muddle the controversy had created only two decades later in the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680–1.[23] The heretics were condemned and the doctrine of the two natural activities and wills in the one Christ was established, but the men who gave their lives for it, Maximus and Martin, were hardly mentioned in the proceedings of the council; there is only one reference to Martin as the pope who convoked the Lateran Council 649, none to Maximus.[24]

NATURAL DIFFERENCE AND NUMBER

Such then in broad lines is the historical setting within which Maximus produced his Christology.[25] As for the theological setting, for Maximus, what is logically and conceptually true of the Trinity must also be true of Christ, since he is one of the Trinity. In other words, just as with the Trinity, so also with Christ, the distinction between the universal and the particular is fundamental. In the *oikonomia* this is mainly expressed by the terms nature (φύσις) and hypostasis respectively. The Monophysites[26] rejected this distinction in the *oikonomia*

[21] *Opusc.* 7 (PG 91), 72C–73B.

[22] See *Rel. mot.* (CCSG 39), 41; and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 302.

[23] A remnant of Monothelites that survived became known as the Maronites. See the entry 'Maronites' in the *ODCC*, 1040–1.

[24] See ACO ser. 2, vol. ii, part 1, 130.

[25] A detailed discussion on Maximus and the Monothelite controversy can now be found in the recent study of Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[26] When I here use the term 'Monophysite', I mean those who say that Christ (i.e. the Logos with his assumed humanity after the union) is, or has, one *physis* (albeit a composite *physis*).

on account that Christ had 'renewed the natures'—a position against which Leontius of Byzantium had argued already one century earlier, insisting on the necessity of the distinction.[27] By making the distinction the Chalcedonian theologians were able to confess both unity and difference in the Trinity and in Christ with clarity and coherence. This is how Maximus sees it:

> Just as with respect to the Holy Trinity difference and union are not expressed by the same words, but difference is confessed by declaring three hypostases and union by confessing one essence, so also with respect to the One of the Trinity; difference is confessed through acknowledging the two natures and union is confessed through proclaiming one composite hypostasis.[28]

In Chalcedonian theology, then, the universal and the particular in Christ are considered in the reverse order with respect to how they are in the Trinity. In Christ, there is difference at the level of the universal and unity at the level of the particular, whereas in the Trinity, unity is at the level of the universal and difference at the level of the particular. Already Gregory Nazianzen in the fourth century spoke of *allo* and *allo* when referring to the diversity in Christ.[29] In Chalcedonian Christology, this is expressed by attributing hypostasis or person to the particular and nature to the universal. Thus one (composite) hypostasis is considered in two natures.

In Severan Christology, which makes no clear distinction between the universal and the particular in the *oikonomia*, it is not possible to speak of two natures as this would necessarily involve two hypostases.

[27] Brian Daley has made the following observations with regard to this issue: 'He [Leontius] insists, throughout his works … on clear definition and the consistent use of terms, tracing the origin of the major Trinitarian and Christological heresies to confusion about the difference between ὑπόστασις and οὐσία, 'person' (πρόσωπον) and nature (φύσις), and refusing to accept the argument of the Severan party that the very "newness" of the Incarnation justifies a new and singular use of terminology. All language about God, he admits, is equally inadequate; yet if the terms we use in speaking about the Trinity are not consistent in their meaning with those we use for the Incarnate Word and even for the subjects of our everyday discourse, all our argument about either is "a reduction to absurdity rather than a demonstration"' ('"A Richer Union": Leontius of Byzantium and the Relationship of Human and Divine in Christ', *SP* 24 (1993), 245–6).

[28] *Opusc.* 13. 3 (PG 91), 148A.

[29] See *Ep.* 101. 21 (SC 208), 44–6. Gregory also speaks of φύσεις in this sense in *Ep.* 101. 19 (SC 208), 44.

Instead, Severus speaks of one composite nature and one composite hypostasis. Severus accepts, as genuinely Cyrillian, Christ's double consubstantiality, as well as natural difference in Christ, and much of post-Chalcedonian two-nature Christology challenges Severus at this particular point.[30] Often, as also the present-day dialogue has shown, Chalcedonian and Severan Christologies seem to be saying virtually the same thing,[31] and yet, they could never be reconciled.

Here, we shall look into this question through Maximus' lenses. It is sometimes thought that Maximus, and other Chalcedonian theologians such as Leontius of Byzantium or Justinian, were not aware of Severus' actual teaching—i.e. that he spoke of double consubstantiality and natural difference, and that for him *physis* was more or less a synonym for hypostasis—but this is certainly not the case, as we shall see a little later.[32]

Maximus discusses the Severan cause in a series of Christological *Letters* (12–19). I shall take as an example *Letter* 13 filling in some gaps from other texts. In this letter addressed 'to Peter the Illustrious', a governor in North Africa, Maximus spills much ink on explaining why the refusal to confess two natures in Christ is wrong, and why it is necessary to say 'two natures'. According to Maximus, the Severans, while acknowledging the natural difference in Christ after the union, refuse to admit two natures in him in order to avoid splitting him into two Christs. They do this, Maximus says, 'because, it seems, they do not know that every number according to its *logos* neither divides nor is divided, nor produces division or, indeed, union'.[33] Number as such seems to suggest division to the Monophysite mind whereas for Maximus number is simply 'indicative of quantity'.[34] In itself number says nothing about the *relation* the things that are numbered have between themselves. They can be united as well as separated, and in both cases their number remains, provided that their relation does not obliterate them as natures.[35]

[30] See the article of Jean-Claude Larchet, 'La Question christologique: à propos de projet d'union de l'Église Orthodoxe et des Églises non Chalcédoniennes. Problèmes théologiques et ecclésiologiques en suspens', *MO* 134 (2000/2), 56–76.

[31] See ibid. 56–76.

[32] See *Ep*. 12 (PG 91), 492BC; *Ep*. 13 (PG 91), 513C; and *Ep*. 15 (PG 91), 565D–572B.

[33] *Ep*. 13 (PG 91), 513A.

[34] Ibid. cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Eun*. 1. 202 (GNO 1), 851: 14–15.

[35] Cf. Leontius *Cap. Sev*. 8 and 10 (PG 86), 1904BC.

The logic Maximus follows here is that where there is difference, there is also quantity, and quantity can be expressed or acknowledged only through number. That is to say that if there is one 'something' without any kind of differentiation, it is one in every respect and involves no quantity. If however there is difference of some kind, it follows that something is different from another, which in turn involves quantity. This quantity can be expressed only by counting the differentiated elements. They may be natures in the one Christ or colours in a single stone (or flower or an animal), an example Maximus takes to illustrate his point.[36] If, then, one wishes to express the existence of diversity, one has to admit number. If one refuses the number, one then refuses quantity and with it the difference and the things of which the difference is predicated.

Maximus is careful to distinguish between difference and division. The former does not involve the latter but both are independent concepts.

> Difference, on the one hand, is a *logos* according to which the substrata differ one from another, and is indicative of πῶς εἶναι, that is, it is indicative of the flesh being by nature and essence *what* it is; it is indicative of God the Word being by nature and essence *what* it is. Division, on the other hand, is a cut right through which entirely severs the substrata and renders them to be … separate from one another.[37]

In the case of Christ, if one admits difference of some kind in him, it follows, Maximus argues, that 'he cannot be *one* in every respect [lit. according to every *logos* and *tropos*].'[38] Therefore, he must be '*in some respect* at least two, or more'.[39] This again does not mean that he must be two or more in every respect—as he is one hypostasis. Christ is two or more in the respect in which there is difference in him. And if Christ *is* two in some respect, we must confess this. Otherwise we ultimately deprive him of what he is and render him non-existent in our thinking. 'Therefore,' Maximus maintains, 'because they say that there is difference in Christ after the union, they cannot say that Christ is in every respect one after the union.' Maximus gives the Severans two options.

[36] *Ep*. 12 (PG 91), 476A–D. See also Ch. 2: 'Stone and colours', here above.
[37] *Ep*. 12 (PG 91), 469AB; italics mine.
[38] *Ep*. 13 (PG 91), 513D. [39] Ibid. italics mine.

For either, according to them, the natures are not destroyed after the union, and they exist and are preserved, and it is [therefore] fitting to confess them as preserved after the union, or since it is not fitting to confess them preserved after the union, it is not fitting, according to them, either to say that they exist or that they are preserved, and [therefore] the natures are destroyed.

So, either let them stop speaking of the *mere* difference, learning that difference is indicative of the quantity of certain differentiated things, or let them accept the confession of truth with us who in accord with the Fathers devoutly take the number by the *logos* of difference and only in order to make known that the things united have remained without confusion.[40]

Leontius of Byzantium is no less perceptive in his *Capita triginta contra Severum* 5.

If they acknowledge that the things which have come together [remain] unconfused—and the things come together are two also according to them—how is it that they do not recognize the things, which in union are not confounded, [to be] two after the union? And if they do recognize two natures, why do they not confess [this]? And if they do confess, how do they refuse to count them, things of which they recognize the natural properties unconfounded after the union? For, as Saint Basil says, 'what they confess let them also count.'[41]

What is implied here is that the Severans *do* admit natural difference, and consequently, so Leontius and Maximus maintain, they should also admit number. But since they refuse the latter, it logically follows that they also reject the natures and, by the same token, the whole mystery of Christ together with our salvation. So the argument runs.

To the modern reader this kind of argumentation may, perhaps, sound somewhat crude and off-putting, or at least not very ecumenical: there seems to be no middle ground, no space for mutual understanding or dialogue. But in Late Antiquity doctrinal confession was something in which ultimate accuracy was required and the formulae used had to be able to endure every scrutiny. It was all or nothing. And in the latter case a *reductio ad absurdum* would follow the argument. This does not mean that the opponent was necessarily unaware of the positive aspects of the theology in question—Maximus regards

[40] *Ep*. 12 (PG 91), 492B.
[41] *Cap. Sev*. 5 (PG 86), 1901D–1904A; and St Basil, *Ep*. 214 (Deferrari 3), 234.

such aspects in Severus' theology as 'mock piety' aimed at 'deceiving his audience'.[42] In this spirit, Severus' theology, despite its relative ingenuity, is according to Maximus 'hideous, full of stench and totally deprived of grace' and in the final analysis it 'completely denies the Incarnation'.[43]

A SIXTH-CENTURY CONTROVERSY OVER NATURAL DIFFERENCE

Let me pause here, and go a few decades back in time to the 580s to a Christological controversy which took place within the Monophysite community. Also in this controversy, natural difference and number was the bone of contention. The sources for the controversy are scanty and mainly in Syriac. Much remains unpublished. Fortunately, some description of the Syriac sources has been provided by Albert van Roey,[44] and the Greek that survives has been published in article form by Karl-Heinz Uthemann[45] and José Declerck.[46]

The originator of the controversy was none other than Stephen the Sophist, whom we have already met in Part I. His basic thesis was

[42] *Ep.* 13 (PG 91), 512D. [43] Ibid. 512CD.

[44] Albert van Roey, 'Une controverse christologique sous le patriarcat de Pierre de Callinique', in *Symposium Syriacum 1976* (OCA 205, Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1978), 349–57. Van Roey examines the Syriac manuscript tradition and the historical evidence from the histories of Denys of Tell-Mahre and Michael the Syrian. See also the brief account of the controversy given in R. Y. Ebied, A. van Roey, and L. R. Wickham, *Peter of Callinicum: Anti-Tritheist Dossier* (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1981), 6–8; Karl-Heinz Uthemann, 'Stephanos von Alexandrien und die Konversion des Jakobiten Probos, des Späteren Metropoliten von Chalcedon: Ein Beitrag zur Rolle der Philosophie in der Kontroverstheologie des 6. Jahrhunderts', in *After Chalcedon*, 381–99; and Albert van Roey, 'Trois auteurs chalcédoniens syriens: Georges de Martyropolis, Constantin et Léon de Harran', *OLP* 3 (1972), 125–53.

[45] Karl-Heinz Uthemann, 'Syllogistik im Dienst der Orthodoxie: Zwei unedierte Texte Byzantinischer Kontroverstheologie des 6. Jahrhunderts', *JÖB* 30 (1981), 103–12.

[46] José Declerck, 'Probus, l'ex-jacobite et ses *Ἐπαπορήματα πρὸς Ἰακωβίτας*', *Byzantion*, 53/1 (1983), 213–32. Declerck adds the testimony of Timothy of Constantinople concerning the doctrine of the Niobites (from Stephen the Sophist, surnamed Niobos, PG 86, 65A), 219–20.

that 'it is impossible to speak of difference in natural quality in Christ without admitting by the same token a duality of natures in him.'[47] This was regarded as seriously heretical within the Monophysite community. Stephen was first challenged by someone named Probus in a treatise entitled *Against the impious doctrine of those who say that one must not confess that the difference in natural quality is preserved after the (thought of) union*.[48] Probus also wrote a treatise *On Difference* in which he maintains that difference does not imply number[49]—something which Maximus would have completely disagreed with, as did Probus himself later on.

Probus was joined by an archimandrite called John Barbour, and together, so it seems from the course of events, they went and met Stephen at Alexandria. Instead of their convincing Stephen, they themselves were convinced by him and eventually became his followers. In the sequel, Probus was excommunicated and exiled by the Monophysite Patriarch Damian of Alexandria, while John still tried to settle the issue. In the end, they were both condemned in a synod held sometime between 584 and 586 at the monastery of Gubba Baraya and presided over by the patriarch Peter of Callinicum.[50] In the account of Denys of Tell-Mahre the outcome of the synod was this:

> The Patriarch Mar Peter immediately composed in the name of the whole synod a letter or treatise in which he annulled and destroyed the opinion of the sophist and of Probus and established and proved, by means of testimonies from the doctors of the church that there really and actually is a difference between the natures which make up the Christ, and that this is still preserved after the thought of the union without there being any numbering or separation of the natures themselves.[51]

A few years later Probus and John joined Constantinople and the former was appointed metropolitan of Chalcedon. (Stephen was not mentioned in connection with the synod, and it may be that he had already taken the same step at an earlier date. Whatever the case may

[47] Van Roey, 'Une controverse christologique', 350.
[48] Ibid. 351. [49] Ibid. 352.
[50] A tritheist controversy between Damian of Alexandria and Peter of Callinicus took place two years after these events. See the account in Ebied, Van Roey, and Wickham, *Peter of Callinicum*, 20–43.
[51] *History;* quoted in Ebied, Van Roey, and Wickham, *Peter of Callinicum*, 11–12.

be, it is implied that he was a Chalcedonian orthodox when in the 610s he was invited by Heraclius to teach philosophy in Constantinople.)

In 595–6 by the order of the emperor Maurice discussions were held between Probus (now Chalcedonian) and a group of Monophysite monks. Both parties produced eight *tomoi* in which they presented their views. An interesting paragraph from the seventh *tomos* of the Monophysites is provided by van Roey. (Van Roey remarks that 'the synonymy of "nature" and "hypostasis" stated here reflects the terminology not of Probus but of the monks.'[52])

> We say that one must confess that the difference in natural quality remains after the (thought of) union without there being at the same time a duality of natures or hypostases. You, on the contrary, say that he who confesses the preservation of the difference in natural quality, adding 'after the union', is constrained to affirm the natures or hypostases after the union.[53]

Why was it, then, that the school of Stephen maintained that natural difference necessarily implied plurality of natures? Stephen, as we have seen earlier, was a philosopher in the lineage of such names as Ammonius, Olympiodorus, Elias, and David. His school was a version of Neoplatonism in which Aristotle's logical works played a significant role in terms of rudimentary philosophical categories. Porphyry's *Isagoge,* by the time of Stephen, formed a part of the body of texts which were not only studied but also commented on. Porphyrian logic, then, was the tool which not only helped philosophers to understand Aristotle but also assisted the Christians, for good or ill, in explicating their own doctrine.

We have seen in Chapter 1 that the kind of 'difference' in Porphyrian logic which makes a difference in species is called the *idiaitata*-difference or the most specific difference. This is regarded as a constitutive difference of a species and as dividing difference of the more generic. It is called 'most specific' because it produces the lowest species in the Porphyrian Tree. This species has no more subdivisions but only 'subsists in the individuals [that come] under it'. As we saw earlier on, it is this kind of difference that makes something *ἄλλο*[54] in the sense which agrees with the Cappadocian usage of the word. And it is also, I think,

[52] Van Roey, 'Une controverse christologique', 355 n. 13.
[53] Ibid. 355.
[54] See Porphyry, *Isag.* (CAG 4), 3a: 25.

the 'difference in natural quality' Stephen and his adherents were dealing with. Consequently, when they maintained that if 'the difference in natural quality' of both the divinity and humanity are preserved intact and unconfounded in Christ, then there are two countable natures in him; it was the same as saying that since there is a constitutive/dividing difference in Christ, there are two ἄλλα in him. Probus, after his conversion, put it in the following way in his *Syllogistic Chapters* 10:

> But there are two [kinds] of differences, 'accidental differences' and '*idiaitata* essential differences' which are constitutive of the essences and are themselves essences. If according to these differences Christ is two 'somethings' after the union, and if after the union Christ is two natures by a certain *logos,* how is it that he will not be also *in two natures* by a certain *logos* also after the union?[55]

Probus' and John's move proved convincing to the Monophysites in the environment of Antioch, so much so that, according to Declerck, 'many people followed their example and whole villages passed from one camp to the other.'[56] Of course, not all of the Monophysites were convinced.

Probus' language is strongly reminiscent of that of Maximus, and it may well be that Maximus (perhaps via the mediation of Stephen) was aware of these discussions and that they, among other things, sharpened his Christological mind. Be it Probus or Maximus, this argumentation on natural difference and number in many ways brings the discussions between the Monophysite and Dyophysite theologies to the end of the road. In logical terms, things could hardly be pushed any further. And one only wonders why it led nowhere. The council which condemned Probus simply stated, vaguely referring to patristic authority (meaning probably Cyril and Severus), that there 'is a difference between the natures that make up the Christ' (a difference which remains after the union) but that at the same time 'there is no numbering or separation of the natures themselves'.[57] The council clearly was unable to argue why they actually thought this was the case, and Probus' as well and Maximus' reasoning proves far and away more convincing.

[55] Uthemann, 'Syllogistik', 112.
[56] 'Probus', 222. [57] See n. 51.

The rationale behind the Monophysite position lies most probably in Severus' understanding of composite nature. And if there is a question one is bound to ask Maximus, too, it is: what is wrong with speaking of Christ as one composite nature, since this can accommodate natural difference (a 'union without confusion') and hypostatic unity in a single phrase?

COMPOSITE NATURE OR COMPOSITE HYPOSTASIS?[58]

The idea that Christ could be called a 'composite nature' is based on the analogy of the human being seen as a composite of body and soul. St Cyril made a considerable use of this analogy, and it seems to have been the touchstone of Severan Christology. In the following passage, we have Severus quoting Cyril:

> We are composed of body and soul, and we see two natures, the one that of the body, the other that of the soul; but the human being is one from the two owing to the union. And the fact that he is composed out of two natures does not permit us to conclude that he who is one is two men, but rather one single man, as I have said, on account of the composition from body and soul.
>
> And the man that we are may again serve us as an example. For with regard to him we comprehend two natures, one that of the soul and the other that of the body. However, although in subtle reflection we distinguish or in the imagination of the mind perceive a distinction, we still do not juxtapose the natures and do not allow in them the power of the separation to exhaust itself entirely, but we understand that they belong to a single unique being in such a way that from then on the two are no longer two, but through the two a single living being has been formed.[59]

[58] On the body–soul analogy, composite nature, composite hypostasis, and *enhypostaton* in Leontius of Byzantium and Maximus, see the article of Venance Grumel (written eighty years ago but still valid), 'L'Union hypostatique et la comparaison de l'âme et du corps chez Léonce de Byzance et saint Maxime le Confesseur', *ÉOr* 25 (1926), 393–406.

[59] Severus, *Philalethes* 42 (CSCO 133, Syriac), 260–61 [= Cyril, *Ep. ad Succensum I* (45), ACO ser. 1, tom. 1, vol. i, part 6, 154: 5–8 and *Ep. ad Succensum II* (46), ACO ser. 1, tom. 1, vol. i, part 6, 162: 4–9]; quoted in Grillmeier, *Christ,* vol. ii, part 2, 34.

The body–soul analogy was, of course, common to the language of all the parties, but the Severans seem to have taken a very literal line as far as its usage was concerned. Cyril himself did not speak in terms of 'one composite nature'; this was Severus' interpretation it seems.[60] In the later centuries, it became a standard expression in the Monophysite circles. Here, a tenth-century treatise by Severus' namesake the Jacobite bishop Severus Ibn Al-Mouqaffaʿ gives us an idea of their approach:

> How great is the word of our father Abba Cyril concerning the union of the soul with the body, and concerning the fact that this union resembles the union of God with his humanity! For soul and body are a single nature, composite of two natures, since one cannot know the operation of the soul except through the body or the operation of the body except through the soul. Their nature is, therefore, one, composite of two natures. … Here, we oblige the Melkites [i.e. the Chalcedonians] to say that soul and body are only one nature which comes out of two natures, so as not to make them say that Christ is three natures. If they confess that the soul and the body, in spite of the difference of their nature, are only one composite nature, this obliges them to say that God and man, in spite of the difference of their nature, are only one composite nature.[61]

Now, Maximus acknowledges that the human being is one composite nature, and that every instance of the human species is a 'composite hypostasis' on account of the underlying *eidos*.[62] But he does not think that this is a good enough reason to speak of Christ as one composite nature. For Maximus, Christ is composite at the level of hypostasis alone, that is, at the level of particular being, not at the level of the universal. (In fact, if the quotations from Cyril are considered closely enough, one can see—it could be argued, as did the Monk Eustathius in the sixth century[63]—that in both cases Cyril is saying precisely this. First, he clearly speaks of *physis* as a generic nature, a quiddity, and second, he speaks of the *end result* of the union as a concrete particular, and not a quiddity—which is why he does not call it a *physis* but 'a single living being', in other words a hypostasis.)

[60] See Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. ii, part 2, 127.

[61] *Exposition* 10 (Troupeau), 379. The treatise is written in Arabic but a French translation is provided by Gérard Troupeau in 'Une réfutation des Melkites par Sévère Ibn Al-Mouqaffaʿ', in *After Chalcedon*, 371–80.

[62] See also Ch. 1: 'Whole and Parts'.

[63] See his *Ep.*, 28 (CCSG 19), 446.

Justinian had argued a century earlier against Severus' 'composite nature' theology claiming it to be of Apollinarian provenance. He maintained that also Cyril rejected the language of 'composite nature' as denoting the one *physis* composed of flesh and divinity, and that Cyril's works, in actual fact, bore witness to the formula of two natures (rather than to the formula of one composite nature).[64]

The reasons for Maximus to reject the application of the notion of composite nature to Christ can be summarized in the following.[65] First, the union of the Logos and humanity did not result in the generation of a single nature (universal) but it resulted in the event of Christ: a hypostasis (particular) which participates in both divine form of being and human form of being. 'Christ' is not a name of a species or of a nature but of a hypostasis.[66] Humanity, in contrast, is a species or a nature subsisting in a multiplicity of individuals. And why cannot Christ, as a divino-human entity, be regarded as a species? If we bear in mind the principles of the Porphyrian Tree, Porphyry himself points out that what is common about all the five terms in the *Isagoge* is that they are necessarily predicated of *many individuals*.[67] In a similar vein, the Cappadocians spoke of what is common to individuals or hypostases, in contrast to what is particular to each. One individual cannot make a species, that is, *a nature*. Christ is unique and single, and cannot fall within this categorization. He cannot be a generic nature since he is only one instance, nor can he be considered as a 'monadic nature' for then he would be like some mythological creature and would no longer be consubstantial either with God the Father or with us.[68] Maximus writes:

> For this great and venerated mystery of Christ neither possesses the nature as a species predicated of it as of something generic and universal as [is the case with] an individual, nor however, is it a genus or a species predicated of the individuals which by nature are subordinate to it, so as to be able to fit into the above mentioned rules, because, indeed, [this mystery of Christ] does *not* possess, in the coming together by composition of God the Logos with the

[64] See Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. ii, part 2, 358–9.

[65] See also the argumentation in *Doctrina patrum* where the notion of 'composite nature' is seen as being Apollinarian (*Doctrina patrum* 9, Diekamp, 58–65).

[66] See e.g. *Opusc.* 16 (PG 91), 201C–202D.

[67] *Isag.* (CAG 4, part 1), 4a: 37. See also Barnes, *Porphyry*, 102–4.

[68] Cf. *Ep.* 13 (PG 91), 517D–520C.

flesh, composition equal and of similar kind to the conjunction which [the parts of] composite [natures] have with each other.[69]

Second, with composite natures the coming-into-being of their parts is necessarily contemporaneous. The moment of the union of body and soul is the moment they *both* come into being. With Christ this clearly is not the case since the Logos existed from before the ages and his humanity came into being only at the moment of conception. Furthermore, with Christ the union happens by assumption: the Logos assumes human nature. Instead, the union of body and soul is, says Maximus, 'the simultaneous generation of the parts from non-being into being at the moment of their union with each other as they come into being.'[70]

Third, with composite natures the union of the parts is involuntary. With Christ this would be blasphemous, Maximus maintains, since God willingly assumed the form of human being.[71]

And fourth, God became man not to complement a being—like soul complementing body to form the composite human nature—but he became man in order to restore and renew us. 'For in an unspeakable manner the Logos visited men through flesh by virtue of *tropos* of dispensation rather than by virtue of law of nature.'[72] For these reasons, then, Maximus rejects the application to Christ of the notion of 'composite nature'.

Let us, then, move on to consider Maximus' understanding of 'composite hypostasis', which he does accept and makes considerable use of.[73] First of all, we must remind ourselves of what was said about hypostasis or person in Part II: that it is not to be understood as a psychological entity but rather as a particular and concrete being.

[69] *Ep*. 13 (PG 91), 528D–529A. [70] Ibid. 532A.

[71] Maximus applies the same argument against the notion of 'composite activity' (*Opusc*. 5c, PG 91, 64D–65A).

[72] *Ep*. 12 (PG 91), 492A.

[73] 'Composite hypostasis' is a notion relatively widespread in Maximus' works: see *Ep*. 12 (PG 91), 489C–493B; *Ep*. 13 (PG 91), 517C, 525C–529A; *Ep*. 15 (PG 91), 553D, 556C; *Ambig*. 2:21–2 (CCSG 48), 9; *Ambig*. 3: 18 (CCSG 48), 10; *Opusc*. 2 (PG 91), 41B; *Opusc*. 3 (PG 91), 56A; *Opusc*. 7 (PG 91), 73B; *Opusc*. 13. 3 (PG 91), 148A; *Opusc*. 16 (PG 91), 197D–204D; and *Qu. Thal*. 62: 33 and 89 (CCSG 22), 117 and 119. See also Larchet, *La Divinisation*, 327–32; and Nicholas Madden, 'Composite Hypostasis in Maximus the Confessor', *SP* 27 (1993), 175–97.

Reading a psychological notion of the person into Christology inevitably leads to some form of Apollinarianism in which Christ's human soul or intellect (as being the 'person') is annihilated and replaced by the Logos. In brief, modern personalism, it seems to me, could hardly accommodate the concept of 'composite hypostasis'.

For Maximus it is self-evident that before the Incarnation the Logos was a complete hypostasis and that this complete hypostasis was simple. With the incarnation the Logos assumes to his own concrete and particular being another form of being; that of humanity. The concrete reality that results from this union by voluntary assumption is clearly composite in some respect. We have seen how Maximus rejects (as did Justinian[74] and Leontius[75] before him) the notion of 'composite nature' to describe this end result. Christ, therefore, is composite according to hypostasis, not according to nature.

> [Christ is], according to the Fathers, *one composite hypostasis*, according to which he, the same, with his humanity and owing to his divinity, is wholly God and one of the holy and all-praised Trinity, and he, the same, with his divinity and owing to his humanity, is wholly man and one of men.[76]

Here Maximus complements Justinian's favourite phrase 'one of the Trinity' by the very striking expression 'one of men'. But if Christ is one of the Trinity and one of men, as Maximus says, then, one may wish to ask whether Christ is then not two hypostases. Is this not straightforward Nestorianism? To this Maximus' answer is clearly in the negative. And why?

> Because, the Word himself was instead of the seed, or rather he was found willingly to be the seed of his own incarnation, and he, who is by nature simple and not composite, became composite according to hypostasis. He, one and the same, remained unchanged, undivided and unconfused in the permanence of the parts of which he was constituted …[77]

With the Incarnation there does not emerge a new separate hypostasis, but the single and simple hypostasis of the Logos obtains a second level of being. And he is particular also at this new level. Therefore he,

[74] *Monoph*. 57 (Schwartz), 16.
[75] *Cap. Sev*. 14 and 15 (PG 86), 1904D–1905B.
[76] *Ep*. 13 (PG 91), 525C; italics mine.
[77] *Ep*. 15 (PG 91), 553D–556A.

the same one, is also one of us; he is a composite of parts, that is, of the two natures that are individuated in a single particular, a 'composite hypostasis'.

For we say that the one hypostasis of Christ—constituted of flesh and godhead through natural union, that is, true and real union—has become the common hypostasis of flesh and godhead by the unspeakable union. I say 'common', because one and the same most particular hypostasis of the parts appeared from the union; or rather it was one and the same hypostasis of the Word, now as before. But earlier it existed without a cause (ἀναιτίως) [and was] simple and uncomposite, later for a cause it became truly composite without change through assuming a flesh animated by an intelligent soul.[78]

For Maximus what marks off one person from another are the hypostatic differences. But this in no way implies that a hypostasis as such is simply 'the characteristic properties and not the thing itself which is "characterized" by them,'[79] which the Jacobite Elias (8th–9th century) claimed to be the error of the Chalcedonians. In the case of Christ, Maximus writes,

by virtue of the hypostatic particularity of his own parts,[80] he was distinguished from his extremities, I mean from his Father and mother, and he proved to have kept the oneness of his own hypostasis totally undifferentiated and always unified in the utter personal identity of his own parts one with another.[81]

These are not simply logical niceties. Admittedly, Maximus makes use of rather stiff logical jargon, but he does this in order to argue for deep

[78] Ibid. 556CD.

[79] Albert van Roey, 'La lettre apologetique d'Élie à Léon, syncelle de l'évêque chalcédonien de Harran: une apologie monophysite du VIIIe–IXe siècle', *Le Muséon*, 57 (1944), 22.

[80] The weakness of this position, it might be argued, is that it does not satisfactorily account for the individuating characteristics of Christ's humanity (presuming the Logos did not assume a particular human individual). Simply to state that there is 'hypostatic particularity' in which both natures participate does not explain adequately how this particularity and the individuating human characteristics are produced within the human side of Christ. (Aloys Grillmeier has discussed this issue in relation to Leontius of Jerusalem. See his *Christ*, vol. ii, part 2, 289–93.)

[81] *Ep.* 15 (PG 91), 556B.

soteriological concerns. The incarnate Logos, Christ, is a composite hypostasis 'so that he may mediate according to hypostasis between the parts of which he was composed, closing in himself the distance between the extremities, making peace and reconciling through the Spirit human nature with God the Father …'[82]

ENHYPOSTATON

Another concept closely related to composite hypostasis is that of ἐνυπόστατον—a concept which during the last one and a half centuries has been almost exclusively misunderstood. As a result of this there has emerged the doctrine of 'enhypostasia', as the essence 'subsisting-in-the-hypostasis' of another, attributed to Leontius of Byzantium as the cornerstone of sixth-century Christology. Thanks mainly to the careful work of Brian Daley on Leontius we are now becoming aware of the fact 'that the theory that Christ's personal unity was achieved through the "enhypostatization" of a full, but impersonal human nature into the person of the divine Logos … has nothing to do with Leontius of Byzantium.'[83] Daley has conclusively argued (even if reluctantly accepted by modern theologians)[84] that the prefix ἐν- in the word ἐνυπόστατον is the opposite of the alpha-privative, and does *not* have the locative sense of 'in'.

Daley has also demonstrated how the nineteenth-century German Patristics scholar Friedrich Loofs conceived the idea of *enhypostasia* through an erroneous etymology and a misreading of Leontius' *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* 1 (where ἐνυπόστατον is contrasted with 'accident'),[85] and how Loofs' reading was elaborated first by Herbert Relton

[82] Ibid. 556A.

[83] Brian Daley, 'The Christology of Leontius of Byzantium: Personalism or Dialectics?' (unpublished paper read at the Oxford Patristic Conference in 1979), 1. See also his '"A Richer Union"', 239–65; and Matthias Gockel, 'A Dubious Christological Formula? Leontius of Byzantium and the *Anhypostasis-Enhypostasis* Theory', *JThS* 51 (2000), 515–32.

[84] See e.g. U. M. Lang, 'Anhypostatos-Enhypostatos: Church Fathers, Protestant Orthodoxy and Karl Barth', *JThS* 49 (1998), 630–57.

[85] *Nest. et Eut.* (PG 86), 1277CD.

and ultimately by Stefan Otto in the direction of existential phenomenology 'to be not merely a Christological theory but a term which describes the way *any* "concrete individual nature" is taken up into the "übergeordneter Selbstand" of "absolutes Fürsichsein", the state which comprises the formal determination of the human individual as a person.'[86]

This trend has inspired many Maximian scholars, too.[87] The summit has, perhaps, been reached by Eric Perl in his thesis *Methexis: Creation, Incarnation, Deification in Saint Maximus Confessor* where he states: 'That he [Maximus] accepts the principle that the hypostasis of union which is Christ is the Logos and the idea of enhypostasization, and makes these central to his Christology, is so well known that we need not demonstrate it again here.'[88] And Perl maintains that 'this is the Christology which Maximus adopts and develops *into a universal ontology*.'[89]

What do Leontius and Maximus themselves have to say about this issue? Leontius, first of all, rather than creating a new ontological category is quite simply defending Chalcedon against Severan Monophysitism. The Severans argued that since, according to the commonly accepted dictum, 'there is no *anhypostatos* nature', it follows that those who admit two natures must also admit two hypostases. 'For they say: "If you say two natures in relation to Christ, and as there is no *anhypostatos* nature, there will thereby be two hypostases." '[90] As a response to this, Leontius makes a distinction between *hypostasis* and *ἐνυπόστατον*, as well as between *ousia* and *enousion*.

> Ὑπόστασις signifies the particular being (τὸν τίνα), whereas the ἐνυπόστατον signifies the essence. Ὑπόστασις defines a person by means of characteristic properties, whereas ἐνυπόστατον signifies that it is not an accident which has its being in another and is not considered in itself. … Therefore, he who says that there is no ἀνυπόστατος nature speaks the truth, but he does not draw the right conclusion if he deduces that that which is not ἀνυπόστατος is a ὑπόστασις.[91]

[86] Daley, 'Christology', 13.

[87] See e.g. Eric Perl, *Methexis: Creation, Incarnation, Deification in Saint Maximus Confessor* (Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1991), 188–220; Larchet, *La Divinisation*, 331–2; and Alain Riou, *Le Monde et l'église selon Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1973), 103–4 n. 30. See also Andrew Louth's criticism in his 'Recent Research on St Maximus the Confessor: A Survey' (review article), *SVThQ* 42/1 (1998), 73 and 81–2.

[88] Perl, *Methexis*, 188.

[89] Ibid.; italics mine.

[90] *Nest. et Eut.* (PG 86), 1276D.

[91] Ibid. 1277CD.

What Leontius is saying here is that to say there is no nature which is not individuated does not mean that one cannot make a distinction between nature and hypostasis. It is true that nature exists only instanced as individuals, that is to say as hypostases, but this does not mean that nature is hypostasis. Therefore, one can say that Christ is one hypostasis in two natures individuated in one composite particular, which is Christ.

Maximus in his turn describes something as being ἐνυπόστατον in two different ways. Something, he says,

1. 'which by no means subsists by itself, but is considered in others, as a species in the individuals subordinate to it,' is ἐνυπόστατον, or again something
2. 'which is put together with another, different by essence, to bring about a whole'[92] is ἐνυπόστατον.

In the first description, we have many elements which could almost support the *enhypostasia* theory, but not quite. What we have here is the Porphyrian Tree again—into which Christ does not fit because he is not an individual of a species. What Maximus is saying, is that ἐνυπόστατον is the species (εἶδος) which exists only in the form of individuated cases of it, that is to say 'in individuals'—or perhaps *as* individuals would be a better way of putting it so as to resist the temptation of translating ἐνυπόστατον as in-subsistent, rather than simply as subsistent or real and concrete. Ironically, this is not the version of ἐνυπόστατον which can be applied to Christology. Instead, it is the second one which has no trace of the idea of in-subsistence.

The second description brings us back to Maximus' understanding of composite hypostasis, as a particular made up of two essentially different realities, 'that which is put together with another, different by essence, to bring about a whole'.[93] To close the circle and to make a connection with Leontius, we could repeat a line concerning hypostasis

[92] *Ep.* 15 (PG 91), 557D–560A; cf. *Opusc.* 14 (PG 91), 152D–153A.

[93] Further down in *Ep.* 15 (560BC), Maximus argues that the flesh of the Logos is not a hypostasis, but *enhypostaton*, and says that this is so because the flesh received its coming-into-being 'in him [the Logos] and through him' (560C). What he means, quite clearly, is that the Logos did not assume a human hypostasis, that the union was not of two particular hypostases, but that he assumed a generic humanity which came into being at the moment of assumption and was individuated as his very own flesh.

from *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*: 'We can define as "hypostasis" either things which share a nature but differ in number, or things which are put together from different natures, but which share reciprocally in a common being.'[94]

If one were to conjecture what the *theological* reasons for the Monophysite resistance to Chalcedon at this stage were, it would seem to me that there were two main reasons which prevailed. First, the fact that they make no distinction between the universal and the particular in the *oikonomia,* which makes it impossible for them to admit duality of any kind in Christ and which is a way of accommodating their interpretation of Cyril's dictum of the one incarnate nature of the Word coupled with a very literal understanding of the body–soul analogy; and second, the fact that they were happy with their own understanding of 'composite nature' which in *their* conceptual framework allowed them to speak of natural difference, and indeed double consubstantiality, in the one composite nature and hypostasis of Christ without violating in any way whatsoever his unity.

Let me, in conclusion, pull some of the strings together: for Maximus Christ is one according to hypostasis or person, two according to natures. He is the single and simple Logos and Son of God who for our salvation by voluntary assumption of generic humanity became man. At the moment of conception, this humanity becomes his humanity; he individuates it in his own concrete and particular being and becomes what Maximus calls a 'composite hypostasis'. The two natures of which he is a hypostasis retain their natural difference *qua* natures, and, therefore, they must be counted as two and confessed as two—inseparably united, no doubt. There is in the one Christ a simultaneous union and distinction. That the two natures are endowed with the natural properties of activity and will, compels Maximus to argue for a Christology of two natural activities and wills. How this unfolded is the next step in our enquiry.

[94] *Nest. et Eut.* (PG 86), 1280A.

7

Activities and Wills

ACTIVITIES

The Lateran council of 649, convoked and chaired by the newly elected pope of Rome, Martin I, in its third session, examined a number of texts which postulated the doctrine of one activity in Christ. According to the council the first person to articulate the Monenergist doctrine was a certain Theodore, bishop of Pharan.[1] Eleven fragments from Theodore's texts were read out at the council demonstrating his understanding of Christ's activity and will, the core of it being that because Christ is one also his activity is one and comes forth from the divinity of the Logos.

Here are two fragments from Theodore as quoted by the Lateran council 649.

Fragment 10

For our soul is not of such a power by nature so as to be able to repel the properties of the body either out of the body or out of itself, but nor has the rational soul proved to possess such a dominion over its own body so as to have both mastery over the body's mass, fluids or colour (which are natural to the body) and to render the body outside these things at certain times; things which are both recorded in the Dispensation of our Saviour Jesus Christ and which have happened in his divine and life-giving body. For he came forth without mass and, so to speak, incorporeally without expansion

[1] In the *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, Maximus refers to the correspondence between Theodore of Pharan and Sergius of Constantinople (638–41) as being the source of this new doctrine. Also a certain Sergius Macaronas, bishop of Arsenoë, was involved in the matter as a middleman. See *Pyrr.* (PG 91), 332B–333B.

from the womb and tomb and through the doors, and he walked on sea as on the floor.[2]

Fragment 11

Therefore we must think and speak in this wise. All those things that are recorded of the Saviour Christ in his Incarnation are to be understood as *one* activity of which the fashioner and creator is God the Word and the instrument is his humanity. Thus, the things that are said of him as God and the things which are said of him as referring to a man (ἀνθρωποπρεπῶς), are all an activity of the *divinity* of the Word.[3]

It is suggestive that Theodore, who was a Chalcedonian, drew on the themes which were very dear to the Monophysite heart, namely virgin birth and walking on water. In the eyes of the bishops of the council, his treatment of these themes appeared alarming and was repudiated by quoting several patristic authorities.

The council then discussed Dionysius' *Letter* 4 and the well-known phrase 'a certain new theandric activity'.[4] Its interpretation in the *Nine Chapters* of Cyrus of Phasis together with the commentary of Sergius of Constantinople were scrutinized. Cyrus had used the formula '*one* theandric activity': 'This same Christ and Son, who is one, performed activities fitting for God and for a human being by "one theandric activity" according to holy Dionysius.'[5] Cyrus' formula falsified, so the council's chairman Pope Martin maintained, Dionysius' expression which was not '*one* theandric activity' but '*a certain new* theandric activity'.[6] Sergius went even further and spoke simply of '*one* activity'.[7] Thus from 'a certain theandric activity' through 'one theandric activity' Sergius came to speak of 'one activity'. Finally, having read out some texts of the Severan Themistius and of Severus himself the council drew the conclusion that Cyrus and Sergius were in agreement with the Severan heresy.[8]

[2] *Sermo ad Sergium* (ACO ser. 2, vol. i), 122: 32–9.
[3] Ibid. 124: 2–7; italics mine.
[4] *Ep.* 4 (PTS 36), 161: 9.
[5] *Satisf.* 7 (ACO, ser. 2, vol. i), 134: 18–20.
[6] See ACO, ser. 2, vol. i, 142: 37–4: 143.
[7] *Ep. ad Cyrum* (ACO, ser. 2, vol. i), 136: 37.
[8] Severus, though, had made it explicit that this one activity of the one Christ was *theandric* and not divine (θεοπρεπής) only. See ACO, ser. 2, vol. i, 146.

As for what Maximus' contemporary Severans actually thought of the question, Maximus relates in *Opusculum* 3:

> I remember, when I was staying on the island of Crete, that I heard from certain false bishops of the Severan party who disputed with me, that 'we do not say, in accordance with the *Tome of Leo*, that there are two activities in Christ, because it would follow that there were two wills, and that would necessarily introduce a duality of persons, nor again do we say one activity, which might be regarded as simple, but we say, in accordance with Severus, that one will, and every divine and human activity proceeds from one and the same God the Word Incarnate.'[9]

This gives us an idea as to how the doctrine may actually have emerged, and why, when the 'one activity' formula failed, the discussion moved on to 'one will'.

How, then, does Maximus argue against the idea of one activity? Good examples of Maximus' argumentation can be found, for example, in his *Letter to Bishop Nikandros*[10] and in the *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*.[11] He argues following the same principles we have already seen several times, namely, that things are either natural (universal/common) or hypostatic (particular). (Here we should bear in mind that Maximus' opponents are followers of the Chalcedonian tradition and therefore the distinction between hypostasis and nature is taken for granted.) Maximus lays out the options. If, he says, Christ's activity—and the same applies to his will—is one, it must be either natural or hypostatic. If it is natural, there are three options. It must be either divine only or human only, or neither divine nor human. It follows that Christ is, in such a case, either divine nature only, or human nature only, or neither of them.[12]

If, on the other hand, the activity is hypostatic, then Christ is found to be different from his Father and mother with respect to his activity. This, however, introduces division in the divine essence since it is a commonplace that singleness of activity implies singleness of essence also. In *Opusculum* 7, Maximus argues:

[9] *Opusc.* 3 (PG 91), 49C–52A; translation in Louth, *Maximus*, 195. Maximus is still quite unhappy about this. See the sequel of the *Opusculum*.

[10] *Opusc.* 8 (PG 91), 89C–112B.

[11] *Pyrr.* (PG 91), 288A–353B.

[12] We have seen how in the Monophysite theology this kind of argument could be rejected by appealing to the body–soul analogy and the composite nature theory but also how this position was refuted by Maximus. See Ch. 6, here above.

If it [the activity] is said to be hypostatic, then this is a new idea: for who has ever spoken of possessing an hypostatic activity? Thus such an idea makes him foreign to the Father in his activity, if he has an hypostatic activity, and not a natural activity, other than that of the Father. For in his hypostatic characteristics, the Word is clearly different from him.[13]

Christ, according to Maximus, acts because he is *by nature capable* of acting; and he is capable of acting both according to his divine nature (as creator, for example) and according to his human nature (when he eats, for example). Had he no such capacity, he would be a lifeless nature, such as a stone. Activity, Maximus maintains, is a capacity which a nature possesses; it is a natural property. And since we confess two natures in Christ, we must also confess the properties of those two natures. Otherwise these will be elliptic, and an incomplete nature is, in the final analysis, not a real nature at all.

Consequently, Christ's activity is twofold. Maximus' opponents were not too happy with this. Pyrrhus argued that what if one regarded as activity the effect of Christ's activity? Was that not one and single? Maximus' answer is intriguingly clear.

For although the activities of both fire and sword are united with each other, we nevertheless see the end result of fire to be burning and that of sword cutting, even when they are not divided from each other in the burning cutting or the cutting burning.[14]

One more challenge Maximus had was to defend the expressions in Dionysius and Cyril where they speak of Christ's activity in 'monadic' terms.[15] These Maximus regards as periphrastic expressions which imply a duality of natures and activities but which lay emphasis on their inseparable, yet unconfused, union. The hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Christ without confusion or separation is as true of the natural activities as it is of the natures themselves. The appellation 'theandric' is clearly double and is indicative of the duality of natures, Maximus maintains. The fact that it is expressed 'monadically' does not denote the disappearance of the natural differences or

[13] *Opusc.* 7 (PG 91), 85B; translation in Louth, *Maximus*, 189.

[14] *Pyrr.* (PG 91), 341B. See also *Ambig.* 5: 272–7 (CCSG 48), 33.

[15] See Jean-Claude Larchet's introduction to *Maxime le Confesseur: Opuscules théologiques et polémiques*, trans. into French by E. Ponsoye (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1998), 56–8.

the existence of single natural activity, but emphasizes the inseparable union according to the one hypostasis constituted of the two natures. In *Ambiguum* 5, comparing the Incarnation to the simile of sword plunged in fire, he says that as it is with the sword

> in the same way in the mystery of the divine Incarnation, too, the godhead and the humanity were hypostatically united, but neither of them departed from its natural activity on account of the union, nor possessed after the union its activity unrelated to or separated from its co-subsisting partner. For the Word made flesh, in virtue of an unbreakable union, possessed the capacity of his own humanity to undergo suffering. This he possessed attached as a whole to the entire active power of his own godhead. Thus, being God, he humanly performed wonders, accomplished through the flesh that is passible by nature, and being man, he divinely underwent the sufferings of nature, executed by divine authority. Or rather, in both he acted *theandrically*, being at the same time both God and man.[16]

Cyril's phrase 'the activity shown to have kinship with both' Maximus regards as an 'imitation of Dionysius' in different words. Again emphasis is on unity but without 'destroying the essential difference of the natural activities.'[17]

> As he [Cyril] showed that the natural activities of Christ God, who is composed of both are perfectly preserved, that of his godhead through the almighty command, and that of his humanity through the touch, he proves them to be thoroughly united by their mutual coming together and interpenetration, showing that the activity of the Logos himself and his all-holy flesh is one on account of the union, not natural or hypostatic—for the teacher did not say any such thing—but akin by the parts (*συγγενὴ τοῖς μέρεσι*), through which, as was said, in accordance with his almighty command and the touch of his hand this kinship was manifested.[18]

However hairsplitting this might sound to us today, for Maximus it was an issue of truth *par excellence*. And his position in this matter was so authoritative that after his arrest people refused to be in communion with the church of Constantinople.[19] The patriarch together with the imperial

[16] *Ambig.* 5: 280–91 (CCSG 48), 33–4.
[17] *Opusc.* 7 (PG 91), 85C.
[18] Ibid. 85D–88A; translation in Louth, *Maximus*, 189.
[19] Cf. *Rel. mot.*: 344–55 (CCSG 39), 39.

court kept sending delegation after delegation to Maximus to try and convince him of their doctrine. On 19 April 658, in a letter to his disciple Anastasius—the last known document that he ever penned—Maximus relates a discussion with one such delegation. (The patriarch's messenger attempted to persuade Maximus by ascertaining that all the churches had united and that the unity had been effected under the formula 'two activities because of the difference, and one because of the union'.)

—'Do you say that the two became one because of the union, or is there another activity besides these?' I [Maximus] asked.

—'No,' they said. 'Rather the two became one because of the union.'

—'We have departed from the facts,' I said, 'by inventing for ourselves a faith without substance and a God without existence. For if we confuse the two into one because of the union, again we separate the one into two because of the difference, there will not be unity nor a duality of activities, because they are forever separated from each other and render him, to whom they belong, incapable of activity and completely non-existent. I say this because what by nature has no movement which cannot be taken away, or change its position in any way, or decay, is devoid of all substance, according to the Fathers, because it does not have an activity essentially characterizing it. I cannot say this [formula you propose], nor have I been taught to confess it by the holy Fathers. Do what you think fit, because you are invested with authority.'[20]

Four years later, the authorities thought it fit to bring Maximus to trial in the capital, to mutilate him, and send him to exile to a remote fortress on the eastern shore of the Black Sea.

WILLS

But let us go back to the late 630s and turn to the question of 'will'. With the imperial edict, the *Ecthesis*, released in 638, Heraclius imposed on his people the doctrine of Monothelitism, or the doctrine of one will in Christ, on the grounds that Christ could not have two wills opposing each other. He argued that since even Nestorius, who divided the

[20] *Ep. Anast.*: 17–31 (CCSG 39), 162–3; translation in Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions: Documents from Exile*, ed. with an introduction, translation and notes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 121, 123.

one Christ into two sons, professed *tautoboulia* (i.e. identity of will[s]), it was impossible for the orthodox to confess two contradicting wills in Christ.[21] Heraclius declared:

> Therefore following the holy Fathers, in this case as in all, we confess *one will* of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true God, since flesh animated by an intelligent soul, at no one time [acted] its natural movement separately and of its own impulse, contrary to the indication (*νεύμα*) of God the Word, who was united to it, but [it acted its natural movement] as God the Word wanted, defining its time, kind and quantity.[22]

Maximus was well aware of the fact that the *Ecthesis* was designed to make imperial orthodoxy acceptable to the Monophysites. Therefore any notion which could betray the doctrine of the two natures was to be uprooted. Since 'will' could be—and had to be—understood as the natural faculty of willing in the human being, rather than simply as an object or an act of willing, it was necessary to maintain that Christ had two wills.

Will, then, according to Maximus, is a natural property of the human (and also of the divine) nature.[23] It is a distinctive and constitutive feature of any rational or intelligent nature. Intelligent natures possess a certain 'self-governed movement' (*αὐτεξούσιος κίνησις*) or self-determination which Maximus calls 'will'. Such beings are not governed in their actions by senses or natural urges, but by a rational self-determination through which they express their freedom. They do certain things because they want to do them, in contrast to animals and plants which do not have this capacity. Maximus argues his point on the basis that 'will' is not something that is taught, and that for this reason it must be natural.

[21] Much more subtle objections to Maximus' doctrine came some time later, once again, from the Maronites. See Sebastian Brock, 'Two Sets of Monothelete Questions to the Maximianists', *OLP* 17 (1986), 119–40; id., 'A Syriac Fragment on the Sixth Council', *Oriens Christianus*, 57 (1973), 63–71 [= *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), XIII]; and id., 'A Monothelete Florilegium in Syriac', in *After Chalcedon*, 35–45. The first two of these texts come from the same manuscript (possibly 7th or 8th century) as the hostile *Syriac Life of Maximus* and are according to Prof. Brock most probably of Maronite provenance ('Two sets', 120).

[22] ACO, ser. 2, vol. i, 160.

[23] For an account of the process of willing in Maximus see R.-A. Gauthier, 'Saint Maxime le Confesseur et la psychologie de l'acte humain', *RThAM* 21 (1954), 51–100.

The usage of the uneducated has also affirmed that what is natural is not taught. So, if natural things are not acquired through teaching, then we have will without having acquired it or being taught it, for no one has ever had a will which was acquired by teaching. Consequently, man has the faculty of will by nature.

And again, if man by nature possesses the faculty of reason, and if rational nature is also self-determining, and if self-determination is, according to the Fathers, the will, then man possesses will by nature. …

And again, if man was made after the image of the blessed godhead which is beyond being, and since the divine nature is self-determined, then he is by nature endowed with free will. For it has been stated already that the Fathers defined 'will' as self-determination (*αὐτεξούσιον*).[24]

An existentialist type of understanding of personhood sees freedom as a property of the *person* as opposed to *nature*. Nature or essence is bound to necessity and must be transcended in the ecstasy of the person out of the impersonality of essence. In Byzantine theology, in contrast, freedom is an intrinsic element of certain natures or essences, of intelligent or rational natures, not to mention the divine nature itself.[25] 'The natural things of intelligent beings are not under necessity,'[26] argues Maximus against Pyrrhus. God, angels, and men are free by nature and by essence, and not because they are 'persons', that is, particular instances of their species.[27] For St Maximus even a particular mouse, as we have seen, is a person or hypostasis. But a mouse is not free, because its nature does not possesses freedom; it has no 'self-governed movement' or self-determination (*αὐτεξούσιον*).

In the patristic understanding, we are not free because we are persons; we are free because we are rational and *autexousioi* by nature/essence. Freedom resides in our rationality rather than in an indeterminate principle of personhood. Human beings (let alone God) are not in want of an extra principle of liberty which is not already part of the essential being. Human nature is after all an extremely fine and complex fabric which already as such is a supreme mystery.

[24] *Pyrr.* (PG 91), 304CD; translation in Joseph P. Farrell, *The Disputation with Pyrrhus of our Father among the Saints Maximus the Confessor* (South Canaan, Pa.: St Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1990), 24–5.

[25] See Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 260.

[26] *Pyrr.* (PG 91), 293C.

[27] Applied by analogy to God.

Yet, we must not forget that human beings are amphibians that have a twofold nature constituted of a rational and free part, and an irrational animal part. The latter is to be governed by the former, but in the fallen man these two parts are somewhat confused. In this context, Maximus does sometimes speak of the 'law of nature' (*νόμος τῆς φύσεως*)[28] and the need of being liberated from it. By this Maximus means detachment of the intellect—the seat of rationality—from the senses which are holding it captive. No sense of the 'person' emerging from the prison of the objective impersonality of nature can be determined here. And if there is a factor that enables the liberation of the intellect, that can be only the divine grace.

Having established that will is a natural property both of divine and of human natures, Maximus argues that although Christ has two wills, it does not follow that Christ has two *contradicting* wills. He makes a distinction between the natural and the *gnomic* will; the former is characteristic of nature, the latter of person. In *Opusculum* 3, Maximus demonstrates the consequences of confessing one will.

> If this [one] will is *gnomic*, then it will be characteristic of his single hypostasis … and it will be shown to be different in will from the Father and the Spirit, and to fight against them. If, furthermore, this will [is natural and] belongs to his sole godhead, then the godhead will be subject to passions and, contrary to nature, long for food and drink. If, finally, this will belongs to his sole human nature, then it will not be efficacious by nature.[29]

Gnomic will is, it seems, a characteristic of the fallen world.[30] It is the inclination away from the purpose of God for his creation, which is why it is so radically separated from the natural will. Natural will, in turn, is 'the power that longs for what is natural',[31] and 'that nothing natural is opposed to God is clear from the fact that these things were originally fashioned by him'.[32] Christ has two natural wills, but not two *gnomic* wills, for his willing is not dominated by the blameworthy passions, as usually happens with fallen human individuals.

[28] See e.g. *Qu. Thal.* 54 (CCSG 7), 443–55. The word *πρόσωπον* in this text clearly has the meaning of 'face' only.

[29] *Opusc.* 3 (PG 91), 53CD; translation in Louth, *Maximus*, 196–7.

[30] See *Opusc.* 16 (PG 91), 193B–196A. See also Ch. 13: '*Gnome*', here below.

[31] *Opusc.* 3 (PG 91), 48A.

[32] *Opusc.* 7 (PG 91), 80A.

'The willing of that one [i.e. Christ] is not opposed to God, but is wholly deified,' Maximus maintains, quoting St Gregory Nazianzen.[33] There is, therefore, no contradiction between the two wills of the two natures of Christ.

Moreover, Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane is indicative of his human will. As a man he begged the Father to *let the cup pass from* him[34] to show that he was truly human—and that he truly bore the consequences of the blameless passions, voluntarily and without sin. That Christ's human will was wholly deified is shown

> in its agreement with the divine will itself, since it is eternally moved and shaped by it and in accordance with it. … All that matters is a perfect verification of the will of the Father, in his saying as a human being, *Not mine, but your will be done*,[35] by this giving himself as a type and example of setting aside our own will by the perfect fulfilment of the divine, even if because of this we find ourselves face to face with death.[36]

Our own ascetic struggle aims at this same end: to will and act naturally according to the divine order. Freedom of will, rather than being simply freedom to choose between things, becomes in Maximus' theology freedom to exercise that which is natural in God's unfallen reality. It is freedom from the blameworthy passions and freedom to act according to God's will—even when this may be utterly painful and difficult—with a clear vision and a certainty of the correctness of one's actions. If, then, freedom in this sense is constitutive of what it is to be truly human, then liberation through ascetic struggle of the soul's rational powers and its self-determination (*αὐτεξούσιον*) from its irrational animal side becomes vital for men and women to be truly human.[37]

[33] *Opusc.* 3 (PG 91), 48AB; Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 30. 12 (SC 250), 248.
[34] Matt. 26: 39. [35] Cf. Luke 22: 24.
[36] *Opusc.* 7 (PG 91), 80D; translation in Louth, *Maximus*, 186.
[37] Cf. Louth, *Maximus*, 61.

8

Union

Until now we have seen how unity and differentiation can be considered in Christ at the level of the particular and of the universal, that is, at the level of hypostasis and nature. What has not been discussed yet is the role simultaneous union and distinction have in the relation *between* the two natures in Christ. Here two notions of particular interest for Maximus' theology will be addressed: 'union without confusion' (ἀσύγχυτος ἕνωσις)[1] and 'interpenetration' (περιχώρησις).[2] We shall begin this chapter with a discussion on the views of the Neoplatonist Porphyry concerning the union of body and soul, then move on to consider how this features in the Christologies of Cyril of Alexandria and Maximus, and finally end with a discussion on the notion of 'interpenetration'.

UNION WITHOUT CONFUSION

Porphyry

The question of the manner of union of body and soul was for the Neoplatonist Porphyry a pivotal one. He postulated that this was a 'union without confusion' (ἀσύγχυτος ἕνωσις); a position that was an innovation in Greek philosophy and which was later taken up by the Christians to describe the union of the divine and human natures in Christ.

[1] Here we shall concentrate on the usage of this phrase with respect to the body–soul analogy and Christ. There are other areas where it plays a significant role, cosmology in particular, but it also resonates, for example, in ecclesiology and anthropology.

[2] On the concept of *communicatio idiomatum* see Larchet, *La Divinisation*, 333–46; and Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 22–3.

Porphyry's argumentation on the union of body and soul can be found in his *Miscellaneous Inquiries* 7.[3] The discussion is primarily addressed to the Stoics. Starting from their language of mixture, Porphyry argues against the Stoic concept of the corporeity of soul and shows that there must be 'another manner of union'[4] apart from those which the Stoics applied to material things. These were 'blending' (κρᾶσις), 'combination' (μῖξις), 'joining' (σύνοδος), 'juxtaposition' (παράθεσις), and 'confusion' (σύγχυσις). For example, 'blending' happens when water and wine are mixed, and 'juxtaposition' is the way in which grains in a heap relate to one another. The strongest of the five terms is 'confusion'. It involves an erasure of the united elements as such (συμφθαρῆναι) and results in a third element with new qualities.[5] The union that Porphyry is after should somehow combine the density of confusion and the imperishability and the clear distinction of the elements in juxtaposition.

According to Porphyry, soul is an immaterial and intelligible being, and intelligible beings are by nature such that cannot suffer any alteration. Hence their immortality. The soul, as the life principle, is there to animate the body, to give life to it, and if the soul changed and thus ceased to be life, there could be no living human nature. Consequently, since any mixing of material things involves alteration, the Stoic materialistic terminology proves inadequate for expressing this 'divine and wondrous

[3] Porphyry, *Fragmenta* (Smith), 278–90; and Nemesius of Emesa, *Nat. hom.* (Morani), 38–42. An English translation is provided in W. Telfer (ed.), *Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesius of Emesa: The Catechetical Lectures/ On the Nature of Man* (The Library of Christian Classics 4, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1955), 293–8. The argument is attributed to Ammonius Sakkas by Nemesius of Emesa in the *De natura hominis* 3, but modern scholarship, especially Heinrich Dörrie, has argued—even if not conclusively—that the actual source was Porphyry. See Heinrich Dörrie, *Porphyrius' 'Symmikta Zetemata': Ihre Stellung in System und Geschichte des Neuplatonismus nebst einem Kommentar zu dem Fragmenten* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1959), 12–24 and 55; Grillmeier, *Christ,* vol. ii, part 2, 34–5 and 200–1; Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968), 109–10; and Daley, '"A Richer Union"', 254–6. A similar discussion can be found in Porphyry's *Sent.* 33 (Lamberz), 35–8.

[4] 'ἕτερος τρόπος … κοινωνίας' (*Sent.* 33, Lamberz, 38: 2–4).

[5] For these terms see Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol. ii, part 2, 39–40 and 205; and Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, vol. i: *Faith, Trinity, Incarnation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), 372 ff.

blending'[6] of body and soul. Porphyry, therefore, suggests that there is a special manner of union between an intelligible and a sensible thing.

> It is in the nature of intelligible beings both to be capable of union with things adapted to receive them, just as much as if they were things that perish when they are united, and to remain, nevertheless, unconfused with them while in union, and imperishable, just as though they were merely juxtaposed.[7]

There is union but no change or annihilation. It is worth noting here that *sympathy* between body and soul is essential for Porphyry's argument: it proves that there is a union. On the other hand, the soul's individual operation during sleep shows its distinctiveness from the body. Porphyry's corollary is the famous 'union without confusion' which he illustrates by the metaphor of light blending with air.[8]

> It follows of necessity that when intelligible beings are in union with bodies, they do not perish in company with those bodies. So the soul is united to the body, and, further, *united without confusion*. … The soul is incorporeal, and yet it has established its presence in every part of the body, just as much as if it were a partner to union involving the sacrifice of its proper nature. Nevertheless, it remains uncorrupted by body, just as if it were something quite distinct from it. Thus, on the one hand, the soul preserves its own independent unity of being, and on the other, it modifies whatever it indwells, in accordance with its own life, while itself suffering no reciprocal change. For, as the presence of the sun transforms the air into light, making the air luminous by uniting light with air, at once maintaining them distinct and yet melting them together, so likewise the soul is united to the body and yet remains distinct from it.[9]

It is not at all surprising that the Fathers—St Cyril of Alexandria in the first place—were ready to make use of this idea in their Christology, especially if we bear in mind that soul for Porphyry was not just a created life principle, but a *νοητόν*, an intelligible and eternal being which originated from the divine world of Forms. The union of body and soul was one in which the sensible and the intelligible realities came

[6] Porphyry, *Ad Gaurum* 10. 5, quoted in Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, 89.

[7] Nemesius, *Nat. hom.* 3 (Morani), 39: 17–20 [= Porphyry, *Miscellaneous Inquiries*, 7].

[8] See E. L. Fortin, *Christianisme et culture philosophique au cinquième siècle: la querelle de l'âme humaine en occident* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1959), 111–28; Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, 109–10.

[9] *Nat. hom.* 3 (Morani), 40: 9–11, 40: 19–1: 2 [= Porphyry, *Miscellaneous Inquiries* 7].

together. It was not a union between two material objects but a union between incorporeal and corporeal natures. As the Neoplatonists drew the fundamental ontological divide between these two realities (the intelligible and the sensible)—something which the Christians drew between the uncreated and the created—a union of soul and body corresponded to no less than a union of God and man in Christian terms. A terminology which could bridge the ontological gulf and unite the realms on either side of the divide was very welcome to Christian theology.

The body–soul simile, however, could serve only as an analogy for the Christian Fathers, because, on the one hand, in the person of Christ, God assumed both a human body *and soul*, and, on the other hand, the union of the two natures in Christ was to be sought at the level of hypostasis, rather than at the level of nature.

Cyril of Alexandria

Porphyry's analysis of the union of body and soul heavily influenced the way in which Cyril of Alexandria discusses the question of the manner of union of the two natures. Cyril definitely knew Porphyry's works; he quotes several of them in *Contra Julianum*.[10] His terminology of the manner of union clearly draws on Porphyry's *Miscellaneous Inquiries* and *Sententiae*; even the structure of his argumentation betrays a certain familiarity with these texts. Also the body–soul analogy, of which Cyril makes considerable use in his Christology, creates a strong link between the two men. In the *Scholia de incarnatione unigeniti*,[11] he enumerates the terms—more or less the same as in Porphyry—which should not be used in relation to Christ concluding that the only proper word to be used is 'union' (ἕνωσις).

Cyril, as we have seen above, compares the union of the two natures in Christ to the human being which, although made of body and soul, is one. He admits the obvious defects of such an analogy and states that 'Emmanuel' is above every analogy. For example, compassion between body and soul, which in Porphyry's argument was the *sine*

[10] See *Juln.* (PG 76), 645B, 781B, 817BC, and 977B.
[11] *Schol. inc.* (ACO ser. 1, tom. 1, vol. v, part 1), 219–31.

qua non,[12] in the Christological context would lead to heresy. In this analogy, soul and body represent the divine and the human aspect of Christ respectively. If, therefore, the soul *suffers with* the body at the human level, in Christ this would mean that his divine nature *suffered with* his human nature, which simply was incompatible with orthodoxy. Interestingly, then, Nemesius, in whose treatise *On the Nature of Man* Porphyry's discussion is preserved, comments on this particular weakness of the analogy.

> The above arguments [concerning unconfused union] would apply even more exactly to the union of the divine Word with his humanity. For he continued thus in union, without confusion, and without being circumscribed, in a different manner from the soul. For the soul, being one of the things in process of completion, and because of its propriety to body, seems even in some way to suffer with it, sometimes mastering it, and sometimes being mastered by it. But the divine Word suffers no alteration from the fellowship which he has with the body and the soul. In sharing with them his own godhead, he does not partake of their infirmity. He is one with them, and yet he continues in that state in which he was, before his entry into that union. This manner of mingling or union is something quite new. The Word mingles with body and soul, and yet remains throughout unmixed, unconfused, uncorrupted, untransformed, not co-suffering but only co-acting with them, not perishing with them, nor changing as they change.[13]

Like Porphyry, Cyril, too, in his own context rejects the use of the term 'blending' on the grounds that it introduces 'confusion'. 'Confusion' would mean the destruction of the divine and the human in Christ and the coming-into-being of a *tertium quid*. Also other terms such as 'combination' and 'juxtaposition' Cyril regards as inadequate. The only acceptable term is 'union' (ἕνωσις). Thus Cyril quite clearly has in mind the kind of union of which Porphyry spoke: a union without confusion. Cyril writes: 'But we say that Jesus Christ is one and the same knowing the difference of natures (διαφορὰ φύσεων) and guarding them without confusion in relation to each other (ἀσύγχυτοι ἀλλήλαις).'[14] It seems reasonably clear that Cyril took the concept of

[12] Plotinus, in contrast, is of the opinion that the soul remains unaffected by the body's 'passions'. See Norris, *Manhood and Christ*, 30–1.

[13] *Nat. hom.* 3 (Morani), 42: 9–22; translation in Telfer, *Cyril & Nemesius*, 300–1.

[14] *Schol. inc.* 5 (ACO ser. 1, tom. 1, vol. v, part 1), 222: 32–3.

'union without confusion' from Porphyrian anthropology, placed it in a new environment and in so doing prepared its way for Chalcedonian Christology.[15]

Maximus

Coming now to Maximus, we have seen several times already that for him the wholeness both of nature and person is of major importance. Since confusion is something which involves destruction of a nature, it is thereby something to be avoided at all cost. On the other hand, in Christology, separation is the monster that destroys personal unity.[16]

> [I]t is altogether devout to confess two natures, dissimilar in essence, that have come together in an unspeakable union, and to hold the opinion that they have remained unconfused also after the union. To say that they remain unconfused does not introduce any division … but signifies that the difference has remained unchanged. For difference and division are not the same thing.[17]

The greatness of the notion of 'union without confusion' lies in the fact that it can accommodate at once both unity and differentiation within one being. 'No' to confusion means 'yes' to difference, and hence to natural integrity; 'yes' to union means 'no' to separation, and hence also 'yes' to personal integrity.

In the following excerpt, Maximus draws together a great deal of his Christological insights. This is an allegory on Zacharias' prophetic vision of the flying sickle[18] whose sharp cutting edge serves as an image of the utter inviolability of unity and difference in Christ.

> 'Sickle' is, therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son and Logos of God, who in himself is and ever remains simple by nature but who for my sake became composite by hypostasis, as he knows how, through assuming

[15] See E. L. Fortin, 'The *Definitio Fidei* of Chalcedon and its Philosophical Sources', *SP* 5 (1962), 489–98.

[16] Heretics in Maximus' ranking were always either 'confusers' or 'separators'. A good example of this can be found in the fifth session of the acts of the Lateran council 649, a document inspired to a great extent by Maximus. See ACO, ser. 2, vol. i, 320–32 for the 'confusers' and 332–4 for the 'separators'.

[17] *Ep.* 12 (PG 91), 469A.

[18] Zach. 5: 1–4.

flesh animated by an intelligent soul. He neither accepted a fusion (*σύγχυσις*) into one nature on account of his utter hypostatic union with the flesh, nor was he severed into a duality of Sons due to his utter natural difference from the flesh. (By 'utter' [lit. 'edge' of the sickle] of the hypostatic union I mean the absolute undividedness, and by the 'utter' of natural difference the complete unconfusion and unchangeability.) … For the union was of two natures into one hypostasis, not into one nature, so that the hypostatic oneness is shown to result by union from the natures which have come together, and the difference in natural particularity of the natures united in an unbreakable union is believed to remain free from every change and confusion.[19]

If there is something new in Maximus' treatment of 'union without confusion', it is its extension to include activity. What is true of the natures themselves is also true of what belongs to them, activity being one of the essential constituents. Christ himself, Maximus concludes, is the unconfused union of the activities: 'By fitting these [divine and human] things one into the other he has demonstrated the natures, of which he was a hypostasis, and their essential activities, that is movements, of which he was a union without confusion.'[20]

INTERPENETRATION

The sibling of 'union without confusion', the notion of 'interpenetration' (*περιχώρησις*)[21] was first made use of by Gregory Nazianzen among the Christians—though he used it only once, and the meaning even of this instance is disputed.[22] Maximus is the next person to have taken advantage of the notion, and it was he who established its place in Christology. St John of Damascus, in turn, is the first person known to have applied it to Trinitarian theology. Through his *Expositio fidei* it became more widespread and eventually found its way to the

[19] *Qu. Thal.* 62 (CCSG 22), 117: 29–39, 44–50.

[20] *Ambig.* 4: 74–8 (CCSG 48), 16.

[21] See Verna Harrison, 'Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers', *SVThQ* 35/1 (1991), 53–65; Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 418–28; and Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 21–36.

[22] See Harrison, 'Perichoresis', 54–7.

fourteenth-century compilation *De pietate* of Joseph the Philosopher, more commonly known as *De sacrosancto Trinitate* of Ps.-Cyril,[23] a treatise which for long was regarded as a seventh-century text and the originator of the idea of trinitarian *perichoresis*.[24]

Perichoresis often comes—at least in Maximus' works—in a phrase εἰς ἄλληλα περιχώρησις (= penetration into each other), and sometimes in another similar phrase but without the prefix δι' ἀλλήλων χώρησις (= penetration through each other) which also is important. In the word *perichoresis*, the more meaningful part is the *choresis* rather than the *peri-*, which tends to draw one's attention when investigating this idea. The preposition *peri-* is in this case quite clearly an emphatic prefix,[25] rather than a prepositional one with the meaning 'around'. The actual preposition comes with the phrase, and is *eis* ('into') followed by the object in the accusative—though *perichoresis* has had the other meaning, too, and is then usually translated as 'rotation'.

As a notion, interpenetration is very similar to 'union without confusion'. And normally where the term *perichoresis* appears in Maximus' text, there also the phrase 'union without confusion' is present. Maximus uses *perichoresis* to describe the interpenetration of essentially different natures. With the interpenetration, natures are utterly united but not altered *qua* natures. The wholeness of both the union and the distinction is strongly emphasized. Maximus is careful to point this out by making it clear that there is a *peri-chôrêsis* but not a *meta-chôrêsis*, that is, there is an interpenetration but not a change of one nature into the other.

> And this is truly marvellous and astounding to all: the same one is wholly among men remaining entirely within its own nature, and the same one being wholly among the divine remains completely unmoving from its natural properties. For according to the teaching of our Fathers inspired by God this was an interpenetration (περιχώρησις) of the natures, and of their natural

[23] PG 77, 1120 ff. Vassa Conticello has shown that this treatise forms a part (*De pietate*) of Joseph the Philosopher's (d. *c.*1330) *Encyclopedia* and is a compilation from John's *Expositio fidei* and Nicephorus Blemmydes' (1197–1272) *Sermo ad monachos suos* (PG 142, 583–606). See Vassa S. Conticello, 'Pseudo-Cyril's "De SS. Trinitate": A Compilation of Joseph the Philosopher', *OCP* 61 (1995), 117–29.

[24] See, for example, G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1952), 280–1.

[25] See H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones, and R. McKenzie (eds.), *A Greek–English Lexicon, with a Supplement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940[9], supplement 1968), 'περί'/F.IV, 1367.

properties, one into the other, but not a change or declension (μεταχώρησις ἤ μετάπτωσις) on account of the union—which is proper to those who malevolently turn the union into confusion. …[26]

The question that comes up every now and then is whether there is a mutual interpenetration of the natures or only a penetration of the human nature by the divine.[27] It seems to me that in Maximus this depends on the context in any given case. The metaphor he is fond of repeating is, as one might expect, that of incandescent iron/sword, but there are also the metaphors of air permeated by light, of reason and conception,[28] and that of the union of body and soul.[29]

For mutual interpenetration Maximus employs the first three metaphors. The natures of fire and iron interpenetrate one into the other, and the result of this is seen in the double effect of cutting and burning of the red-hot sword.

> Just as the utter and complete union and mixture with fire does not alter an iron sword from its own essential being, but the sword undergoes what belongs to the fire since it becomes fire by virtue of the union. It still weighs down and cuts, for it has suffered no maiming of its own nature nor has it at all changed from its natural activity—despite the fact that it exists with the fire in one and the same hypostasis and accomplishes the things that belong to its nature, that is cutting, without separation [from the fire]. And again it also does what belongs to union, which is burning. For burning now belongs to it, as does cutting to the fire, by virtue of their utter interpenetration into each other and their exchange.[30]

Yet, in another place, where he defends the doctrine of natural will and the deification of Christ's humanity and human will, he is perfectly happy to use the same metaphor to present a more unilateral penetration.[31]

[26] *Disp. Biz.*: 531–8 (CCSG 39), 121–3.

[27] See e.g. Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus*, 257–9. For a discussion see Larchet, *La Divinisation*, 335–46, and Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 23–4.

[28] *Pyrr.* (PG 91), 337CD.

[29] *Ambig.* 42 (PG 91), 1320B.

[30] *Opusc.* 16 (PG 91), 189CD.

[31] The same is true of the metaphor of body and soul, 'the soul being united to the body entirely penetrating it without confusion according to the union' (*Ambig.* 42, PG 91, 1320B).

Confirming the truth of the Incarnation, he became everything for our sakes and acted voluntarily on our behalf, in no way deceiving in respect to our essence or in respect to any of its natural and blameless passions, since he both deified the essence with all that belongs to it, like an incandescent iron, …, penetrating it thoroughly and to the utter degree on account of the union, and becoming one with it without confusion according to one and the same hypostasis.[32]

If we now look at the context, we shall discover that in the last two examples Maximus speaks of the *deification* of the humanity of Christ by the Logos. There is, one might say, a vertical penetration. The Logos deifies the human nature; the Logos penetrates and the humanity is being penetrated, as the soul penetrates the body.

In the first example, in contrast, Maximus is defending the doctrine of the two natural activities. It is vital for him to show that they both are there and that they both are active and real, yet in an unbreakable union. This could be called a horizontal and symmetrical interpenetration. Two natures with their natural activities penetrate each other in such a way that their natural characteristics are preserved unharmed but are allowed to form one whole with a double effect. This, in conclusion, could be taken as the culmination of the principle of union and distinction in Maximus' Christology as a whole:

It is just like the way the cutting edge of a sword plunged in fire becomes burning hot and the heat acquires a cutting edge (for just as the fire is united to the iron, so also is the burning heat of the fire united to the cutting edge of the iron) and the iron becomes burning hot by its union with the fire, and the fire acquires a cutting edge by union with the iron. Neither suffers any change on account of the exchange [of properties] with the other in union, but each remains unchanged in its own [being] also in the identity that the one has with the other by virtue of the union. In the same way in the mystery of the divine Incarnation, too, the godhead and the humanity were hypostatically united, but neither of them departed from its natural activity on account of the union, nor possessed after the union its activity unrelated to or separated from its co-subsisting partner.[33]

[32] *Opusc.* 4 (PG 91), 60BC.

[33] *Ambig.* 5: 272–84 (CCSG 48), 33.

Part IV

Universe, Church, Scripture

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9

The Creation Song

In our investigation into the different ways in which the principle of union and distinction finds an expression in Maximus' thought, the study now moves away from the technicalities of Christological controversy into areas where a number of relatively variegated themes emerge. Cosmos, Church, and Scripture: each of these has its own particular mysteries to be unravelled, yet the one mystery of the presence of the Logos gives them coherence. The Logos is their unity. He, as it were, shines through the contingent as through some prism and thus 'refracted' into a multitude of colours makes himself accessible to us. By so doing he invites us to his eschatological kingdom where everything discovers its true being and where everything, inseparably unified yet without confusion, finds its place in the Logos.

THE CONNECTION

The perennial question of the connection between God, or the first principle, and the universe, and Maximus' famous theme of the *logoi* of beings[1] will be our starting point here. Unlike in Neoplatonism, which represents a very strong type of participation metaphysics in

[1] As a whole Maximus' cosmology is a vast subject and has received a number of different interpretations; here we shall limit the discussion to aspects relevant to our subject matter only. The most recent discussions can be found in Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 83–173; and Perl, *Methexis*, 147–79. On the *logoi* in general, see e.g. Irénée-Henri Dalmais, 'La Théorie des "logoi" des créatures chez S. Maxime le Confesseur', *RSPhTh* 36 (1952), 244–9; Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 166–80; Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 72–9; and Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 83–104.

which the connection amounts to nothing less than a continuum,[2] in Maximus' thought there is a form of participation which could be described as 'theophanic':[3] the uncreated God makes himself manifest in and through the created in order to draw us through himself to himself as he is in himself.

The connection between God and creation in Maximus' system exists through the *logoi* of beings. These *logoi* are, according to Maximus, God's intentions or wills for his creation. They pre-exist eternally in the Logos as his wills, and are realized in time. The *logoi* are not the beings themselves, but are what God, as it were, in his mind plans to create.[4] Maximus also points out that in scriptural language the *logoi* are called 'predestinations' and 'divine wills'—he invokes the authority of Dionysius the Areopagite[5] and Clement of Alexandria.[6]

The *logoi* are God's ideas or plans for the creatures, and when realized they seem to be like things coming out of 'God's head', as in the 'Creation Song' of the Lion Aslan described in this passage of a well-known children's tale:

> All this time the Lion's song, and his stately prowl, to and fro, backwards and forwards, was going on. …
>
> Polly was finding the song more and more interesting because she thought she was beginning to see the connection between the music and the things that were happening. When a line of dark firs sprang up on a ridge about a hundred yards away she felt that they were connected with a series of deep, prolonged notes which the Lion had sung a second before. And when he burst into a rapid series of lighter notes she was not surprised to see primroses suddenly appearing in every direction.
>
> Thus, with an unspeakable thrill, she felt quite certain that all the things were coming (as she said) 'out of the Lion's head'.

[2] See e.g. Proclus, *Inst.* 28–30 (Dodds), 32–4.

[3] Eriugena made use of this terminology but his interpretation is considerably different from the one presented here.

[4] Tollefsen argues for a type of exemplarism (*Christocentric Cosmology*, 24–59).

[5] Cf. *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1085A. *Logoi* in Dionysius' view pre-exist in God as paradigms, wills, and predeterminations (*D.n.* 5. 8, PTS 33, 187: 17–8: 1813).

[6] Cf. *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1085A. The reference is unknown, but Maximus may be referring to Clement's lost work *On Providence*.

When you listened to his song you heard the things he was making up; when you looked round you, you saw them.[7]

Everything in the created order receives being in accordance with the *logoi*. And everything is different owing to the differentiation of the *logoi*, just as the firs and the primroses followed the different sounds in Aslan's song, differentiated already in the 'Lion's head' no doubt. '[It is] by means of these *logoi*,' Maximus writes, 'and even more so because of them, that the different beings differ [from one another]. For the different beings would not differ from one another, had the *logoi* by means of which they have come into being no difference.'[8] Differentiation in the cosmos springs from God's very own purpose for the universe. It is his pre-eternal will that there is multiplicity and variety in the universe.

How does Maximus then understand the connection between God and the creation through the *logoi*? In *Ambiguum* 7, where Maximus discusses the puzzling phrase of Gregory Nazianzen, 'we are a portion of God'[9]—an expression which had been interpreted literally by his contemporary Origenists—Maximus makes it clear that creation comes from non-being.[10] He then proceeds to examine the *logoi*, first, as it were, locating them:

In God, the *logoi* of all are firmly fixed.

And it is said that God knows all beings according to these *logoi* before their creation, since they are in him and with him; they are in God who is the truth of all [beings].[11]

He then makes the distinction between the actual beings and the *logoi* in accordance with which these same beings come into being in time:

[This is so] even though all these very beings, those that are and those that are to be, were not brought into being together with their *logoi* or their being

[7] C. S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (Tales of Narnia, London: Diamond Books [HarperCollins Publishers], 1998; first published in 1955), 101.

[8] *Ambig.* 22 (PG 91), 1256D.

[9] Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 14. 7 (PG 35), 865C.

[10] '… beings have been brought into existence by God from non-being through reason and wisdom' (*Ambig.* 7, PG 91, 1077C). 'For having the *logoi* of created beings existent before the ages in his benevolent will, he from non-existence established the visible and invisible creation in accordance with these *logoi*.' (*Ambig.* 7, PG 91, 1080A).

[11] Ibid. 1081A.

known by God, but each being was created at the appropriate time according to its *logos* in harmony with the wisdom of the Creator, thus receiving its particular concrete being in actuality—since God is always Creator in actuality whereas these do not yet exist in actuality but only in potentiality.[12]

For the connection to work between the rational beings and God through the *logoi*, Maximus maintains, there must be movement from the creature's part towards the Creator. The rational creatures come to be in God if they move according to the *logos* which is in God. Only this enables them to participate in God in a way which leads them to a real communion with him, communion which will allow them to be characterized as 'a portion of God'. Without such movement they will simply fall away from God.

> Each of the intellectual and rational beings, whether angels or human beings, through the very *logos* according to which each was created (*logos* that is in God and is *with God*) is and is called 'a portion of God' … Surely then, if someone moves according to this *logos*, he will come to be in God, in whom the *logos* of his being pre-exists as his beginning and cause. Furthermore, if he moves by desire and wants to attain nothing else than his own beginning, he does not fall away from God. Rather, by constant straining towards God, he becomes God and is called a 'portion of God' because he has become fit to participate in God.[13]

Participation

Despite the fact that Maximus speaks in terms of participation, reading into his thought the kind of participation Neoplatonism represents is misleading.[14] To accommodate such a reading it has been argued that the 'non-being' out of which God creates the world is God himself, since he as 'beyond-being' can be called 'non-being'. As an idea this draws on Dionysius the Areopagite and his interpretation of this

[12] Ibid. 1081AB.

[13] Ibid. 1080BC; translation in Blowers and Wilken, *Cosmic Mystery*, 55–6.

[14] Tollefsen has rightly argued that we cannot take it for granted that the Fathers had a clearly defined concept of participation. As for what such a concept in Maximus' thought might amount to, he makes some suggestions in his article 'Did St Maximus the Confessor have a Concept of Participation?', *SP* 37 (2001), 618–25.

apophatic expression—and Dionysius' usage is perfectly legitimate.[15] But to draw the conclusion that creation *ex nihilo* is, in actual fact, God's self-creation, can only be erroneous. This interpretation was advanced already by John Scotus Eriugena,[16] and it has been recently taken up by some modern thinkers.[17] Texts such as the following could easily be read in this light.

> The same in itself, by virtue of its infinite superiority, is inexpressible and incomprehensible, and is beyond all creation and the difference and distinction which is and is understood in relation to it. And the same is made known and multiplied proportionately in every being which is from him. The same also recapitulates everything in himself. By this *logos* there is being and remaining, and from this the creatures, in as much as they have come into being and on condition that they have come into being, participate in God both remaining [still] and moving. For everything participates proportionately in God on account of coming into being from God,[18] either according to intellect, reason, sense or vital motion, or according to essential and habitual fitness, as the great and God-revealing Dionysius the Areopagite maintains.[19]

Beings do participate in God through their *logoi*, this is quite clear, and the Neoplatonic *scala naturae* does find its way into Maximus' cosmology, but it is language which Maximus takes from Dionysius the Areopagite (who for Maximus is a first-century apologist) and which he reads *within* the context of creation out of non-being. One is too easily tempted to understand Maximus in a more directly Neoplatonic way because of this language, but the fundamental distinction between

[15] See Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 88–9.

[16] Cf. *Periph.* 3: 2541–765 (CCCM 163). See also Carlos Steel and D. W. Hadley, 'John Scotus Eriugena', in *Companion*, 401–2.

[17] See Philip Sherrard, *Christianity: Lineaments of a Sacred Tradition* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 232–44, esp. 239; Eric Perl, 'Metaphysics and Christology in Maximus Confessor and Eriugena', in B. McGinn and W. Otten (eds.), *Eriugena: East and West* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1994), 253–70; id., *Methexis*, 118 and 127; and id., 'Maximus Confessor', in *Companion*, 432–3.

[18] As Lewis Ayres in a recent article on Athanasius has pointed out, the phrase "*ἐκ Θεοῦ*" was used not only in connection with the uncreated Son but also in connection with the created order which was the reason for Athanasius to adopt the expression "*ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας του Πατρός*" to differentiate between the Son (who was properly speaking 'from God') and the creation. (See Ayres, 'Athanasius' Initial Defense of the Term '*Ομοούσιος*: Rereading the *De Decretis*', *JECS* 3/12 (2004), 341–2, 346.

[19] *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1080AB.

the created and the uncreated is so deeply embedded in his theology that such a reading will inevitably lead to distortion.

Again, creation, although deriving from non-being, exists *because* of God, and as God's creation. The Lion's song quoted above gives, I think, a very truthful image of this understanding of creation. The connection between the creatures and the creator is presented in this figure as different musical notes. With the notes everything seems to proceed, as the young observer puts it, 'out of the Lion's head'. Yet, it is clear that this is not a process of emanation but an act of creation. It is *not* the Lion, as it were, unfolding into the creatures. It is not his self-creation. Yet, it *is* the *Lion's* creation, a creation which expresses and realizes *his* will and ideas. Creation, therefore, participates in God as creation rather than as the unfolded many emanating from the One. While there is no essential continuum, there is a union between God and creation, a simultaneous union and distinction; the ontological gulf is bridged without being violated.

If, in sum, Maximus expresses the 'distinction' through the language of the ever-enduring ontological gulf between the created and the uncreated, he equally eagerly displays the 'union' in the language of the Neoplatonic scheme of participation (filtered through Dionysius). But it is these two *together*, not the one without the other, it seems to me, that constitute Maximus' own 'Creation Song'.[20]

Immanence

If we now consider the question from creation's viewpoint, we arrive at God's immanence in beings. Maximus speaks of God's being present in all things together and, at the same time, in each and every one in particular. But unlike for the Neoplatonists, for whom this was a crux, for Maximus unity and difference with respect to God's presence in the universe is not a philosophical dilemma but a cause for wonder and for the acknowledgement of the limits of the human intelligence. He not only takes it for granted that this is how things are in the universe

[20] 'This delineates a concept of participation worked out within a Christian system with the aid of Neoplatonic categories' (Tollefsen, 'Did St Maximus', 625).

but he also assumes that it is a commonplace and uses it as a proof against the Eunomian cause (i.e. against those who think they can know God in his very essence).

If, therefore, in accordance with truthful reasoning, every divine energy individually intimates through itself the whole God without partition in the *logos* by which each being exists, who then can understand and say how God both is wholly in all beings in general and in each in particular, undividedly and without partition, neither being contracted according to the particular existence of any one [of the beings] nor contracting the differences of beings according to the single wholeness of all, but being truly all in all and never departing from his own indivisible singleness?[21]

Intriguing picture: God entirely present in the universe as a whole and in each and every part individually—one could hardly expect to find a more 'theophanic' understanding of the cosmos.[22] Yet, clearly, Maximus does not promote here a form of pantheism or of emanationism; rather, his is a cosmology in which God wants to make himself manifest to his creatures through his creatures in order that he might—hiding in creation—draw us through himself to himself as he is in himself.

The Logos and the *logoi*

Maximus' 'theophanic' cosmology becomes even more forceful when he advances the idea that the Logos and the *logoi* are in actual fact one and the same thing.[23] He distinguishes three different levels in relation to the Logos which could be designated as (1) 'the apophatic Logos', (2) 'the Logos of the *logoi*', and (3) 'the *logoi* of the Logos'. In the following passage all these levels become apparent:

Excepting (1) the supreme and apophatic theology of the Logos, according to which he is not called or understood … as the being beyond being, and

[21] *Ambig.* 22 (PG 91), 1257AB.

[22] See also *Qu. Thal.* 15 (CCSG 7), 103–5, where Maximus asserts the presence of the Holy Spirit in all beings.

[23] For the possible Plotinian background, see Ch. 1: 'The Universal Intellect', here above. See also the article of Chrestos Térézis, 'Aspects de la théorie des "Formes" chez G. Pachymère', *Byzantion*, 74/1 (2004), 133.

according to which he is participated by no-one in any respect, excepting this, then, the one Logos is the many *logoi* and the many *logoi* are the one Logos. (2) The one Logos is the many *logoi* according to the benevolent creative and preserving procession of the One towards beings. And (3) the many *logoi* are the one Logos as bringing them all together according to the reference and providence which returns and guides the many into the One, like as into an all-governing principle or a centre which contains the beginnings of the radii that extend from it.[24]

Clearly a very Dionysian scheme: apophatic theology combined with procession and return. The first level safeguards the Logos' transcendence. At the second level we see the Logos moving outwards: the differentiated *logoi* are realized in creation in the various beings. And Maximus is very careful to keep the balance between unity and difference: 'Who would not recognize … the one Logos as the many *logoi*, distinguished together with the *undivided difference* of created things, on account of their *unconfused particularity* in relation to one another and themselves?'[25]

The one Logos is differentiated on account of the 'unconfused particularity' of created beings. Earlier we mentioned that particularity is produced by difference, and difference in turn is produced by the *logoi* that are different. It is precisely differentiation (done so that beings can make up a harmonious manifold) that is the aspect *par excellence* which betrays the activity of the Logos as Wisdom in creation. It is the characteristic of the Logos himself to produce 'unconfused particularity' coupled with 'undivided difference' in creation.

Viewing the situation from the opposite direction, Maximus asks: 'Who would not recognize … the many *logoi* as the one Logos, the essentially existing and truly subsistent God the Logos of God the Father, by virtue of reference of all [beings] to him?'[26] Here creation

[24] *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1081BC. See Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 168–73.

[25] *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1077C; italics mine. Here Maximus' language echoes Gregory Nyssen's language of the Trinity. See *Eun.* 1 (GNO 1), 107–8; (Ps.-Basil) *Ep.* 38 (Patrucco 1), 78–194. That this language also resonates in the famous Chalcedonian Definition by no means should allow one to draw the conclusion that Maximus' discussion on the Logos and the *logoi* in *Ambigua* 7 and elsewhere is an elaboration of Chalcedonian Christology.

[26] *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1077C.

reaches its ultimate unity in the reference of all beings through their *logoi* to the one Logos. But once again we find a unity which is without confusion. It is the Logos himself who by himself exists without confusion, as the principle and cause of all.[27] There is, therefore, a simultaneous union and distinction in the Logos himself, a simultaneous union and distinction which he communicates to the created order through the *logoi*.

PROVIDENCE AND JUDGEMENT

The reflection in creation of the unconfused union of the *logoi* leads us to the presence of providence in the cosmos, as harmony and differentiation in the universe go hand in hand with the oneness of God and his providence. A harmonious whole is dependent on the differentiation of its parts and a governing principle which organizes the different parts into a harmonious entity,[28] and in Maximus' 'Creation Song' this is explained in terms of providence[29] and judgement.[30]

[27] Ibid.

[28] We find something similar in Dionysius: 'The effects of this inexhaustible power enter into men and animals and plants and the entire nature of the universe, and strengthen all those that are unified in their mutual love and communion, and preserve the distinct in existence in accordance with the peculiar *logos* and definition of each, without confusion or merging. … And this power preserves the mutual harmony of the interpenetrating elements distinct and yet inseparable' (*D.n.* 8.5, PTS 33, 202: 6–9, 17–19). See also René Roques, *L'Univers dionysien: structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris: F. Aubier, Éditions Montaigne, 1954), 66–7 and 87.

[29] Maximus on providence, see *Ambig.* 10. 19 (PG 91), 1133C; *Ambig.* 10. 42 (PG 91), 1188C–1193C; *Ambig.* 11 (PG 91), 1205D–1208A; *Cap. theol.* II. 16 (PG 90), 1132B; *Car.* I. 96 (PG 90), 981C; *Ep.* 1 (PG 91), 368D–369C; *Ep.* 10 (PG 91), 452A; *Exp. Ps. 59*: 123 (CCSG 23), 11; *Or. Dom.*: 45 (CCSG 23), 29; *Qu. dub.* 120–1 (CCSG 10), 88–9; *Qu. Thal.* 2 (CCSG 7), 51; *Qu. Thal.* 53 (CCSG 7), 431; *Qu. Thal.* 54 (CCSG 7), 457; and *Qu. Thal.* 64 (CCSG 22), 239.

[30] On the theme of judgement and providence in Maximus see Paul M. Blowers, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy in Makimus the Confessor: An Investigation of the* Quaestiones ad Thalassium (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991) 158 n. 45; id., 'The Logology of Maximus the Confessor in his Criticism of Origenism', in *Origeniana Quinta* (Leuven, 1992), 570–6; Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 69–72; Gersh, *From Iamblichus*, 226–7; Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 36–7; Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 135–6 (and 531 in the German edition); and Berthold, 'History and Exegesis', 395–8.

Movement is indicative of providence of beings. Through it we behold the unvarying essential identity of each of the created beings according to its kind, and similarly its inviolable manner of existence. And through it we perceive the One who preserves and protects all beings in accordance with the *logos* of each well distinct from one another in an ineffable unity.[31]

Difference is indicative of judgement. Through it we are taught that God is the wise distributor of the *logoi* of each particular being. This we learn from the natural potency in each being; potency which is commensurate to the underlying essence.[32]

Over and over again Maximus emphasizes the importance of wholeness and integrity of beings in the cosmos, both at the level of the generic being and at the level of the particular being, and providence plays a significant role in preserving this wholeness.

The combination of all things with all things and their distinction from all things, and the ever-preserved succession of each and every being in accordance with the species, so that no-one suffers an alteration with respect to its *logos* of nature, or confuses or is confused with another being in this respect—all these things show that everything is held together by the providence of the Creator God.[33]

Wholeness is also central to his corrective of the Origenist understanding of providence and judgement:

When I [here] speak of providence (*πρόνοια*), I associate it with design (*νοῦς*), and I do not mean the converting providence or the providence which, as it were, dispenses the return of things subject to it from what is not fitting to what is fitting. Instead, I mean that providence which holds the universe together and preserves it [unharmed] according to the *logoi* according to which it was made in the first place.

And when I speak of judgement, I mean, not the chastening or, as it were, punitive judgement of sinners, but the saving and defining distribution of beings, in accordance with which each created thing, by the *logos* in accordance with which it exists, has an inviolable and unalterable constitution in its natural identity, just as from the beginning the fashioner determined and established that it was to be, what it was to be, how and of what kind it was to be.[34]

[31] *Ambig.* 10. 19 (PG 91), 1133C.
[32] Ibid. 1133CD.
[33] *Ambig.* 10. 42 (PG 91), 1189A.
[34] *Ambig.* 10. 19 (PG 91), 1133D–1136B.

Maximus is here working through the Origenist doctrines of converting providence and punitive judgement which form an integral part of the Origenist cosmology.[35] Because Maximus in the above text rejects these Origenist ideas, it is tempting to think that he in so doing rejects *any* such understanding of providence and judgement. But this would not be an accurate reading of the text. By saying that providence is that 'which holds the universe together and preserves it [unharmed] according to the *logoi*' and that judgement is 'the saving and defining distribution of beings' Maximus certainly undercuts the Origenist principle according to which the world exists as subsequent to a pre-eternal fall. And he defines judgement and providence in this way in order to underline the fact that he is addressing a cosmological issue, and not a moral one. The positive aspect of the matter has it that God is a judge and a provider even without the fall, and that he has these two aspects to him as the Creator of a manifold universe which he has created to be intrinsically differentiated and at once harmonious. Differentiation, in turn, is the condition of multiplicity on the one hand and of harmony on the other, and this differentiation is created in view of constituting a harmonious whole. It also shows God to be a wise judge who in the beginning gives to the beings what is proper to each. The preservation of this harmony is his task as the provider, but when it comes to human beings it is conditioned also by the way in which humans make use of their free will.

Once the positive side of judgement and providence has been established, their negative aspect can be taken into consideration. This is

[35] According to the version of Origenism which Maximus rebuts in his *Ambigua* 7 and 15 before the creation of the material world there was a primordial unity of intellects (or henad of the *logikoi*) united with God through contemplation. These were sated with contemplation and became lax, as a result of which they all moved and fell. At their fall, they cooled down (*ψύχομαι*) and thus became souls (*ψυχή*). To stop the fall, God created bodies of varying density, each according to the degree the *logikoi* had relaxed their contemplation. This was the so-called first judgement. The bodies functioned as a punitive means through pain but also as a means of return to the henad through contemplation. The restoration and rest of all the *logikoi* in the primordial unity in which all differentiation, names, and bodies are done away with, was the aim of providence. See Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 72–102; Blowers and Wilken, *Cosmic Mystery*, 23–5; Antoine Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica' d'Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'Origenism chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962), 37–43. See also Bunge, 'Hénade ou monade?', 69–91. In opposition to Guillaumont, Bunge argues against the attribution of the doctrine of henad to Evagrius.

a different effect of the same thing. Maximus is explicit about this: 'I do not for this reason think that there are two different kinds of providence and judgement. I recognize one and the same [judgement and providence] in potency, differentiated and multiform in its effects in relation to us.'[36] The beings which are endowed with free choice can violate this harmony by transgressing against their own *logos*. The result of such a transgression is a natural 'punishment' which from another angle appears as corrective or converting.[37] Here punitive judgement and converting providence do not correspond to the Origenist idea of the soul (the 'cooled-down' fallen intellect) getting rid of the created material world but rather to the idea of coming back to discover its true nature and meaning within a movement towards ever-well-being.[38]

THE UNIVERSE AND THE TREE OF PORPHYRY

A slightly different aspect to the discussion comes to the forefront when we consider Maximus' conception of the universe in the light of the Porphyrian Tree. In Chapter 1, we have already discussed the rudiments of Porphyrian logic and we have also seen how it was implemented in post-Chalcedonian Christology. As for how Maximus handles unity and differentiation in the universe in relation to Porphyry's logic,[39]

[36] *Ambig*. 10. 19 (PG 91), 1136AB. [37] See ibid 1136A.

[38] See *Qu. Thal*. 2: 12–22 (CCSG 7), 51, quoted in Ch. 1: 'Wholes and Parts', here above.

[39] For a discussion on the *logoi* in relation to the Porphyrian Tree, see Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 104–18. I do not find any grounds in Maximus to connect the Logos–*logoi* theme directly with the Porphyrian Tree, which, I think, is simply a different issue. These two themes are, I would argue, quite independent from each other and should not be confused. In fact, also Tollefsen expresses a certain hesitation when he says: 'Are they [the *logoi*] established as a transcendent Porphyrian tree in the Logos? … The question, however, seems immediately difficult to answer, first of all because I cannot find any textual evidence that clearly settles the matter' (111). It seems to me that this confusion may be due to the following identifications: (*a*) the identification of the *logoi* with the Platonic Forms (εἴδη) on the one hand, and (*b*) that of the Platonic Forms with the species (εἴδη) of the Porphyrian Tree, on the other hand—an identification which to me seems unjustified. From these two identifications there follows a third one: (*c*) that of the *logoi* with the species. Maximus clearly thinks that each species has a *logos* which pre-exists the coming-into-being of the species or of an individual instance of it (*Ambig*. 7, PG 91, 1080A), but this can hardly be a reason for their identification. Also, one may note that, as seen in the following discussion here below, the generic *logos* of 'being created' is clearly a different thing from the most generic genus of 'created being'. See also n. 47, here below.

he gives an account of this in the final section of *Ambiguum* 41*a* as a sequel to a discussion on the well-known five divisions.[40]

These five divisions—the division between God and the creation, the intelligible and the sensible, heaven and earth, paradise and the inhabited world, and male and female—were to be overcome by the human being as the crown and bond of unity of all creation. Since man failed to fulfil this task, God himself became incarnate in order to restore the universe.

> With us and through us he [i.e. Christ] encompasses the whole creation through its intermediaries and the extremities through their own parts. He binds about himself each with the other, tightly and indissolubly, paradise and the inhabited world, heaven and earth, things sensible and things intelligible, since he possesses like us sense and soul and mind, by which, as parts, he assimilates himself by each of the extremities to what is universally akin to each in the previously mentioned manner. Thus he divinely recapitulates the universe in himself, showing that the whole creation exists as one, like another human being, completed by the gathering together of its parts one with another in itself, and inclined towards itself by the whole of its existence, in accordance with the one, simple, undifferentiated and indifferent idea of production from nothing, in accordance with which the whole of creation admits of one and the same undiscriminated *logos,* as having 'non-being' prior to its 'being'.[41]

Maximus then gives a logical demonstration of how all the created things are united according to the natural *logos* of having come into being from non-being. On this basis he argues that all the things in the universe necessarily have something in common. There is differentiation, no doubt, but there is also unity: 'For all those beings, that are distinguished one from another by their particular differences, are united by their universal and common identities, and are pushed together towards oneness and sameness by a certain natural generic *logos*;' everything 'admits of one and the same undiscriminated *logos*, as having "non-being" prior to its "being".'[42] This is to say that everything within the universe from angels to daffodils and from stars to stones is created, and as such united.

[40] For an extensive discussion on the five divisions see Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 373–427.

[41] *Ambig.* 41 (PG 91), 1312AB.

[42] Ibid. 1312B.

This is where the Porphyrian Tree with its genera and species comes into the picture. Following Dionysius, Maximus speads out the Porphyrian branches and explains how the different ramifications are united: the various genera are united in the most generic genus, species in the genus, individuals in the species, and accidents in the subject. He, then, quotes Dionysius himself: 'There is no multiplicity which is without participation in the One … that which is many in its accidents is one in the subject, and that which is many in number or potentialities is one in species and that which is many in species is one in genus …'[43]

Clearly, the overall unity of the universe is produced by the most generic genus. We have not yet seen however what the most generic genus is. What Maximus says in *Ambiguum* 41 is that 'the various genera are united one with another according to "being" and are one and the same and undivided according to it'.[44]

Thus, Maximus calls the most generic genus 'being' or *οὐσία*. But how are we to understand this? Is not also God a 'being'? Does not also he have an *οὐσία*? First we should note that it is very likely that Maximus is referring to the *example* Porphyry gives in *Isagoge* 8, an example in which the most generic genus is *οὐσία*. Porphyry, though, makes it quite clear that according to Aristotle there is no such all-embracing genus as 'the being', *τὸ ὄν*.[45] 'Being' (*οὐσία* in this case), for Porphyry, is simply the highest genus of the particular example. For Maximus, in contrast, 'being' *is* an all-embracing genus.[46] It is, nevertheless, qualified by one thing, and that is createdness.

If we add to this the fact that the whole discussion in the last section of *Ambiguum* 41 draws heavily on Dionysius for whom *οὐσία* means

[43] *D.n.* 13. 2 (PTS 33), 227: 13–16/*Ambig.* 41 (PG 91), 1313A. Clearly Dionysius in his turn draws on Proclus who says that, '[e]very multiplicity in some way participates in the One' (*Inst.* 1, Dodds, 2). Cf. Plotinus' axiomatic statement, 'It is by the one that all beings are beings, both those which are primarily beings and those which are in any sense said to be among beings. For what could anything be if it was not one?' (*Enn.* VI. 9. 1, Armstrong 7, 302: 1–3).

[44] Also in *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 48 describing various unions between parts and wholes, Maximus states that there is 'the union of the individuals with the species, that of the species with the genera and that of the genera with "being"' (*Qu. Thal.* 48: 82–4, CCSG 7, 341).

[45] *Isag.* 2b: 7–8 (CAG 4/1), 6.

[46] See Barnes, *Porphyry*, 118. This thesis could be shared by the Stoics.

'being' in distinction from the ὑπερούσιον, 'the God who is beyond being' (that is to say, created and uncreated being respectively) then we may conclude that 'being' here is the same as 'created being'. After all, as we saw a little earlier, the point in Maximus' whole argument is that the one thing all beings have in common is createdness: having 'non-being' prior to 'being'. Consequently, the all-embracing and most generic genus in Maximus' cosmology is 'created being'.[47]

Unity Between the Generic and the Specific

In the sequel, Maximus discusses the question of the way in which unity exists between the generic and the specific. The generic must first of all remain what it is. Its being generic and its being the principle of unity go together. 'For that which does not naturally unite what is separated,' Maximus argues, 'but is divided together with them and departs from its own singular unity, can no longer be generic.'[48] Simultaneously, however, there must be a mutual presence between the generic and the particular in order that there can be any unity. '[E]verything generic, according to its own *logos*, is wholly and indivisibly present in the whole of the subordinate species while remaining a unity, and the whole particular is observed in [the] generic.'[49]

From what Maximus says here, the following points seem to emerge: the generic, or the universal, is and must be indivisible; if it is divided, it cannot function as a universal. Thus the universal is indivisible. At the same time it has to be present in all the particulars: the universal is immanent in the particulars. This immanence entails that the universal is present in the particulars both wholly and indivisibly, as well as collectively and individually.

In *Ambiguum* 10. 42, in contrast, we see a different picture. Discussing providence Maximus explicitly says that

[47] Stephen Gersh points out about the Neoplatonists that '[a]mong texts dealing with the interrelation between Forms, one group expounds the doctrine of genus and species more or less in the Aristotelian manner. Thus the genus is "predicated of" its species, genera are "divided into" the various subaltern genera, and the species are "embraced" within the genus. In these passages the Neoplatonists are confining their attention to sensible Forms' (Gersh, *From Iamblichus*, 97).

[48] *Ambig.* 41 (PG 91), 1312C.

[49] Ibid. 1312CD. The text reads ἐνθεωρεῖται γενικῶς.

if all the particular are destroyed, … also the universals will be destroyed with them, for by nature the universals are constituted of the particulars. … For if the universals subsist in the particulars, and since they in no way admit of the *logos* of being and subsistence of the particulars, in case these are destroyed, it is entirely evident that neither the universals will continue to exist.[50]

Thus, universals both subsist in the particulars and are constituted of them. And if the particulars are destroyed, as Maximus says drawing on Nemesius,[51] then also the universals cease to exist.

Maximus' 'Creation Song' endorses a cosmology of simultaneous union and distinction of the uncreated and the created without collapsing into a form of emanationism or pantheism. It is a 'theophanic' understanding of the created order in which God works through creation for the sanctification of creation. His 'Creation Song' is also one of simultaneous unity and differentiation within the created order itself—a reflection of the pre-eternal and unconfused union of the *logoi* of beings in the one Logos. Harmony is the characteristic feature of Maximus' cosmos built on differentiation and providence. This is a cosmos in which the wholeness of every particular being has an infinite value.

[50] *Ambig.* 10. 42 (PG 91), 1189CD.
[51] Cf. *Nat. hom.* 43. 355 (Morani), 130: 14–19.

10

'Spiritual Hierarchy'

DIVERSITY OF MEMBERS

As in the preceding chapter, so also in several other areas we have seen how for Maximus the integrity of the differences of the parts that form a whole is fundamental. For Maximus, the constituent parts must remain intact and 'without confusion' in their union. The Church is another realm where this becomes evident, and in *Mystagogia* 1, Maximus presents a view of the Church at the heart of which lies the principle of simultaneous union and distinction. The Church is seen as effecting something similar to what God does with the universe:[1] the Church creates a harmonious manifold. A little later in this chapter, we shall also see how the union and distinction of the visible and invisible worlds is reflected in the church building. But the first dimension is that of the one and the many reconciled in the cosmos and in the Church.

Thus, as has been said, the holy Church of God is an image of God because it realizes the same union of the faithful which God realizes in the universe. As different as the faithful are by language, places, and customs, they are made one by it through faith. God realizes this same union among the natures of things without confusing them but in lessening and bringing together their distinction, as was shown, in a relationship and union with himself as cause, principle, and end.[2]

[1] This has been discussed extensively by Mueller-Jourdan throughout his *Typologie spatio-temporelle*.

[2] *Myst*. 1 (Soteropoulos), 154: 13–154: 20 [= PG 91, 668BC]; translation in Berthold, *Selected Writings*, 187–8. See also Irénée-Henri Dalmais, 'Théologie de l'église et mystère liturgique dans la *Mystagogie* de S. Maxime le Confesseur', *SP* 13 (TU 116, 1975), 145–53.

The Church, as an image reflecting God, its archetype, creates unity between people who otherwise may have nothing in common. Maximus enumerates a whole list of differences that distinguish people one from another. Such differencies could be the cause for strife and discord but, as Maximus argues, these differences are overcome in the Church and by the Church, yet without being annulled:

> For numerous and of almost infinite number are the men, women, and children who are distinct from one another and vastly different by birth and appearance, by nationality and language, by customs and age, by opinions and skills, by manners and habits, by pursuits and studies, and still again by reputation, fortune, characteristics, and connections.[3]

But Christ and faith[4] in him becomes the point of reference which unites those who are named after Christ: 'All are born into the Church and through it are reborn and recreated in the Spirit. To all in equal measure it gives and bestows one divine form and designation, to be Christ's and to carry his name.'[5] Faith becomes the unifying factor in the Church.

> In accordance with faith it [i.e. the Church] gives to all a single, simple, whole, and indivisible condition which does not allow us to bring to mind the existence of the myriads of differences among them, even if they do exist, through the universal relationship and union of all things with it. It is through it that absolutely no one at all is in himself separated from the community since everyone converges with all the rest and joins together with them by the one, simple, and indivisible grace and power of faith. *For all,* it is said, *had but one heart and one mind*.[6]

Maximus, then, brings into the discussion the classic Pauline image of body and members whose head is Christ, moving on immediately to another image, that of the central point and radii. His exposition here

[3] *Myst*. 1 (Soteropoulos), 152:11–16 [= PG 91, 665C]; translation in Berthold, *Selected Writings*, 187.

[4] On faith, see *Qu. Thal*. 33 (CCSG 7), 229–31.

[5] *Myst*. 1 (Soteropoulos), 152:16–19 [= PG 91, 665C]; translation in Berthold, *Selected Writings*, 187.

[6] *Myst*. 1 (Soteropoulos), 152:19–26 [= PG 91, 665D-8A]; translation in Berthold, *Selected Writings*, 187; Acts 4: 32. Also the Neoplatonic image of a centre and radii serves Maximus to illustrate this point (*Myst*. 1, Soteropoulos, 154: 2–12 [= PG 91, 668AB]). See also Ch. 2, here above.

is strongly reminiscent of that in *Ambiguum* 7;[7] a fact which underlines the proximity of Maximus' understanding of the universe and of the Church: the one Logos is the source of all the *logoi* that produce a harmonious universe constituted of diversified species and individual beings; and Christ is the head of the unified body constituted of variegated members. In both realms, the ultimate union and simultaneous distinction of beings, and especially beings endowed with rationality, is in the Logos-Christ. In both cases, there is a movement away from the multiplicity of the contingent to the unity of the transcendent; and in both cases the final union is without confusion, the differences being overcome without annihilation. All this is neatly brought home with the image of centre and radii; the radii meeting in the centre in an ultimate union without confusion.

GIFTS AND RANKS

But that is not the only way differences are brought to unity in Maximus' reflection on the nature of the Church. Maximus also discusses unity and diversity in the Church in terms of functions, gifts, and virtues. The most important text on the issue is *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 29[8] in which he addresses a question referring to Apostle Paul's alleged disobedience to the Holy Spirit (as he on his way to Jerusalem refused to heed the appeal of the Christians in Syria who *through the Spirit*[9] foresaw his imminent trial). This alleged disobedience of Paul gives Maximus an occasion to expound on the way in which oneness of the Spirit and diversity of functions in the Church should be understood.

The Distinction

Maximus first makes a distinction between the Spirit and the 'spirits', which he interprets as the Holy Spirit and its activities or operations

[7] As has been demonstrated by Mueller-Jourdan, *Typologie spatio-temporelle*, 124–5.

[8] *Qu. Thal.* 29 (CCSG 7), 209–13. See also, *Ambig.* 68 (PG 91), 1404D–1406C.

[9] Acts 21:4.

respectively. (The latter, he says, St Paul also calls 'gifts'.) Drawing on Cyril of Alexandria[10] and Gregory Nazianzen[11] Maximus sees this distinction in the words of the prophecy of Isaiah: *The Spirit of God shall rest upon him; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and piety. The spirit of the fear of the Lord shall fill him*.[12] He writes:

In his prophecy, the holy prophet Isaiah says that seven spirits rested upon the Saviour who grew out of the root of Jesse.[13] He says this, not because he knows of seven spirits of God and teaches others, too, to accept such a doctrine, but because he calls the activities of one and the same Holy Spirit 'spirits', owing to the fact that the actuating Holy Spirit exists wholly and complete in each activity proportionately. On the other hand, the divine apostle calls the different activities of this same one Holy Spirit different 'gifts', which of course are actuated by this one and the same Spirit.[14]

The gifts which the Spirit actuates have been listed both by Isaiah and by Paul (in different versions).[15] These lists do not coincide, but that is less significant. What is more important is that in each case one and the same Spirit is their source and that they are diversified in those who receive them. The underlying condition of each of the faithful defines the gift he can receive and the way in which the Spirit can operate on him. Maximus continues:

If, therefore, the manifestation of the Spirit is given according to the measure of each person's faith, then each of the faithful in partaking of such a gift of grace—in proportion, to be sure, to his faith and to the disposition of his

[10] Cyril writes: 'To the one Spirit he has given a multiplicity of operations. For there is not one Spirit of wisdom and another of understanding or of counsel or of might, and so on. On the contrary, just as the Word of God the Father is one but is called, according to his various operations, life and light, and power, so it is too with regard to the Holy Spirit. He is one but is regarded as multiform because of the way in which he operates. That is why the most wise Paul lists for us the various kinds of gifts: *All these*, he says, *are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each individually as he wills* (1 Cor. 12: 11)' (*In Is.*, PG 70, 316AB; translation in Russell, *Cyril*, 83).

[11] See Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 41. 3 (SC 358), 318; cf. Gregory Palamas, *Cap. cl* 70 (Sinkewicz), 164.

[12] Isa. 11: 2 LXX. [13] Cf. Isa. 11: 1–3.

[14] *Qu. Thal.* 29 (CCSG 7), 211; cf. 1 Cor. 12: 4.

[15] See Isa. 11: 2; 1 Cor. 12: 8–10, 13: 13–14: 1; Rom. 12: 6–8.

soul—he receives in due measure the activity of the Spirit, which activity endows him with the habit that enables him to put into practice a particular commandment.[16]

A Hierarchy of Gifts

The gift in Paul's case is 'perfect love for God' which in accordance with 1 Corinthians 13: 13 is the greatest gift in the Church and at the same time the most important of the Gospel commandments. The fact that the commandment of love is twofold (love for God and love for one's neighbour), and especially that there is an order within it, is the key to solving the problem. Maximus in his interpretation highlights this order pointing at the same time to some implications in ecclesiology. First the distinction:

> Consequently, as one receives wisdom, another knowledge, another faith and another something else from among the gifts enumerated by the great apostle,[17] in like manner one receives through the Spirit in proportion to his faith the gift of love which is perfect and immediate in relation to God having no trace of anything material in it, and someone else receives through the same Spirit the gift of perfect love for his neighbour.[18]

Then the hierarchical order between the two loves:

> Thus the truly great Paul, a minister of mysteries that pass human understanding, who immediately received the spirit of the perfect grace of love for God in proportion to his faith, disobeyed those who had the gift of perfect love for him [i.e. Paul] and who through the spirit told him not to go up to Jerusalem. The 'spirit' in this case is the gift of love for Paul actuated by the Spirit, for, as I said above following the prophet [Isaiah], the 'spirit' is the same as a gift. Paul disobeyed them because he regarded the love which is divine and beyond understanding as incomparably superior to the spiritual love which the others had for him.[19]

[16] *Qu. Thal.* 29: 15–21 (CCSG 7), 211.
[17] Cf. 1 Cor. 12:8 ff.
[18] *Qu. Thal.* 29: 22–9 (CCSG 7), 211.
[19] Ibid. 29: 35–45 (CCSG 7), 213.

From this we may now draw the conclusion that the gifts of the Holy Spirit as well as the commandments are not only diversified but they are also hierachically arranged. Maximus does not provide us with a map to this structure but the principle becomes clear.

He then moves on to the more functional gifts.[20] Here too there is a clear order.

> Again, if the prophetic gift is far inferior to the apostolic gift, it was not fitting with respect to the Logos, who directs everything and ordains everyone his due place, that the superior should submit to the inferior, but rather that the inferior should come after the superior. For those who prophesied through the prophetic spirit—and not the apostolic one—revealed the way in which Saint Paul would suffer for the Lord.[21]

Here Maximus speaks in far more explicit terms of ranks and their order—and it is important to notice that the order for Maximus is something which has a divine origin. Maximus' own conclusions are these: (*a*) 'The alleged disobedience of the great apostle is a guardian of the good order which arranges and directs all that is divine and which keeps everyone from falling away from his own position and establishment.'[22] (*b*) 'The Church's ranks which the Spirit has well ordained must not be confused one with another.'[23]

This, then, confirms a whole sequence of things for us to draw a number of conclusions: first, that there are ranks in the Church; second, that these ranks are defined by certain gifts which are actuated by the one Holy Spirit; third, that these ranks and gifts form an orderly hierarchy arranged by the Spirit and, consequently, that this order must be respected and kept owing to its divine origin; and finally that the ranks must not be confused one with another. Notice that once again the 'bugword' is 'confusion': the hierachically arranged ranks are united in the one Spirit, but without confusion.

[20] See also ibid. 63 (CCSG 22), 153–7.
[21] Ibid. 29: 54–61 (CCSG 7), 213.
[22] Ibid. 29: 67–70 (CCSG 7), 215.
[23] Ibid. 29: 71–2 (CCSG 7), 215.

THE TEMPLE[24]

Let us now return to *Mystagogia* and to the point that the Church effects something similar to what God does with the universe. In *Mystagogia* 2, Maximus again describes the Church as an image of the universe. This time, however, the universe is understood as being composed of the visible and invisible realities, and the Church or the church building is seen from the viewpoint of its construction, that is, of its being divided into a nave and a sanctuary. The image relationship is based on the way in which these two realities coinhere in each other; they are at once united and distinct. Maximus writes: 'On a second level of contemplation he [= the 'old man'] used to speak of God's holy Church as a figure and image of the entire world composed of visible and invisible essences because it admits of the same both union and distinction as the world.'[25] We have seen how Maximus speaks of the *logoi* inhering in the cosmos, and here this idea is projected on to the church building.

For Maximus the church building is first of all a 'hypostatic union' of the nave and the sanctuary.

> For while it is one house in its construction it admits of a certain diversity in the disposition of its plan by being divided into an area exclusively assigned to priests and ministers [= deacons], which we call the sanctuary, and one accessible to all the faithful, which we call the nave. Still, it is one according to hypostasis (*κατὰ τὴν ὑπόστασιν*)[26] without being divided with its parts by reason of the differences between them, but rather by their relationship to the unity it frees these parts from the difference arising from their names.[27]

The odd thing about Maximus' comparison of the church building and the universe (visible/invisible) is that the sanctuary is not invisible, nor does it inhere in the nave. In Maximus' universe there is

[24] See also Tamara Grdzelidze, 'Liturgical Space in the Writings of Maximus the Confessor', *SP* 37 (2001), 499–504.

[25] *Myst.* 2 (Soteropoulos), 156: 3–6 [= PG 91, 668CD].

[26] That is to say 'as a concrete and particular entity'. Here we quite clearly have an echo of Christological thinking. However, see Mueller-Jourdan, *Typologie spatio-temporelle*, 148 n. 298, where he translates this phrase as 'substantiellement' and argues for its Neoplatonic provenance.

[27] *Myst.* 2 (Soteropoulos), 156:7–14 [= PG 91, 668D–669A].

a coinherence of the visible and the invisible, but here there is simply a juxtaposition of the nave and the sanctuary. How can this be reconciled? Maximus sees in the church building an image, and it is the way in which he handles the image that gives meaning to his interpretation. His treatise is, after all, called a *mystagogia*, an initiation, a leading through images to another reality. For this reason we need to approach the question from the aspect of what *happens* in the church building, from the aspect of the Eucharistic liturgy.

The unity between the nave and the sanctuary is a relationship of what one might call 'liturgical becoming'; the sanctuary is the actuality of the nave and the nave is the sanctuary in potentiality. Both are the same, yet not the same: they are at once both united and distinct. 'It shows each one to be by reversal what the other is for itself. Thus, the nave is the sanctuary in potency by being consecrated by the relationship of the initiation towards its end, and in turn the sanctuary is the nave in actuality by possessing the *logos* of its own initiation. In this way the Church remains one and the same in its two parts.'[28]

During the celebration of the Eucharist a movement takes place, a movement from the nave to the sanctuary, which precisely represents this liturgical becoming. And to be more exact, there is first a passage from outside the church building into the nave. (In the seventh century this probably started from the atrium: an open-air courtyard surrounded with a covered portico). Ancient liturgies were extraordinarily processional in character; something which is betrayed also by the elongated structure of early basilicas. After the entrance into the temple, each rank (catechumens, penitents, lay people, and clergy) would resume their place within an area specifically assigned to them. Maximus only makes the obvious distinction between the nave, which is for the laity, and the sanctuary, which is for the clergy (the bishop being seated on the throne situated behind the Holy Table), although he does mention that after the readings and before the entrance of the gifts the catechumens and others who are 'unworthy' are dismissed—following, doubtless, the ancient custom of *disciplina arcani*.

The liturgical movement from the nave to the sanctuary is movement from the visible to the invisible, from the sensible to the

[28] Ibid. 156: 15–19 [= PG 91, 669A].

intelligible, from potentiality to actuality and fulfilment, and, of course, from multiplicity to unity.

It is also, and perhaps more significantly, movement from the present age to the age to come. As with Maximus' biblical hermeneutics to which we shall come presently, here too there is a powerful dynamic in view of an eschatological fulfilment, and Maximus' interpretation of the Eucharist is, perhaps, the most eschatologically tuned of all the Byzantine commentaries.[29] If we take the liturgical sequence seen from the viewpoint of the bishop's movements—the bishop being the image of Christ—this will become strikingly clear. Here first is the sequence: the bishop enters the church passing through the nave into the sanctuary where he mounts the throne; there follow readings from the Old Testament,[30] the Epistles, and the Gospels; the bishop then descends from the throne, and the catechumens and the penitents are dismissed, after which the external doors are closed by the deacons; the gifts are then brought to the bishop; the creed and the Sanctus are said; then follow the Lord's prayer and the 'One is Holy', and finally, as the culmination of the liturgy, the communion of the 'sacrament' takes place.

Viewing this against the events in Christ's life, one would expect to have the Lord's ascension and the second coming somewhere, perhaps, between the Sanctus and the Lord's Prayer. But no, Maximus is so very dramatically eschatological that one has to put aside any too historicizing understanding of the liturgy. Following the above-mentioned sequence, Maximus views the liturgy thus: the first entrance of the bishop signifies the first coming of Christ and his saving passion; the bishop's entering the sanctuary and mounting the throne is nothing less than Christ's ascension into heaven and sitting on the heavenly throne; the reading of the Gospel signifies the end of this world, and the bishop's descent from the throne his second and glorious coming; the dismissal of the catechumens is the final judgement; and all that follows belongs to the life of the future kingdom of Heaven. It is the eschaton made present: union of all with God as he is.

[29] See Irénée-Henri Dalmais, 'Place de la *Mystagogie* de saint Maxime le Confesseur dans la théologie Liturgique Byzantine', *SP* 5 (TU 80, 1962), 282–3.

[30] 'There the soul learns, by symbols of the divine readings which take place, the principles of beings and the marvelous and great mystery of divine Providence revealed in the Law and the Prophets' (*Myst.* 23, Soteropoulos, 214: 12–14 [= PG 91, 700A]; translation in Berthold, *Selected Writings*, 204).

The 'liturgical becoming' reaches its fulfilment when the bishop-'Christ' makes the invisible future kingdom present to the faithful. He distributes, as it were, himself to the faithful in the sacrament, thus truly becoming inherent in them. The sanctuary becomes the actuality of the nave; and the future kingdom dwells in the temporal assembly of the faithful. There is, then, a 'coinherence', a simultaneous union and distinction of the nave and the sanctuary, of time and eternity, of man and God.

11

Transparent Words

A PRISM

Scripture is another 'universe' in which we are called to detect the Logos.[1] In its syllables and words, the Word becomes tangible as he does in the beings that constitute the universe. Both the universe and Scripture are vehicles which can carry us over to the Word or the Logos himself. The Word enables this by coming down to our level and in so doing himself becoming the vehicle.

The Word is said to 'become "thick"' … because he for our sakes, who are coarse in respect to our mentality, accepted to become incarnate and to be expressed in letters, syllables and words, so that from all these he might draw

[1] See Paul M. Blowers, 'The Analogy of Scripture and Cosmos in Maximus the Confessor', *SP* 27 (1993), 145–9. Blowers writes: 'The natural law of creation is itself a "bible" whose "letters" and "syllables" are the particular aspects of the world and the bodies constituted of different qualities, and whose "words" are the more universal aspects of creation. The Logos himself reads the book, inscribes himself in it, and uses it as evidence that he is Creator [*Ambig.* 10, PG 91, 1128D–1129A]' (145–6). See also Maximus' *Ambig.* 38 (PG 91, 1289D–1297B) in which he elaborates a view on the unified and single scriptural word which unfolds in a ten-fold manner and is again contracted into the one Logos (see Table 1).

Table **1**

1. time			
2. place			
3. genus	6. practical philosophy		
4. person	7. natural philosophy	9. present (type)	
5. rank	8. theological philosophy	10. future (archetype)	Logos

us to himself, as we closely follow him and are united by the Spirit. And that he might lead us up to the simple and incomparable thought about himself, he has contracted us towards union with him for his own sake to the extent he has expanded himself for our sakes by virtue of coming down to our level.[2]

The Logos himself is the meaning of Scripture. In him everything finds unity and its true meaning; the old and the new; past, present, and future. He is also the unity of the Scriptures.[3] He himself is behind the multiplicity of the veil of the letter. Just as the soul penetrates every individual part of the body remaining one and single—to use the Late Antique image—so also the Logos penetrates the Scriptures without being fragmented with its words and syllables.[4] It is through variegated and multifaceted things that the Logos becomes approachable to us.

Being bound to senses we need a prism which by refracting the single ray of light proceeding from the Logos makes it diversified and visible. This is a principle which dictates Maximus' approach to Scripture.[5] Maximus, as it were, picks up different colours from the spectrum flowing through the prism. He can give several interpretations to one single scriptural passage,[6] and yet all of 'these various interpretations are', as Polycarp Sherwood has said, 'but diverse representations of the one central mystery: the mystery of Christ and of our unity in Him.'[7] The letter of Scripture is, then, an invitation to go and find its spirit; it is an invitation from the Logos himself to go through himself to himself as he is in himself.

In order to achieve this, Maximus makes a considerable use of spiritual interpretation, contemplation, or allegory. This hermeneutical

[2] *Ambig.* 31 (PG 91), 1285B, 1285D–1288A. On the theme of the 'three laws' (natural law, scriptural law, and the law of grace) and the 'three (or four) incarnations' (in nature, Scripture and Christ, or the deified person), see Adam G. Cooper, *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 36–48; and Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 291–314.

[3] See Blowers, 'The Analogy', 148.

[4] Cf. *Cap. theol.* II. 20 (PG 90), 1133C.

[5] On Maximus' biblical interpretation see Blowers, *Exegesis*; id., 'The Anagogical Imagination, 639–54; Berthold, 'History and Exegesis', 390–404; Polycarp Sherwood, 'Exposition and Use of Scripture in St Maximus as manifest in the *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*', *OCP* 24 (1958), 202–7; Cooper, *Holy Flesh*, 16–75; and id., 'Maximus the Confessor on the Structural Dynamics of Revelation', *VCh* 55 (2001), 161–86.

[6] On this, see Blowers, *Exegesis*, 185–92, 206–11.

[7] Sherwood, 'Exposition', 204.

tradition,[8] already known to the classical Greek world in the form of commentaries on Homeric (or other) poems, was taken up by the Jewish philosopher Philo and later found its way to Christian writers such as Clement and Origen. St Paul made use of it; and Origen based his argumentation in *De principiis* 4 concerning scriptural interpretation largely on St Paul. Letter and spirit, symbol and *logos*, shadow and truth, all express the same idea of two levels, two realities, one natural and literal, one spiritual and going behind the veil of the letter.[9]

Some of the main principles of the spiritual interpretation are these. There is nothing superfluous in Scripture but everything has a meaning,[10] either literal or spiritual. There are passages which cannot be interpreted in a literal way.[11] To remain at the level of the letter of the Old Testament shows carnal mentality. The etymologies of Hebrew names of people and places are interpreted allegorically, as well as animals, objects, and materials; numbers; Jewish feasts; and so on. Allegories are mainly anthropological, cosmological, or ecclesiological, and Christological in the patristic tradition.

All this we find in Maximus.[12] Maximus is also explicit about the fact that there is a reason why in the Old Testament there are historical discrepancies or statements which are historically untrue: 'To the historical narration has been mingled the paradoxical element in

[8] See Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis,* trans. John A. Hughes (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994; original Italian edition 1981); and the monumental work of Henri de Lubac on medieval interpretation of Scripture which is now being translated into English, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, vol. i, trans. M. Sebanc, vol. ii, trans. E. M. Macierowski (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1998 and 2000; original French edition 1959).

[9] In *De principiis* 4, Origen argues for three levels of meaning in Scripture which correspond to body, soul, and mind. In general the twofold pattern is more dominant.

[10] Cf. *Qu. Thal.* 55 (CCSG 7), 481–3.

[11] In *De princ.* 4. 3. 5. (GCS/Koetschau), 331, Origen states that everything in Scripture has a spiritual meaning, but not necessarily a literal one.

[12] Examples in Maximus: (proper names) *Qu. Thal.* 54 (CCSG 7), 443; (place names) *Qu. dub.* 15 (CCSG 10), 12; (animals) *Qu. Thal.* 55 (CCSG 7), 501–13; (objects) *Qu. Thal.* 63 (CCSG 22), 145–81; (materials) *Qu. Thal.* 54 (CCSG 7), 465–7; (numbers) *Qu. dub.* 56 (CCSG 10), 45; *Ambig.* 67 (PG 91), 1396B–1404C; (feasts) *Qu. dub.* 10 (CCSG 10), 9. See also Blowers, *Exegesis*, 203–11 ('Etymology') and 211–19 ('Arithmology'); and Peter van Deun, 'La Symbolique des nombres dans l'œuvre de Maxime le Confesseur (580–662), in *Byzantinoslavica*, 53 (1992), 237–42.

order that we should seek after the true meaning of what is written.'[13] Historical discrepancies, as Carlos Laga has said, are for Maximus 'starting-points for reflection which lead us into the very mystery of the Revelation itself: the deification of man in Christ.'[14]

Going beyond the historical confines is pivotal to Maximus' biblical hermeneutics—or, indeed, any hermeneutics. One has to gather together the rays of light that stream through the prism of Scripture to be drawn through it to the Logos who lies behind it. That Maximus' understanding of Scripture, as well as his understanding of cosmos and the Church, is Logo-centric is evident. What is less evident is that his Logo-centrism has a certain orientation. He is in every aspect of his theology intensely eschatological—we saw an example of this in his interpretation of the Eucharistic liturgy. Everything within the created order could, in fact, be put on a trajectory extending from the creation through the present time to the age to come; or in terms of Scripture, from the Old Testament through the New Testament to the Kingdom of God. The truth and the fulfilment lie in the future, and it is this dynamic towards the truth of the age to come that pervades Maximus' thought.

Passing over from the literal and historical to the spiritual within an eschatological dynamic is a constant theme in his exegetical works. There is a tension between the past, present, and future, which tension could be described as the relationship of all things with their own truth: 'For it is by shadow and image and truth that the whole mystery of our salvation has wisely been arranged.'[15] Everything in Maximus' understanding of the world and Scripture ultimately points to this one end: Christ in glory, the Logos that the world cannot contain.

The Logos is like an infinite lighthouse from which everything draws its true being the more it is approached. And although we speak in terms of linear time, the truth of 'the age to come' is not the end result of human history: the lighthouse is not a product of the temporal

[13] *Qu. Thal.* 65 (CCSG 22), 275. Cf. Origen, *De princ.* 4. 2. 9.–4. 3. 5 (GCS/Koetschau), 321–31.

[14] Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* I (Quaestiones I–LV), text ed. C. Laga and C. Steel with a Latin translation by John Scotus Eriugena (CCSG 7, Turnhout: Brepols, 1980), xii.

[15] *Ambig.* 21 (PG 91), 1253C. See also *Ambig.* 48 (PG 91), 1361A–1364A; and *Qu. Thal.* 36 (CCSG 7), 243–5.

order. Movement towards the lighthouse is rather a process of assimilation of what is beyond history by what is bound to it. Maximus, of course, sees the value of the present age but at the same time he is very much aware of its limitations. 'Every form of providence and mystery around man that belongs to the present age, even if it be great, is somehow preparing in advance and prefiguring the things to come.'[16] The reading of Scripture is no exception.

THE WORD OF THE AGE TO COME

I shall take an example of Maximus' eschatologically orientated exegesis from *Ambiguum* 21, in which he interprets, not a biblical text, but a patristic one. Its theme however is biblical, and as he interprets the text, Maximus unfolds his understanding of the relationship between the present age and the age to come presenting a panoramic vision of the interpretation of Scripture, cosmos, and man, in a perspective of an eschatological fulfilment. As unity lies in the eschaton, it also gives us a vision as to how unity and multiplicity are reconciled within this dynamic.

The text from Gregory which Maximus is asked to interpret runs thus: 'and which John, the forerunner of the Word and great voice of the truth, declared even this very "lower" world could not contain.'[17] Here Maximus is faced with the apparent historical discrepancy that John the Divine is called a 'forerunner'.[18] To an English speaker 'forerunner' does not necessarily suggest any particular person in Scripture[19] and thus the discrepancy may not be so evident, but to a Greek speaker 'forerunner' is exclusively the epithet, if not a synonym, of John the Baptist and therefore Gregory's appellation begs for an explanation.

This, it seems to me, is precisely the kind of 'deliberate discrepancy' which has as its purpose to draw the reader's attention to somewhere

[16] *Ambig.* 21 (PG 91), 1256B.
[17] *Or.* 28. 20: 17 (SC 250), 142. [18] Ibid.
[19] In the *New Testament* the word 'forerunner' or 'precursor' appears only once, in Heb. 6: 20, where it is attributed to Jesus.

else, that is, somewhere beyond historical limitations, and therefore, it is to be approached through contemplation. Maximus does not hesitate to say that 'contemplation (θεωρία) alone is the resolution of things which at the literal level seem contradictory, since it can demonstrate the truth (which is incorporeal in all things) as being simple by nature and not becoming "thick" together with words or bodies.'[20]

But let me first quote St Gregory in some length to make the wider context more apparent.

> If it had been permitted to Paul to utter what the third heaven contained, and his own advance, or ascension, or assumption to it, perhaps we should know something more about God, if this was the mystery of the rapture. But since it was ineffable, we too will honour it in silence. Thus much we will hear Paul say about it, that we know in part, and we prophesy in part. This and the like to this are the confessions of one who is not rude in knowledge, who threatens to give proof of Christ speaking in him, the great doctor and champion of truth. Wherefore he estimates all knowledge on earth only as through a glass darkly, as taking its stand upon little images of the truth. Now, unless I appear to anyone too careful, and overanxious about the examination of this matter, perhaps it was of this and nothing else that the Word himself intimated that there were things which could not now be borne, but which should be borne and cleared up hereafter, and which John, the forerunner of the Word and great voice of the truth, declared even the whole earth could not contain. The truth then—and the whole word—is full of difficulties and obscurity.[21]

The tone is strongly eschatological, and Maximus rightly contextualizes both his approach to the question and his answer to it. The unity of Scripture, which is the Logos himself, goes beyond history and is therefore above all historical inconsistency, and the only way to reach this realm in hermeneutical terms is by reading the Scripture (and in this case Gregory, too) beyond the letter, by spiritual contemplation. Contemplation or allegory for Maximus is not a means for arbitrary

[20] *Ambig*. 21 (PG 91), 1244B. If the Logos becomes 'thick', or tangible and concrete, in words and syllables for our sakes, as we saw above, he does this in order to give us a gateway to him as he is. Again, he does not become 'thick' by nature in the sense that he remains what he was. In other words, the fact that he comes down to our level does not mean that he ceases to be God invisible and incomprehensible in himself.

[21] *Or*. 28. 20: 1–1: 1 (SC 250), 140–2; translation in E. R. Hardy and C. C. R. Richardson (eds.), *Christology of the Later Fathers* (The Library of Christian Classics 3, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1954), 149–50.

speculation but the vehicle that carries one over to the actual truth and meaning which lies beneath the surface of the text. Here is how Maximus sees Gregory's point in context.

The evangelist has said *And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written*.[22] Through these words he has manifested to us that what he has written is a preparation of a more perfect and hitherto uncontainable word. Should anyone call the holy evangelist John a 'forerunner' in this sense, by virtue of his gospel which prepares the mind for the reception of the more perfect word, he will not miss the mark.[23]

In the sequel, Maximus develops the theme further. He sees the whole created order within a certain movement between shadow, image, and truth. The different shadows and images that point to the truth are united in the latter as their archetype. Unity and difference in relation to scriptural personages, such as John the Baptist, Elijah, and John the Divine from our example, find a stunning resolution in Maximus' interpretation. Interchange between the biblical saints ceases to be a discrepancy.

For every saint up to this day, it would be true to say, by heralding in advance the archetypes of the things which he suffered, acted and spoke, was a forerunner of the mystery disclosed and prefigured through himself.

For this reason every saint can be taken in place of another without error, and all can be taken in place of all, and each in place of each, and the saints can be named in place of the books written by them just as the books can be named in place of the saints, as it is customary in Scripture. Clearly the Lord indicates this when he both renders and calls John the Baptist 'Elijah'…[24]

For if the one announced through them is one, then those who announce him may also be considered as one, and each may be taken in place of all, and all may be rightly taken in place of all—both those who served the mystery of the old covenant and those who have believed the proclamation of grace in the gospel.[25]

[22] John 21: 25. [23] *Ambig.* 21 (PG 91), 1252BC.
[24] Ibid. 1252D–1253B. [25] Ibid. 1253B.

By virtue of the reference of all to the Logos everything is unified, like in the simile of a central point and radii. The saints are one because their archetype, Christ, is one.

But there is a sequence here which we must not forget. One thing follows another, and one thing points to another as its truth. To be a 'forerunner' is to refer to the truth of one's self, truth which lies ahead. To be a 'forerunner' is to function as an instructor to this truth. The Old Testament introduces one to 'Christ in flesh', Maximus explains, and the New Testament introduces one to 'Christ in Spirit'; and he adds: 'Every concept capable of leaving an impression on the intellect is nothing else than an elementary introduction to the things that are beyond it [and] to which it refers.'[26]

In this sense, the four Gospels are seen as 'an elementary introduction' to the eschatological word. Maximus makes here a connection between 'elementary introduction' (στοιχείωσις) and 'elements' (στοιχεία). He links the fourfoldness of the Gospels with the sensible reality and its four elements (fire, air, water, and earth), but also with the four cardinal virtues (sagacity, courage, chastity and justice) which are the 'elements' of a certain spiritual world. All these: the Gospels, the elements, and the virtues are 'forerunners'. They are there to lead and prepare us for the future age, for the reception of the word of the age to come.[27]

Maximus then applies the idea of elementary introduction also to the faculties of the soul and the bodily senses.[28] When the senses discern the *logoi* in sensible objects, they become, Maximus says, 'instructive for the faculties of the soul, calmly instructing them to activity by means of their own perceptions of the *logoi* that are in beings; *logoi* through which, as through some letters, those who are sharp-sighted to perceive the truth, read the word of God.'[29] The soul with its faculties creates a spiritual universe of virtues.[30] The soul does this, Maximus continues, 'by combining the four virtues one with another like as elements … and, indeed, by establishing every virtue from the activity of

[26] *Ambig.* 21 (PG 91), 1244D–1245A.
[27] See ibid. 1245A–1248A.
[28] See ibid. 1248C; and n. 32.
[29] *Ambig.* 21 (PG 91), 1248AB.
[30] Cf. ibid 1248C.

its faculties in an intertwining relation to the senses.'[31] The purpose of creating this world of virtues, intertwined with the sensible universe, is again to make one able to receive the word of the age to come.[32]

Following a kind of 'Porphyrian telescope logic' the four cardinal virtues are contracted into two, meekness and wisdom, and finally into one and the most generic virtue, love[33]—and love is 'the producer *par excellence* of deification'.[34] The consummation of the movement from shadows and images to the truth is, then, deification; it is 'to become living images of Christ, or rather to become identical with him or a copy, or even, perhaps, to become the Lord himself, unless this seems blasphemous to some.'[35]

If the temporal order has reached its fulfilment in this human 'microcosm' which by combining in an inseparable union without confusion the world of virtue and that of the senses and which, as it were, diving through the virtues into the divine *logoi*, makes God manifest in this universe,[36] there still remains one other factor to bring about the fulfilment of a different universe that this one cannot contain. It is, in the end, Christ himself, the unity and the truth of Scripture and of the entire created order, who in the Scriptures is the 'forerunner' of himself, instructing and leading us through himself to himself as he is in himself. This is to lead the whole universe in all its dimensions beyond its created 'bounderies'; to gather together all the various and colourful beams of light into one and to pass through

[31] Ibid. 1248CD.

[32] See ibid. 1248D–1249A. These are all the various combinations of the Gospels, the elements, the virtues, the 'sciences', the faculties and the senses (see Table 2).

Table 2

Gospel	element	virtue	'science'	faculty	sense
Matthew	earth	justice	faith	life force	touch
Mark	water	chastity	*praktikê*	desire	taste
Luke	air	courage	*physikê*	anger	smell
John	ether (fire)	sagacity	theology	intellect & reason	sight & hearing

[33] On love as the most generic genus of virtues, see Ch. 12, here below.

[34] *Ambig.* 21 (PG 91), 1249B.

[35] Ibid. 1253D.

[36] Cf. Ibid. 1249BC.

the prism to the source of light; to plunge oneself into the transparent words of the 'forerunner' Gospels in order, finally, to discover the Word of the age to come.

> Consequently, compared to the more mystical word to be granted to the disciples in the coming age, the containable one which the Lord had given earlier, is a forerunner of itself. The same is true if you compare the first and the second coming of the Lord. In himself he has intimated [this word] dimly in proportion to the capacity of those who receive it. But he has not yet revealed the mysteries he in silence has hidden in himself owing to the fact that for the time being they are entirely uncontainable to the created order.[37]

As in the universe and the Church so also in Scripture, the spiritual blends with the material and sensible. One reflects the other in a relationship of reciprocal interdependence. The visible and contingent receives its meaning in the invisible, and the visible provides a bridge to the invisible. The Word himself becomes embodied in the contingent in order, as we have said, to draw us through himself to himself as he is in himself.

Again, multiplicity and diversity characterize all the three realms. Without losing their particularity, the many discover their unity in the divine that lies behind them all. The divine Logos gives coherence and harmony to the many in their mutual relationship, in their union without confusion, and as the source and end of all he is the point of reference by virtue of which beings, people, words, and syllables find their ultimate unity in an eschatological fulfilment.

[37] Ibid. 1256BC.

Part V

Spiritual Life and Human 'Architecture'

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12

The Twofold Commandment of Love

St Augustine in his treatise *On Christian Teaching* writes: 'Anyone who thinks that he has understood the divine Scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up the twofold love of God and neighbour, has not yet succeeded in understanding them.'[1] Augustine has said here, in a nutshell, all one needs to know about the Christian life: what really matters is love and without love one is but *a clanging cymbal*.[2] That love is also for Maximus the *sine qua non*, not only of scriptural interpretation, but also of the spiritual life in general, has already become evident in some of the preceding chapters. But the question that needs to be asked is: what do we mean when we speak of love here? After all, love can be understood in so many different ways.[3] Asking this question in the following three chapters I shall be quoting the lines of an early seventeenth-century English lute-song which succinctly expresses our problematic:

> *Tell me, true Love, where shall I seek thy being,*
> *In thoughts or words, in vows or promise-making,*
> *In reasons, looks, or passions never seeing,*
> *In men on earth, or women's minds partaking.*
> *Thou canst not die, and therefore living tell me*
> *Where is thy seat, why doth this age expel thee?*[4]

[1] I. 86 (xxxvi 40) (Green), 48.

[2] 1 Cor. 13: 1.

[3] Maximus gives five reasons why people love one another: 'For God's sake, as the virtuous man loves everybody and as the man who is not yet possessed of virtue loves the virtuous man; or for natural reasons, as parents love their children and *vice versa*; or for vainglory, … or for avarice, … or for love of pleasure … (*Carit*. II. 9, PG 90, 985CD).' See also Catherine Osborne, *Eros Unveiled: Plato and the God of Love* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

[4] John Dowland, 'Tell me, true Love', in *A Pilgrimes Solace: Wherein is contained Musicall Harmonie of 3. 4. and 5. parts, to be sung and plaid with the Lute and Viols* (The English Lute-songs I/12&14, London: Stainer & Bell, 1969; first published in 1612), 20.

In this final section we shall see what answer St Maximus gives to the question of *true Love*. As always, we shall move within the parameters of unity and diversity.[5] The first chapter will deal briefly with Maximus' anthropology, his understanding of unity and differentiation of virtue and commandments, and also with his view on the twofold commandment of love seen against the event of the Incarnation. Finally, the last two chapters will discuss how the lack or the presence of the active application of the commandment of love can either divide or unite the humanity.

THE 'ARCHITECTURE' OF THE HUMAN BEING

Following the common practice in the Greek world of his time, Maximus speaks in terms of the Platonic tripartite division of the soul. In accordance with this conception, three parts, the rational, the incensive, and the desiring part (or reason, anger, and desire)[6] make up the intellective, reasonable, and sentient soul which animates and holds together the body. In his Christological[7] as well as anti-Origenist[8] works Maximus argues that soul and body come into being simultaneously. He very carefully excludes any idea of pre-existence of soul, or indeed of pre-existence of body:[9] body and soul are united in a union without confusion at the moment of their coming-into-being.[10] In this union, the soul, and more precisely the mind, observes the material world by means of its senses through the body's sense organs.[11]

[5] More general surveys on Maximus' spirituality can be found in Thunberg, *Microcosm*; Larchet, *La Divinisation*; Blowers, *Exegesis*; Walther Völker, *Maximus Confessor als Meister des geistlichen Lebens* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1965); and Hausherr, Irénée, *Philautie: de la tendresse pour soi à la charité selon saint Maxime le Confesseur* (OCA 137, Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1952).

[6] For a detailed account on the trichotomy of the soul, see Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 169–207.

[7] See *Ep*. 15 (PG 91), 552D.

[8] See *Ambig*. 42 (PG 91), 1325D–1336B.

[9] See *Ambig*. 42 (PG 91), 1336C–1341C; *Ambig*. 7 (PG 91), 1100CD; and *Ep*. 12 (PG 91), 489A.

[10] See also Ch. 2: 'Body and Soul', here above.

[11] See *Qu. Thal*. 58 (CCSG 22), 33–5. Cf. Ch. 11: 'The Word of the Age to Come', here above.

In addition to the tripartite division, Maximus makes use of another distinction, perhaps more characteristic of Aristotle (found also in the *De natura hominis* of Nemesius of Emesa, a treatise which Maximus frequently quotes).[12] In accordance with this distinction the soul is first divided into two parts, the rational and the irrational. The irrational part is then divided into that which obeys reason and that which cannot be influenced by it, the former being the desiring and the incensive parts, and the latter the nourishing and the life-maintaining parts. There are further divisions to the irrational part, but these are too detailed and less important for our purposes here.[13]

What is more important is the distinction Maximus makes in *Mystagogia* 5 with respect to the rational part.[14] This he divides into intellect (*νοῦς*) and reason (*λόγος*). First, intellect is a contemplative faculty through which the soul can be united to God. It is a static and receptive faculty at the summit of the human construction. The intellect can function as a kind of landing area for God. Through the intellect the soul becomes luminous when in communion with God, and the soul in turn illumines the body. But this can happen only when the human 'architecture' is restored to its right hierarchical structure.

Reason, again, is a practical faculty which governs the activity of the soul. It is the charioteer which drives the 'two horses', that is, the desiring and the incensive parts of the soul.[15] Reason is the faculty which seeks after goodness in practice, in the soul's, as it were, external relations.

Why this distinction is of interest to us, is because it provides a clear anthropological structure in which the twofold commandment of love finds its proper place. Love for God through the intellect in contemplation attracts divine grace, which in turn enables the soul to express love for neighbour in activity governed by reason. It is only by

[12] Particularly in the long *Ambiguum* 10 (PG 91), 1105C–1205C. See the references in Louth, *Maximus*, 205–12; and in the critical edition of Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis,* ed. M. Morani (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft, 1987), 141.

[13] See *Ambig*. 10. 44 (PG 91), 1196D–1197D.

[14] *Myst*. 5 (Soteropoulos), 164–80. See also Véronique L. Dupond, 'Le Dynamisme de l'action liturgique: une étude de la *Mystagogie* de saint Maxime le Confesseur', *RSR* 65 (1991), 363–88.

[15] Cf. *Ambig*. 15 (PG 91), 1216AB.

means of this double love that the human being is able voluntarily to move from the image to the likeness of God and to reach deification. In the opposite case, we have what basically is the fallen humanity, fragmented and at once confused.

LOVE: THE MOST GENERIC OF THE COMMANDMENTS AND VIRTUES

The question of unity and differentiation of virtue Maximus handles in his own peculiar way.[16] The Porphyrian Tree with its genera and species is once again lurking at the back of his mind when he speaks of love drawing 'the individual commandments into a universal *logos*'[17] and being 'the most generic of virtues'.[18]

In seeing love, or charity, as something all-embracing and fundamentally as the source of all virtue, Maximus only elaborates the key principle of Scripture *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. … and … you shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend*

[16] There are different ways unity of virtue or unity between virtues has been viewed. Plato, for example, asks in the *Protagoras* whether individual virtues are parts of a single virtue or whether they are simply different names of one and the same thing (*Prt*., OCT/Burnet III, 329c–336b), and in the *Republic* he expounds the idea that the three cardinal virtues (wisdom, temperance, and courage) assigned to each one of the parts of the soul (the rational, the desiring, and the incensive part) are drawn together into a harmonious whole by a fourth virtue, that is, justice (*R*. 4, OCT/Burnet IV, 441c–444e). Evagrius has seen virtue as being essentially one but differentiated in the different parts of the soul of those who put it into practice (*Cap. prac*. 89 and 98, SC 171, 680–8, and 706). The metaphor he uses is that of light which penetrating through glass takes the form of glass. Finally, Mark the Ascetic sees the unified virtue differentiated in its operations (*On the Spiritual Law* 196, SC 445, 126). See also Gabriel Bunge, *Évagre le Pontique: traité pratique ou le moine. Cent chapitres sur la vie spirituelle*, trans. by P. Peternell (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1996; original German edition 1989), 253–5, 275–6.

[17] *Ep*. 2 (PG 91), 393C.

[18] *Qu. Thal*. 40: 61 (CCSG 7), 269. For Maximus there are two Christian 'cardinal' virtues clearly distinct from the four classical ones: love and humility (cf. *Ep*. 12, PG 91, 505C–508A). Humility he sometimes calls the 'mother of all virtues' (*Ep*. 37, PG 91, 632B). See also *Opusc*. 16 (PG 91), 185C; *Ep*. 2 (PG 91), 396A.

all the law and the prophets.[19] In *Letter* 2—which in itself is an entire treatise on charity—Maximus speaks of the 'the mystery of love'[20] in which the whole of the Old Testament finds its fulfilment, truth and unity;[21] and which 'out of human beings makes us gods, and draws the individual commandments to a universal *logos*'.[22]

Love as something all-embracing represents, in terms of Porphyrian logic, the most generic genus of commandments. The individual commandments are seen simultaneously as the unfolding and differentiation of the *logos* of love in time: 'All the individual commandments come uniformly under this universal *logos* according to God's good pleasure, and from it they are dispensed in diverse ways in accordance with God's economy.'[23]

Being the universal *logos* of virtue, love possesses a whole range of 'species of good things' which Maximus in the sequel enumerates: faith, hope, humility, meekness, mercy, self-control, patience, peace, joy, and so on.[24] 'And simply,' he says, 'to put it briefly, love is the consummation of every good thing (being the highest of goods with respect to God) and the source of every good thing.'[25]

In *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 40, where Maximus interprets the meaning of the six jars in the wedding at Cana of Galilee, Porphyrian logic becomes explicit. Here Maximus speaks of love as 'the most generic of virtues'.

The six jars Maximus takes to mean 'the capacity of the human nature to do the divine commandments', interpreting the number six as signifying (*a*) creative activity (or productivity) on account of the six days of creation, and (*b*) perfection because it is the only 'perfect' number (i.e. the sum of its factors) between one and ten. All these aspects, then, Maximus transposes to his discussion on the generic virtue and its division.

> [W]hat is the faculty of nature that produces the universal virtue, a virtue which is universal and more generic than other virtues, and which is divided

[19] Matt. 22: 34–40. [20] *Ep*. 2 (PG 91), 393C.
[21] See also Ch. 11, here above. [22] *Ep*. 2 (PG 91), 393C.
[23] Ibid. [24] Ibid. 393C–396A.
[25] Ibid. 396B.

into six species, and these generic ones, so that after having been set in order by this natural faculty it may through its modes advance in a six-fold manner into species?[26]

The universal virtue is, of course, love and the differentiating faculty, 'the most generic faculty of the [human] nature capable of realizing it,' Maximus informs us, 'is reason (*logos*).'[27]

If we now read this against the Porphyrian Tree, there is 'love' as the most generic genus to begin with. This most generic genus is divided into species by the reason which is differentiated into various modes (*tropoi*): 'Reason,' Maximus continues, 'as it operates, holding fast onto its own cause, is distinguished into six (more) generic modes'. Halfway down the Tree, the most generic genus is divided into genera having still species subordinate to it. (The non-Porphyrian element here is that the dividing principle, instead of being a specific *differentia*, is the mode or *tropos*.) Further down, the generic modes 'include the species into which the *logos* of love is intrinsically divided'.[28] These are the most specific species. The content of these is dictated by six biblical ideals of love for one's neighbour: 'looking after both the bodily and the spiritual needs of those who hunger and thirst, of those who are strangers or naked or in sickness, and of those who are in prison.'[29] (Love, of course, is not exhausted in these particular six 'species' of virtue.)

'Consequently,' Maximus concludes, 'the most generic faculty of the [human] nature is capable of differentiating the most generic virtue into species [of virtue]. It divides virtue by means of its own six modes into six species, and through these [species of virtue] the human nature is united in singleness of inclination (γνώμη).'[30]

All this rather intellectual elaboration is nothing else than Maximus' way of answering the question of true love. It is precisely the kind of reading of Scripture St Augustine has in mind in the passage quoted above: drawing from the hidden meaning of 'the six jars' Maximus builds up a whole system of love for neighbour. This, then, is one aspect in discovering the being of *true Love*.

[26] *Qu. Thal.* 40: 43–7 (CCSG 7), 269.
[27] Ibid. 40: 61–3 (CCSG 7), 269.
[28] Ibid. 40: 63–6 (CCSG 7), 269–71.
[29] Ibid. 40: 66–8 (CCSG 7), 271.
[30] Ibid. 40: 71–4 (CCSG 7), 271.

LOGOS AND *TROPOS* OF COMMANDMENTS

Just as with virtues, so also with individual commandments it is the *tropos* which differentiates the more generic *logos*. In *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 27, Maximus deals with the question of the need of a particular revelation concerning the application of a commandment. Thalassius asks: 'Since the Lord after his resurrection had explicitly commanded to *make disciples of all nations*,[31] why did Peter need a revelation for the nations in the case of Cornelius?'[32]

Thalassius' query gives Maximus an opportunity to expound on the *logos–tropos* distinction. He first emphasizes the fact that the apostle necessarily needed a revelation: he had not known that in accordance with faith circumcision made no difference, nor had he yet learnt that there was no distinction between Jews and Greeks. Maximus writes:

> For this grace of preaching was an introduction of a divine life and a new kind of worship, different from the forensic worship [of the Old Covenant], and it was a teaching about the soul voluntarily releasing itself from the body by *gnome*. For this reason those to whom this grace of preaching was entrusted needed to be taught about each word (*logos)* by him who had given the command.[33]

As a corollary, Maximus once again turns the given example into a universal principle: '[E]very word (*logos*) of a divine commandment necessarily requires teaching and revelation as to the definite mode (*tropos*) of its realization. For there is no such person who can exactly discern the mode (*tropos*) of a word (*logos*) without a revelation from him who has spoken the word.'[34] Despite the difficulty in rendering the Greek *logos* with its multi-levelled meanings into English, the idea becomes clear: a divine commandment is a general principle which covers a great range of situations and circumstances. Its application in any given case requires further knowledge. In other words, it requires divine inspiration to discern what the best way of putting it into practice is, as in the example of the apostle Peter who 'although he already

[31] Matt. 28:19. [32] *Qu. Thal.* 29 (CCSG 7), 191.
[33] Ibid. 27: 20–6 (CCSG 7), 191. [34] Ibid. 27: 28–32 (CCSG 7), 191.

had received the word (*logos*) concerning preaching to the nations, did not attempt to do so but waited until he was taught the mode (*tropos*) of this word (*logos*) by him who gave it.'[35]

THE PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION

What then is the actual significance of the twofold commandment of love in the history of salvation? In the dialogue *Liber asceticus*,[36] Maximus sets the question of the motives of the incarnation into the perspective of an arch extending from creation and fall to redemption and deification. At both ends 'the commandment' plays a crucial role. Here is Maximus' virtually credal statement expressed through the mouth of the 'old man' as his answer to the question of the purpose of the Lord's incarnation.

> The old man replied: 'Listen: man, made by God in the beginning and placed in Paradise, transgressed the commandment and was made subject to corruption and death. Then, though governed from generation to generation by the various ways of God's providence, yet he continued to make progress in evil and was led on, by his various fleshly passions, to despair of life. For this reason the only-begotten Son of God, … taking flesh by the Holy Spirit and the holy Virgin, he showed us a godlike way of life; he gave us holy commandments and promised the kingdom of heaven to those who lived according to them. Suffering his saving Passion and rising from the dead, he bestowed upon us the hope of resurrection and eternal life. From the condemnation of ancestral sin he absolved by obedience; by death he destroyed the power of death, so that *as in Adam all die, so in him all shall be made alive*. Then, ascended into heaven and seated on the right hand of the Father, he sent the Holy Spirit as a pledge of life, and as enlightenment and sanctification for our souls, and as help to those who struggle to keep his commandments for their salvation. This, in brief, is the purpose of the Lord's becoming man.'[37]

[35] Ibid. 27: 32–5 (CCSG 7), 191–3.

[36] See Irénée-Henri Dalmais, 'La Doctrine ascétique de S. Maxime le Confesseur d'après le *Liber Asceticus*', *Irénikon*, 26/1 (1953), 17–39.

[37] *Ascet*. 7–31 (1) (CCSG 40), 6–7; emphasis mine.

Clearly, the initial human failure, according to Maximus, was the transgression of the commandment, the inability to love and obey God. This then led to corruption and death, to the increase of evil and the rule of the devil in the world. The Incarnation of the Son of God, his passion, resurrection, and ascension, and finally the sending of the Holy Spirit restored the possibility for man once again to find salvation through keeping of the commandments.

The dialogue goes on to discuss the commandments and how he who imitates the Lord is able to do them, and again how he who separates himself from 'every fleshly attachment' and 'worldly passion' will be given power, that is the grace of the Holy Spirit, to do this. The fact that all the commandments are summed up in the twofold commandment of love, and that love for God and love for neighbour are interdependent, are then made explicit. And Maximus continues:

'Love for every man must be preferred above all visible things. This is the sign of our love for God, as the Lord himself shows in the Gospels: *He that loves me*, he says, *will keep my commandments*. And what this commandment is, which, if we keep, we love him, hear him tell: *This is my commandment, that you love one another*. Do you see that this love for one another makes firm the love for God, which is the fulfilling of every commandment of God?'[38]

In reality, when there is mutual love between people, it all seems quite easy, but when it comes to loving one's enemies, things begin to look rather different. Love for one's enemies seems, in fact, to be something humanly speaking impossible. For this end one needs to know, Maximus explains, the 'purpose (σκοπός) of the Lord'. And here comes the connection between the Incarnation and the twofold commandment. The Lord's purpose, he says, was the following.

'Our Lord Jesus Christ, being God by nature and, because of his love for mankind, deigning also to become man, was born of a woman and made under the law, as the divine apostle says, that by observing the commandment as man he might overturn the ancient curse of Adam. Now the Lord knew that the whole law and the prophets depend on the two commandments of the law—*You shall love Lord your God with your whole heart, and your neighbour as yourself*. He, therefore, was eager to observe them, in human fashion, from beginning to end.'[39]

[38] Ibid. 120–8 (7) (CCSG 40), 17–19.

[39] Ibid. 178–86 (10) (CCSG 40), 23–5.

Out of his love for mankind God became man with the purpose to observe the twofold commandment of love as a human being—something we too need to bear in mind if we wish to imitate Christ and love our enemies.

Keeping the commandment of love is clearly a matter of spiritual warfare, and that is how Maximus sees it in Christ's personal life, too. The devil attempts to cast Christ down in this warfare through different kinds of temptations or trials. The devil's purpose is the opposite of that of Christ's: it is to make Christ transgress the commandment of love.

The temptations are twofold just as the commandment is twofold. Love for God is the devil's first target when he tempts Christ in the wilderness. He hopes to make Christ prefer some created thing to God, which he does by tempting him with pleasurable things. The temptations of this kind are described as being 'within one's power' or 'voluntary'. It is a matter of free choice as to what one makes of them.

The devil failed in this first enterprise but did not give up his mission. Instead, he tried to win Christ with respect to the other half of the commandment. Here, the temptations, or perhaps better trials, come through painful experiences, through things that do not depend on free choice.[40] Maximus, or the 'old man', continues:

'So making use of the wicked Jews and his own machinations, he strove to persuade him, on returning to society, to transgress the commandment of love for neighbour. For this reason while the Lord was teaching the ways of life, and actually demonstrating the heavenly manner of life, … that vindictive wretch stirred up the wicked Pharisees and Scribes to their various plots against him in order to bring him to hate the schemers. He thought that Christ would not be able to bear up under their plots; and so the devil would be attaining his purpose by making Christ a transgressor of the commandment of love for neighbour.'[41]

[40] This twofoldness is characteristic of Maximus. He connects the voluntary things that depend on free choice with virtues and vices, with the blameable passions and also with God's foreknowledge. The involuntary things which cannot be influenced by free choice he links with the blameless passions and God's predestination. On this dialectic see *Disp. Biz.* 33–49 (CCSG 39), 77; *Qu. Thal.* 42 (CCSG 7), 285–9; and *Ambig.* 10. 44 (PG 91), 1196CD.

[41] *Ascet.*: 201–15 (11) (CCSG 40), 25–7.

To the devil's disappointment Christ was not persuaded. Being God he knew the devil's designs, and instead of turning his love for his own people (including those who rejected him) into hatred, he fought back against the devil who instigated the Scribes and the Pharisees.

> Out of his love for them he fought back against the instigator: He admonished, rebuked, reproached, berated, ceaselessly did good to those who were egged on, who, though able to resist, yet through sloth had willingly borne with the instigator. Blasphemed, he was long-suffering; suffering, he patiently endured; he showed them every act of love.[42]

Maximus calls this fight of Christ against evil and hatred with goodness and love, a 'paradoxical war'.[43] And it is what one might also call 'a struggle of love', a war which through self-emptying makes manifest the power of *true Love*. Ultimately, it makes manifest God's love for mankind: 'In his love of humanity, he accomplished this restoration for us as though he were himself liable; and what is more, in his goodness, he reckoned to us the glory of what he had restored.'[44] The argument, then, comes back to the commandment and the circle is closed: 'It was for this reason that he endured such evils from them; rather, to speak more truly, on their account he, as man, contended until death on behalf of the commandment of love.'[45]

But Christ's example is not simply a codex of moral behaviour. It is something more fundamental, something more, as we would say today, existential or ontological. And perhaps even more: it is something resurrectional. Following his example means labouring with him for the restoration, and ultimately sanctification, of the whole of humanity, of each and all. Christ's victory over evil opened, therefore, the way for humankind to learn to live anew in accordance with *true Love* which it once lost.

[42] Ibid.: 218–23 (12) (CCSG 40), 27.
[43] Ibid.: 224–5 (12) (CCSG 40), 29.
[44] *Qu. Thal.* 21: 91–3 (CCSG 7), 131; translation in Blowers and Wilken, *Cosmic Mystery*, 113.
[45] *Ascet.* 227–9 (12) (CCSG 40), 29.

13

Confusion and Fragmentation

FALLEN HUMANITY

Despite Christ's victory over evil the fallen world continues to be one of conflict and fragmentation. John Dowland's line in the song quoted earlier on, *true Love … why doth this age expel thee?* strikes the right note, and that a sad one. War and isolation, the two poles between which the pendulum of human history oscillates, are a painfully enduring presence both between people and within each human person. Individuals, communities, and whole nations are constantly being reminded of a tension which seems never to allow peace to exist simultaneously at all these levels. Where there is external peace and well-being, there one discovers inner conflict and the loneliness of the city-dweller. Communities, rather than possessing unity naturally, gain and preserve it only through serious effort, while war between nations is hardly an issue one needs to call in mind at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Maximus was very much aware of the global disintegration. The picture he gives of the fallen humanity in *Letter* 2 is rather grim.

> The deceitful devil in the beginning contrived by guile to attack humankind with self-love, deceiving him through pleasure, and separated us in our *gnome*[1] from God and from one another turning us away from rectitude. In this way he divided the [human] nature, fragmenting it into a multitude of opinions and ideas. With time he established a law for the means and discovery of every vice making use of our powers to this end, and he installed in all a

[1] On *gnome*, see later in this chapter.

wicked cause of discord for the continuance of evil, namely, irreconcilability of *gnome*. By this he has prevailed on humankind to turn it from what is permitted to what is forbidden. Thus humankind has brought into being from itself the three greatest, primordial evils and the begetters of, simply, all vice: ignorance, I mean, and self-love and tyranny, which are interdependent and established one through another.[2]

The story of how we have arrived at this state could be told in many different ways through reading Maximus. One way of doing so is by relating the adventures of the intellect, in other words, by describing the 'intellectual' history of mankind, which is what we shall attempt to do here. In *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 61, Maximus explains the role of the intellect and that of pleasure at the beginning of human history.

When God created human nature, he did not create sensible pleasure or pain along with it, rather he furnished it with a certain spiritual capacity for pleasure, a pleasure whereby human beings would be able to enjoy God ineffably. But at the instant he was created, the first man, by use of his senses, squandered this spiritual capacity—the natural desire of the mind for God—on sensible things. In this, his very first movement, he activated an unnatural pleasure through the medium of senses.[3]

The beginning of the whole story, then, was that the intellect, or the mind, was directed, not upwards to God, as it was meant to do, but downwards to sensible things. In its desire to take pleasure in sensible things, the intellect, as it were, 'got stuck' with the senses. Evidently, *true Love* was not found there. This was the first step, and there began the downhill of the human story: Adam was deceived by the devil through pleasure; he fell away from the knowledge of and essentially communion with God, and seeking to satisfy his existential hunger through the pleasure given from sensible things he ended in self-love and tyranny of his neighbour.[4]

The initial wrong move of the intellect led into a disorder in the human construction. The hierarchical order of the parts of the soul was shattered and thus the whole being became distorted. However,

[2] *Ep.* 2 (PG 91), 396D–397A.

[3] *Qu. Thal.* 61: 8–16 (CCSG 22), 85; translation in Blowers and Wilken, *Cosmic Mystery*, 131–2.

[4] On self-love in particular, see Hausherr, *Philautie*.

the human complex was not altogether destroyed with the Fall but somehow convoluted. Maximus characteristically calls this state 'confusion' or 'evil confusion of passions'.[5]

The intellect sinks in the lower parts of the soul and is thus mingled or confused with the irrational. In biblical language (where 'Israel' takes the place of the intellect) this is seen as the captivity of Israel. But there is other imagery Maximus makes use of. In *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 16, he interprets the 'molten calf'—the golden idol smelted and worshipped by the Israelites in the wilderness—as 'the mixing or the confusion of the natural powers one with another'.[6]

It is important to notice that the post-lapsarian state is one of distortion of elements which are and remain fundamentally good. Evil comes about from their faulty association which violates their true nature. In Maximian terms, the 'mess' is in the *tropos* rather than in the *logos*. In this *Quaestio*, all the various types of jewellery that were gathered for producing the calf, Maximus interprets as good elements of the human nature or its activity.[7]

> The mind which according to [the figure of] Israel comes out of Egypt, that is, out of sin, and which has as its companion the imagination, … this mind, then, as soon as it neglects and leaves rational discernment even for a little while—as Moses left Israel in the olden days—it sets up, as it were a calf, an irrational habit, the mother of all vices. It smelts, like earrings, the *logoi* concerning God which it had naturally received from devout understanding of beings; like necklaces it smelts the godly beliefs concerning being which it had gained from natural contemplation; like bracelets it smelts the natural activity of the practice of virtues. This the mind does in, as it were a furnace, in the burning heat of the impassioned attitude of anger and desire, and in accordance with the imagination and form of evil stored up in advance in reason it accomplishes sin in action.[8]

The fact that the intellect is displaced from its seat introduces, not only a disorder in the human construction as a whole, but also a distortion of the parts or faculties of the soul themselves. As the intellect is subdued to the irrational parts of the soul, it becomes a slave to

[5] See *Qu. Thal.* 54 (CCSG 7), 443; *Qu. Thal.* 16 (CCSG 7), 105–7.
[6] *Qu. Thal.* 16: 38–9 (CCSG 7), 107.
[7] See also *Qu. Thal.* 16:53–62 (CCSG 7), 107; and *Qu. dub.* 79 (CCSG 10), 60.
[8] *Qu. Thal.* 16: 1–21 (CCSG 7), 109.

irrational habits, and as a result of this, the soul's faculties, instead of producing virtues (which is their natural task) become begetters and servants of passions and vice.

Maximus regards passions as an end result of confusion: 'Every passion always comes about by mixing some perceived object, a sense faculty and a natural power, diverted from the natural—the incensive power, desire or the intelligence, as the case may be.'[9] Thus, the intellect's wrong move causes a disorder in the human architecture. This leads to the distortion of the natural state of the individual parts of the soul, which in turn is expressed in unhealthy and sinful activity.

Confusion, come about through turning away from God and through attachment to temporal things, has an effect in the opposite direction, too. St Athanasius in his *Contra gentes* says to the point: 'As soon as they stopped attending to what is one and true (that is, to God) and stopped longing for him, all that was left to them was to launch themselves upon variety and upon necessarily fragmentary desires of the body.'[10] Attachment necessarily leads to fragmentation. The mind which is entangled in the senses is bound to the multiplicity of sensible things. This is not to say that the variety and multiplicity in the created order is bad and fragmenting in itself. It becomes such to the unhealthy soul that relates to the world in an unhealthy manner. In other words, the mind which has become captive to the senses and the irrational parts of the soul, rather than curbing the latter, enables them to satisfy their own insatiable irrational hunger. *True Love* was, therefore, not found residing in *passions never seeing* either, as Dowland sings.

The mind which has abandoned its correct way of relating to the world and which 'gets stuck' with the multiplicity of things cannot retain its wholeness and unity. It becomes like someone who is constantly dragged in different directions at one and the same time. 'Sin is ever scattered,' Maximus says, 'and with itself it ever scatters the mind which has committed it. It cuts the mind off the singular identity of truth and sets up the irrational habit that disperses the mind about many and unsteady imaginations and opinions concerning beings.'[11]

[9] Ibid. 16: 72–75 (CCSG 7), 109.

[10] *Gent.* 3: 22–5 (Thompson), 8.

[11] *Qu. Thal.* 16: 21–5 (CCSG 7), 105.

GNOME

Fragmentation does not remain at the level of the individual only. It has also a universal dimension. The biblical grounding for this could be found in, for example, St James' sharp statement:

> What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.[12]

For Maximus it is primarily 'self-love' that engenders conflict. 'Self-love,' he says in *Letter* 2, 'is, and is known to be, the first sin, the first progeny of the devil and the mother of the passions that come after it.' Self-love is, it could be argued, the generic vice in a similar way as love is the most generic of virtues.[13] Maximus enumerates some of its ingredients: 'pride, the monstrous, composite evil, and the mark of vain opinion that opposes God'; 'the falling glory which casts down with itself those who are puffed up by it'; 'envy'; 'anger, bloodthirstiness, wrath, guile, hypocrisy, dissembling, resentment and greed'; in brief—and most importantly—'everything by which the one humanity is divided up'.[14] And in *Letter* 3, he sums it up: 'Human self-love and craftiness … severed the one nature into many pieces.'[15]

Maximus names the actual 'weapon' which realizes this cutting into pieces of the one humanity '*gnome*'.[16] *Gnome* is one of those terms in Maximus' vocabulary which is extremely difficult to render into another language. Maximus himself is not always very consistent in its usage, and I shall not venture to map all his variations. Instead, I want to focus simply on its negative aspect in accordance with which *gnome* is the principle which divides the one humanity. In general, *gnome* is associated with free will, opinion, deliberation, inclination, individual

[12] James 4: 1–4. [13] See Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 232–3.
[14] All quotations are from *Ep.* 2 (PG 91), 397CD.
[15] *Ep.* 3 (PG 91), 408D. See also *Ep.* 28 (PG 91), 620BC. [16] *Ep.* 3 (PG 91), 409A.

attitude, and so on. In its negative role, we could name it 'the individualistic will'.[17]

When the soul's powers have become unbalanced and wrongly orientated, they begin to require things in an unhealthy way. This leads to an egocentric existence in which the soul makes use of its rational capacities to satisfy its irrational desires. The necessary consequence is what Maximus calls 'tyranny' of one's neighbour. The common good of the one humanity is no longer important, but only the apparent individual good. That it is only apparent, Maximus points out in a practical example:

> Should anyone, who is wealthy enough to do so, ignore those in need, he clearly proves to have cast them away from himself and cast himself from God, since he has ignored the nature on account of his *gnome*, or rather, since he has ruined the good things which belong to his nature. This applies to those who deliberately (γνωμικῶς) have preferred cruelty to charity and who have judged their kin and compatriot to be of less value than money and who yearning after gold have blocked the way from God to enter themselves.[18]

Acting according to one's (fallen or distorted) *gnome* is acting unnaturally. It is activity which reveals the distortion of one's nature, and it is deviation from what is natural and as such already it severs the one humanity. But also its end results have a separating effect, as Maximus speaking about evil in general says: 'evil by nature is scattering, unsteady, multiform and dividing. For since good unifies and holds together what has been divided, clearly then evil divides and corrupts what is united.'[19] *True Love* does not feel very comfortable *in thoughts or words* either, it seems, or *in men on earth, or women's minds partaking*.

Consequently, *gnome*, to conclude, in the context of the Fall, represents the sharp cutting edge which cuts whatever it touches, and fallen humanity ever suffers from the irreconcilability of this cutting edge. Only if we rise above our 'individualistic wills', can we hope to achieve restoration and unification of humanity both at the personal and the universal level.

[17] Sherwood has a brief but comprehensive survey on the subject in *St Maximus*, 58–63. See also Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 213–18, 227–9, and 279; and Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 263–71.

[18] *Ep*. 3 (PG 91), 409B.

[19] *Qu. Thal*. 16: 47–52 (CCSG 7), 107.

But there is another aspect to *gnome*. Much of Maximus' understanding of the Christian life, as an ascetic endeavour, consists in reforming the *gnome*.[20] The purpose is to bring it back home, to unite it with nature. Uniting the *gnome* with nature brings about also the unification of humanity as a whole: it means giving up one's individual desires for the benefit of one's neighbour, in other words, loving them as oneself. 'God in his love for mankind prescribed the saving commandments to us wishing thus to unite us one with another not only by nature but also by *gnome*.'[21] In fact, when this unification takes place, *gnome* becomes the vehicle of voluntary action. It becomes the characteristic constituent of the rational human being who of his free choice expresses love for his neighbour and moves towards God in love. Uniting the *gnome* with nature, reaching the likeness of God and ultimately deification, one could argue, are but different aspects of one and the same reality.

For this reason anyone who by chaste thinking and noble sagacity has been able to put an end to this deviation from nature has shown mercy above all to himself, because he has rendered his *gnome* to be in one accord with nature and because he by *gnome* has advanced to God for the sake of nature. In this way he has shown in himself what is the *tropos* and the *logos* of the image and how God in a manner proper to him created our nature in the beginning similar to his own nature and a manifest likeness of his goodness, and how God made it the same throughout in every respect, namely, non-combative, peaceable, non-factious, and tightly bound both with God and with itself through love, by which love we cleave to God in desire and to one another in sympathy. Such a person has shown mercy to those to whom mercy was to be shown, not only by providing for them, but also by teaching them how the hidden God makes himself manifest through those who are worthy.[22]

[20] See Sherwood, *St Maximus*, 81–3.
[21] *Ep*. 3 (PG 91), 408D.
[22] Ibid. 409AB.

14

Distinction and Unification

DISTINCTION

If the fall is associated with attachment to the sensible, then also the opposite is true: upward movement and integration requires detachment from the sensible. Once again, this is a matter of love, or more precisely, it is a matter of *true Love*. As Maximus puts it in one of his centuries:

> The blameworthy passion of love engrosses the mind in material things; the laudable passion of love binds it even to divine things. For usually where the mind has leisure there it expands; where it expands there it directs its desire and love, whether this be in divine and intelligible things (which are properly its own), or in the things of the flesh and the passions.[1]

What is needed, therefore, is to continue the 'intellectual journey' and to begin an ascent in search of *true Love*.

> *Mount then my thoughts, here is for thee no dwelling,*
> *Since Truth and Falsehood live like twins together:*
> *Believe not sense, eyes, ears, touch, taste, or smelling,*
> *Both Art and Nature's forc'd: put trust in neither*.[2]

Mount then my thoughts; the mind's journey from the 'confusion of passions' to union with God is one of veritable 'intellectual asceticism'. It requires the liberation of the intellect from the realm of the irrational, and a *diabasis*, a passing through the sensible to the intelligible and ultimately to God. Much of Maximus' writing is concerned with this

[1] *Carit*. III. 71 (PG 90), 1037CD.

[2] Dowland, 'Tell me', third stanza, 20.

journey (as Paul Blowers, among others, has amply demonstrated).[3] Also true philosophy for Maximus consists in such 'intellectual asceticism'.[4] True philosophy for him is—as it was for the philosophers of antiquity—a way of life.[5] It is, literally, 'love of Wisdom', and for Maximus this involves striving after the mind's union with God (who is Wisdom itself and the only true source of wisdom) but it also involves the governing through reason of the irrational parts of the soul and their activity.[6] A true 'wisdom-lover', therefore, is both united with the Logos and Wisdom of God, and makes manifest wisdom in action in accordance with the commandments. He loves both God and his neighbour as himself. Interestingly, deification, the goal of human existence, as the union with God through humility and love,[7] was defined in almost exactly the same words by Dionysius the Areopagite as the Platonists defined philosophy: 'Philosophy is assimilation to God to the extent this is possible to a human being. | Deification is assimilation to and union with God to the extent this is possible.'[8]

As an example of the philosopher's or 'wisdom-lover's' *diabasis* to God, we could take Maximus' allegory on Zerubbabel: 'the wisdom-loving mind'. Maximus interprets this Hebrew name in a number of ways in his allegory and by so doing gives a direction for the mind's spiritual journey. He gives five different renderings of 'Zerubbabel',[9]

[3] See his *Exegesis*, 95–183; and his 'The Anagogical Imagination' where he rightly emphasizes the fact that (especially in relation to scriptural interpretation): 'More than a simple ascent (*ana-basis*) it is a *dia-basis*, a penetration through and not just beyond the material to the spiritual truth, a transcendence that assumes the irreducible interrelation between the sensible and intelligible dimensions of scriptural truth, of the created order, and of human nature itself' (640).

[4] Cf. *Ambig*. 10 (PG 91), 1105C–1205C; introduced and translated in Louth, *Maximus*, 94–154.

[5] See Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life,* ed. and introd. A. I. Davidson, trans. M. Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995). [Parts of this work were first published in French as *Exercices spirituelles et philosophie antique* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1987[2]).]

[6] Cf. *Ambig*. 10. 1 (PG 91), 1108A–1112A.

[7] See *Ep*. 12 (PG 91), 505B–508A where Maximus speaks of humility and love as being the two poles of what he calls 'the divine … philosophy (505B)', the end of which is deification.

[8] Elias [?], *In Porphyrii Isagogen*, *Prolegomena* 7 (CAG18/1), 18: 3–4; Dionysius, *E.h.* 1. 3 (PTS 36), 66: 12–13. See the discussion on this by Mueller-Jourdan in *Typologie spatio-temporelle*, 32–3.

[9] See Antoon Schoors, 'Biblical Onomastic in Maximus Confessor's *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*', in *Philohistôr*, 257–72.

and in each case 'Zerubbabel' is a 'wisdom-loving mind', or a 'philosophical intellect', that brings about a change in the state of affairs. This is the post-lapsarian condition of humanity in which nature is keeping the mind captive through the senses. Thus Zerubbabel in Maximus' interpretation becomes:

1. a wisdom-loving mind 'sown' through repentance by virtue of righteousness in the confusion of the captivity to senses;
2. a 'dawn of confusion', which reveals the shame of confused passions;
3. a 'dawn in confusion', which through knowledge gives light in the confusion (caused by the senses in their activity towards sensible things), and which does not allow the senses irrationally to be attached to the sensible;
4. a 'dawn of dispersion', which produces the dawn of deeds of righteousness to the powers of soul dispersed with sensible things. By virtue of this dawn, reasonable *praxis* is put together. This in turn has its share in contemplation which brings the dispersed powers of soul back to intelligible things.
5. 'He is rest', because he made all peaceful by uniting the active aspect of the soul to that which is good by nature and the contemplative aspect to that which is truth by nature.[10]

If we turn these points into a narrative, we can see the basic sequence of events. Repentance lays the foundations. A ray of the rising sun breaks the darkness, and the person begins to see his fallen state. The intellect takes control over the faculties of the soul and nourishes them through its contemplative activity. Gradually, the soul begins to move towards integration. In practical life, virtues emerge, and through prayer or contemplation one's spiritual powers are united and directed to God. In God, then, 'the wisdom-loving mind' finds rest.

But let us not go too far yet. Detachment from the senses is the first step on the way to integration.[11] The inner confusion needs to be sorted out first and the hierarchical structure of the soul restored before anything else, and this can only take place when the intellect is lifted up out of the lower parts of the soul. The intellect must be freed from the irrational before there can be any restoration: *Mount then my thoughts, here is for thee no dwelling, since Truth and Falsehood live like twins together: Believe not sense, eyes, ears, touch, taste, or smelling.*

[10] Cf. *Qu. Thal.* 54 (CCSG 7), 443–5.

[11] See Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 299–309.

As we said in the previous chapter, passions came about through a wrong kind of union, through a union with confusion, so to speak. The healing of passions, then, Maximus sees as depending on distinguishing between the confused elements: a sensible object, a sense faculty, and a faculty of the soul. In his allegory on the 'molten calf', which we referred to earlier, Maximus explains this process of distinction.

> Thus, if the intellect, as it investigates the final compound of these three interrelated factors, is able to distinguish each from the other two, and to refer each back to its specific natural function, if it is able, in other words, to view the sensible object in itself, apart from its relationship to the sense faculty, and the sense faculty in itself, apart from its connection with the sensible object, and the natural power—desire, for example—apart from its impassioned alliance with the sense faculty and the sensible object, the intellect in so doing 'grinds to powder' the constitution of the 'calf', that is, of whatever passion, and 'scatters it upon the water' of knowledge. The intellect has then made even the slightest imagination of passions completely to vanish by restoring each of its elements to its natural state. May we too 'grind to powder' the 'molten calf' of our soul and make it vanish, so that our souls may have in them the image of the divine unadulterated, and unblemished by any external thing whatsoever.[12]

Similar distinction is required between the different parts of the soul which have undergone an interchange with the Fall. They must be first distinguished one from another (especially the intellect from the incensive and the desiring parts) and then restored to their proper places.[13] 'The molten calf' must be dealt with.

> The coming of the divine *logos* 'grinds [the irrational habit] to dust' and 'scatters it upon the water'. By means of the 'thinness' of contemplation it 'grinds to dust' the 'thickness' of reason which it had in its superficial relation to the senses in virtue of passions, and it makes the distinction between the natural powers clear—powers which had suffered an interchange and confusion between one another—and it brings the mind to its proper source of knowledge.[14]

It is impressive to notice how the principle of simultaneous unity and distinction, the master theme of this study, can be traced even in

[12] *Qu. Thal.* 16: 75–93 (CCSG 7), 109.
[13] Cf. ibid. 16: 65–71 (CCSG 7), 109.
[14] Ibid. 16: 26–32 (CCSG 7), 105–7.

Maximus' psychology.[15] And it is only natural that this should be so, since union without confusion is all about integrity and its restoration. In this case, we have the integrity of the soul both as a whole and as parts. If the parts are confused, they lose their wholeness, and as a consequence the entire soul loses its integrity. The healing of a 'confused' soul, its salvation in other words, requires therefore both distinction and unification.[16]

A different way of presenting the process of detachment from the senses can be found in *Chapters on Love* III. 38–44. Just as the whole treatise, so also this presentation is distinctively Evagrian.[17] The three basic factors in this scheme are: a thing, its mental representation, and a passion. A fourth one, the demons, is referred to in III. 41. Thus, in Maximus' words:

> Thing, representation, passion—all differ. A thing is, for instance, a man, woman, gold, and so on; a representation is a mere recollection of one of these things; passion is unreasonable affection or senseless hate for one of the foregoing.[18]

Maximus is careful to point out that the spiritual warfare is not directed against the things or their images, but the passions and the demons who instigate them.

> The God-loving mind does not war against things nor against their representations, but against the passions joined with these representations. Thus he does not war against the woman, nor against him who offends him, nor against their images, but against the passions that are joined with the images.[19]

> The monk's whole war is against the demons, that he may separate the passions from the representations. Otherwise he will not be able to look on things with detachment.[20]

[15] Paul Blowers writes: 'All the faculties of the soul, in their proper function and interrelation are to be preserved without confusion, united without annihilation' ('The Logology', 574).

[16] See also Ch. 5, here above.

[17] See especially his *On Thoughts* 2–3 (SC 438), 154–62. See also Gabriel Bunge, *Earthen Vessels: The Practice of Personal Prayer according to the Patristic Tradition*, trans. M. J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002; original German edition 1996).

[18] *Carit.* III. 42 (PG 90), 1029A.

[19] Ibid. III. 40 (PG 90), 1028D–1029A.

[20] Ibid. III. 41 (PG 90), 1029A.

Maximus calls the wrong kind of union 'an impassioned representation'. What goes on in the mind, and the images one carries in one's mind are all right, as long as the mind does not 'get stuck' with the passions. If that happens, and it happens more often than not, the warfare against impassioned representations, or separating images from passions, becomes necessary. Maximus concludes:

> An impassioned representation is a thought compounded of passion and representation. Let us separate the passion from the representation: the thought alone will remain. If we but will, we make this separation by means of spiritual love and self-mastery.[21]

UNIFICATION

But what role does detachment actually play with respect to unification? As we saw earlier, fragmentation resulted from 'getting stuck' with the senses. The mind was led in different directions with things and unless the mind did something about its impassioned relationship with those objects, it was entirely torn into pieces: *Since Truth and Falsehood live like twins together: Believe not sense, eyes, ears, touch, taste, or smelling …*

The pattern in spiritual life in Maximus' understanding, as we have been presenting it here, is really very symmetrical: fragmentation follows attachment; unification follows detachment. Detachment enables the mind to observe things simply, as they are. The fragmenting effect of attachment is thus removed. Moreover, detachment makes it possible for the mind to engage in what is called 'natural contemplation', to detect the natural *logoi* in beings without being distracted by their material usefulness, for example. In Chapter 5, we briefly discussed how the contemplation of nature leads the soul to the source of the *logoi* and the source of unity, which is God himself. Natural contemplation is not a mystical union *per se*, but it certainly has a strong unifying effect on the soul. In *Quaestiones et dubia* 64, Maximus writes:

[21] Ibid. III. 43 (PG 90), 1029B.

We, too, must first be lifted up to God and having steeled the soul extend its whole desire to him and then, accordingly, descend to search after beings and regard each one in terms of its own nature, and through them, again be drawn up by contemplative knowledge to their Creator. Such a person 'gathers the winds in his bosom,' for he gathers into the bosom of his own heart the diverse *logoi* of beings—which are named figuratively as 'clouds'. Consequently, … one ought to realize that in gathering the diverse *logoi* in the productive and contemplative part of the heart one brings to birth the one Word of God. For the many *logoi* of beings are gathered into one.[22]

In addition to the unifying effects of natural contemplation, detachment allows the intellect to establish itself as the sole governing principle of the soul. In this restored state, the soul is not moved by irrational impulses, but is instead navigated by the rational pilot which can, being detached from the desiring and the incensive parts of the soul, make use of these for the benefit of the whole being.

Reason, instead of being ignorant, ought to move through knowledge to seek solely after God; and through the desiring power, pure of the passion of self-love, it ought to yearn for God alone; and through the incensive power, separated from tyranny, it ought to struggle to attain God alone. And from these [powers of soul] reason ought to create divine and blessed love for which they exist; love which unites a God-loving person to God and manifests him to be God.[23]

Here again we see that the whole matter is about *true Love* and about the realization of the twofold commandment of love. 'Love is,' as Maximus defines it, 'a good disposition of the soul, according to which one prefers no creature to the knowledge of God.'[24] It is love that unites one to God and manifests him to be God. Deification is quite obviously the summit of the mind's journey, and this can be regarded as the end of the first half of the twofold commandment.

[22] *Qu. dub.* 64: 16–30 (CCSG 10), 50–1; unpublished translation, cited by the kind permission of Adam Cooper.

[23] *Ep.* 2 (PG 91), 397AB. On the topic of the transformation of passions, see the article of Paul M. Blowers, 'The Gentiles of the Soul: Maximus the Confessor on the Substructure and Transformation of the Human Passions', *JECS* 4/1 (1996), 57–85.

[24] *Carit.* I. 1 (PG 90), 691A.

What deification itself then amounts to could be summarized in the following.[25] Human nature in itself is not productive of deification, but rather the deification of man is effected by divine operation.[26] It is something the human person undergoes or 'suffers' (to use the literal meaning of the Greek *πάσχειν*), in other words, deification is something that happens to the person. The individual who is being deified has become the receptacle of the divine activity, he has become the material on which God works.[27]

Participation in the divine by the human person, draws him beyond and above the confines of his own nature, which 'going beyond' is often characterized as an 'ecstasy', an ecstasy out of one's nature.[28] This is to be understood as an ecstasy out of, or going beyond, the limitations of the created being effected by divine activity, since the participation that makes this possible is participation in the uncreated which is beyond those limitations.[29] (No idea of 'person' emerging out of the necessity of nature[30] can be included in Byzantine usage of the notion of 'ecstasy'.)

Deification is a union of God and man without confusion and without change in essence. Man participates in divine attributes by grace alone but his nature is not turned into that of the divinity. Except for the simile of mirror, the metaphors Maximus makes use of for describing the state of deification are already familiar from Christology: air transfused with light and incandescent iron.[31] Deification according to the Greek Fathers is a process of transfiguration and sanctification, and not one of transubstantiation (or a sort of transmogrification). If the Greek Fathers made use of the language of their ancestors—which was only natural—they certainly were quite clear about the difference

[25] Here I have drawn on Jean-Claude Larchet's extensive study on the topic, *La Divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1996), 527–640. (Whether or not the *logos–tropos* distinction is applicable in this context is discussed by Larchet on 605–8.) See also Paul M. Blowers, 'Realized Eschatology in Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium* 22', *SP* 32 (1997), 258–63.

[26] See *Ambig.* 20 (PG 91), 1237B.

[27] See ibid. 1237D.

[28] See, Sherwood, *Earlier Ambigua*, 124–54; Larchet, *La Divinisation*, 533–40.

[29] See *Ambig.* 20 (PG 91), 1237B.

[30] Freedom from 'the necessity of nature' in Maximus' thinking means *apatheia*, in other words freedom from passions that keep the fallen human person in captivity.

[31] See *Ambig.* 7 (PG 91), 1076A; 1088D; and *Ambig.* 10. 19 (PG 91), 1137C.

in content of notions such as *theosis*. No Greek Father would claim that the Christian is to become God in the classical sense of a mortal man turning into Hermes or Zeus, or in the sense of becoming an object of worship.[32]

One of the most striking allegories on deification Maximus ever penned is the one in *Ambiguum* 10. 19 in which he reflects on Melchisedec[33]—that ever-so-obscure king and high-priest of the ancient Jerusalem who for not having a genealogy in Scripture was regarded as being without parentage (or without beginning altogether) and, for that reason, a type *par excellence* of Christ. What Maximus saw as the summit of saints' endeavours in general, was what he thought Melchisedec in particular had become an example of.

> To him [i.e. the Logos] the saints have run their course in a way that surpasses knowledge. And so far as the natural capacities inherent in them allowed, they were united wholly to the whole [Word], and to the best of their ability they were endowed by him with [divine] qualities so much so that they could be recognized from him alone, like as some crystal-clear mirrors capturing completely—from his divine characteristics—the whole shape of God the Word who was looking himself in them. They retained none of the old characteristics by which men normally were known: all gave way to the superior characteristics; like dark air which is totally mingled with light.[34]

> This, I think, was what that great and wonderful Melchisedec (of whom Scripture relates great and wondrous things) knew and experienced, and was deemed worthy to rise above time and nature, and to be assimilated to the Son of God. In other words, he is believed to be by habit, that is by grace, such as the giver of grace is by essence—so far as this is possible.[35]

What is so striking in this account, is the way in which Maximus treats the simile of mirror. Here deification is not simply looking at God, and through seeing becoming what you see—although that certainly is a way of putting it. Instead, here *God the Word* is looking, not at you, but

[32] Cf. Acts 14: 11–15.

[33] On Melchisedec in Maximus see Édouard Jeauneau, 'La Figure de Melchisédech chez Maxime le Confesseur', in *Autour de Melchisédech: Mythe-Réalités-Symbole* (Chartres: Association des Amis du Centre Médiéval Européen de Chartres, 2000), 51–9; and Larchet, *La Divinisation*, 208–19, 478, 513, 542, 597, and 620.

[34] *Ambig.* 10. 19 (PG 91), 1137BC.

[35] Ibid. 10. 20a (PG 91), 1137CD.

in you as in a mirror—and in the classical understanding, the mirror image is something very real.[36] In other words, the Logos by looking himself in us—as in a mirror—reproduces his own image in us; he 'impresses,' to quote Gregory of Nyssa, 'an image of the sun upon the mirror of our souls'.[37] One is thus characterized by God alone who as the sun looks himself in the mirror that one is, the end result of this being: none of the old human characteristics remain noticeable but God himself makes himself manifest through one's whole being. There is no annihilation of the soul or the body but a complete transfiguration of the whole of the human composite:

> The soul becomes God by participation in divine grace, ceasing from all activity of intellect and sense, and at the same time suspending all the natural operations of the body. For the body is deified along with the soul through its own corresponding participation in the process of deification. Thus God alone is made manifest through the soul and the body, since their natural properties have been overcome by the superabundance of his glory.[38]

That this sublime reality is not reserved for the few biblical saints only, Maximus reassures his reader in the sequel: 'For God provides equally to all the power that naturally leads to salvation, so that each one who wishes can be transformed by divine grace.'[39] Anyone can become another 'Melchisedec' or 'Abraham' by emulating their way of life (especially as understood in its spiritual interpretation). What being another 'Melchisedec' amounts to is nothing less than shaking off everything that might hinder one's love for God: 'Another Melchisedec' is, then, the person who to the utmost degree carries out the first half of the twofold commandment of love.

> Anyone therefore who puts to death the members that are on the earth, and extinguishes his whole fleshly way of thinking, and shakes off his whole relationship to it, through which the love that we owe to God alone is divided, and denies all the marks of the flesh and the world, for the sake of divine grace, so that he can say with the blessed Paul the Apostle, *Who will separate us from*

[36] See Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 79; and Sherwood, *Earlier Ambigua*, 145–6.

[37] *Cant.* 3 (GNO 6), 90: 15–16; quoted in Louth, *Origins*, 93.

[38] *Cap. theol.* II. 88 (PG 90), 1168AB.

[39] *Ambig.* 10. 20b (PG 91), 1144A; translation in Louth, *Maximus*, 118.

the love of Christ?[40]—such a person has become without father and mother and genealogy in accordance with the great Melchisedec, not being in any way subject to the flesh and nature, because of the union that has taken place with the Spirit.[41]

UNITY OF HUMANITY

The other half of the twofold commandment of love complements the first. It is the active counterpart (accomplished through reason) of the contemplative love for God (brought about through the intellect). Again, this is a matter of serious spiritual warfare: 'For the sake of love,' writes Maximus in a letter to a high ranking Byzantine statesman, 'the saints all resist sin continually, finding no meaning in this present life, and they endure many forms of death, that they may be gathered from this world to themselves and to God, and unite in themselves the fractures of nature.'[42] Passions, individual desires, and sin, all divide the one humanity, and it has become clear by now that *true Love* does not have its seat *in reasons, looks, or passions never seeing, in men on earth, or women's minds partaking*. Yet, *true Love*, that *cannot die* and which *this age expels*, still remains the sole source of unity for the fragmented humanity.[43]

What, then, does this *true Love* consist in? In *Letter* 2, Maximus writes:

> These are the marks of love, which binds human beings to God and to one another. …You, who have become blessed and most genuine lovers of this divine and blessed way, fight the good fight until you reach the end, clinging fast to those qualities that will assure your passage to love's goal. I mean: love of humankind, brotherly and sisterly love, love of the poor, compassion, mercy, humility, meekness, gentleness, patience, freedom from anger, long-suffering, perseverance, kindness, forbearance, goodwill, peace towards all.

[40] Rom. 8: 36.
[41] *Ambig.* 10. 20c (PG 91), 1144B; translation in Louth, *Maximus*, 118–19.
[42] *Ep.* 2 (PG 91), 404D.
[43] On love as unity, see Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 339–43.

Out of these and through these the grace of love is fashioned, which leads one to God who deifies the human being that he himself fashioned.[44]

Much of what love amounts to involves, it seems, certain personal asceticism. And personal ascetisicm is something that is often regarded as individualistic, as opposed to the ecclesial and eucharistic forms of devotion. Within the context of the twofold commandment of love, however, it becomes an entirely necessary means for the reunification of humanity, and an expression of *true Love*.

He who is perfect in love and has attained the summit of detachment knows no difference between 'mine and thine,' between faithful and unfaithful, between slave and freeman, or indeed male and female. Having risen above the tyranny of the passions and looking to nature, one in all men, he considers all equally and is disposed equally towards all. For in him there is neither Greek nor Jew, neither male nor female, neither slave nor freeman, but everything and in all things Christ.[45]

Eucharistic union is in no way in contrast to this but is, on the one hand, the source of invigorating power which becomes the driving force for loving even one's enemies, and on the other hand, it is an iconic fulfilment of the unity of all in Christ. In the *Mystagogia*, Maximus is especially concerned with what the divine grace, present in the Eucharist in a very special way, enables the individual soul to achieve and undergo, and in the *Liber Asceticus* he speaks of a 'power both to imitate Christ and to do well in all his commandments'; a power which Christ gives to those who strive after detachment from the world.

Ascetic struggle and the Eucharist are, we might say, the two poles—opposite war and isolation—between which the pendulum of the human deification oscillates. As long as the pendulum moves, there is time for the *true Love* to find space in those who are still in this world, and who struggle in truth to love God and their neighbour for the sanctification of both soul and body, as well as of the whole of the circumference that their actions cover.

[44] *Ep.* 2 (PG 91), 404D–405A; translation in Louth, *Maximus*, 91–2. See also *Carit.* II. 9 (PG 90), 985CD, where Maximus enumerates the five causes for which human beings love one another.

[45] *Carit.* II. 30 (PG 90), 993B.

True Love, then, that which makes us able to love truly, cannot ultimately be but this power which makes us 'gods' and which at the same time makes us one with God and with one another. It enables a union without confusion and without separation. The true philosopher, the 'wisdom-lover', can be no one else but he whose 'intellectual journey' has led him to become a receptacle of this power. Ultimately, the philosopher becomes a lover of God, God who is the only *true Love* and the only true source of the spiritual love for one's neighbour. The philosopher is, then, a lover of the *true Love*, and becomes a source of love to his neighbours also, a kind of luminous tree of Paradise on whose branches those who are weary shall find rest, whose fruits nourish and sustain them, and whose foliage gives them shelter and consolation.

Such is the Saint whose mind becomes the dwelling place of *true Love* in accordance with the graceful lines with which John Dowland closes his song on *true Love*:

> *O fairest mind, enrich'd with Love's residing,*
> *Retain the best; in hearts let some seeds fall,*
> *Instead of weeds Love's fruits may have abiding;*
> *At Harvest you shall reap increase of all.*
> *O happy Love, more happy man that finds thee,*
> *Most happy Saint, that keeps, restores, unbinds thee.*[46]

May the 'intellectual history' of humankind inherit even a fraction of the happiness of the Saint who unbinds the *true Love*, and may we, each and every one, become true philosophers, 'wisdom-loving minds', possessing and being possessed by the *true Love*, united with God and with one another in a union which knows no confusion or separation.

Many have said much about love. Looking for it among the disciples of Christ will you find it for they alone held the true Love, the teacher of love, of which it is said: If I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, … and have not love, it profits me nothing. He then that possesses love, possesses God himself, for God is Love. 'To Him be glory through the ages. Amen.'[47]

[46] Dowland, 'Tell me', 20.

[47] *Carit.* IV. 100 (PG 90), 1073A.

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Epilogue

Having now traversed through the challenging terrain of the theology of St Maximus the Confessor we have gathered diverse fruits produced by what I have here called 'the principle of simultaneous union and distinction'. To sum up some of the main themes, this principle is at the heart of the Trinitarian doctrine of Monad-in-Triad and Triad-in-Monad, the one God, undivided in essence yet not confounded, distinct in persons but not separated. The One-in-Three is reflected in the deified human person who through the proper use of his free will has moved from the image to the likeness of God. Similarly, simultaneous union and distinction pervades Maximus' understanding of Christ, too. This is a picture of Christ who is one of the Trinity and one of us, a single composite hypostasis, of and in two natures; Christ who preserves the constitutive differences and properties, wills and activities, of his constituent parts unharmed in the hypostatic union that he is, without separation and without confusion.

The universe, in its turn, is one whole, constituted of parts that through the providence of their unique Maker preserve their distinct characteristics unviolated in their union without confusion, thus reflecting the ultimate union without confusion of the *logoi* in the one Logos. The universe is also sensible and intelligible, and again, the two are united without confusion, finding in the human microcosm a vehicle that leads it through the virtues to the kingdom of the age to come. The Logos hides himself in this cosmos—everywhere and in each part of it at once—and just as in the universe the *logoi* are detected, so also the spirit is detected in the Scriptures. The Logos draws us through the multiplicity of the phenomena—in the universe, the Scriptures, and the Church—to unity in himself. Embodying himself in the contingent, the Logos draws us through himself to himself as he is in himself. The ultimate calling of the created order is to mingle with the uncreated in a union without confusion.

Church is also an orderly unity of 'charismatic' ranks united in the one Spirit and distinct in the gifts which the diverse operations of the one Holy Spirit activates; this is Church in which differences are

overcome without annihilation by virtue of the overwhelming presence of God to whom all the faithful are drawn through faith and love.

Love, finally, draws everything into unity without violating the integrity of the particular. This is love which deifies, love which unites us one with another, love which unites us with God, which *is* God and makes us gods; or better said: it is God who is love which unites us with himself without confusion, and which through us unites us one with another and with the whole world in a simultaneous union and distinction.

What, then, has St Maximus' theology of simultaneous union and distinction to offer? If there is one thing which stands out in Maximus' theology, as we have presented it here, it is the immense importance which he lays on the wholeness of each and every being. That difference ceases to be a threat, rather that at all cost one must protect the integrity of difference within unity, community, is of vital importance. Need for respect for wholeness and integrity at every level cannot be overemphasized today. An understanding of simultaneous union and distinction could have a significantly positive effect on any form of 'common life' whether with respect to a working environment, politics, biodiversity or church, for example. In philosophical terms, Maximus' system overcomes dualism without collapsing into monism; and his theology without falling into pantheism presents, on the one hand, a 'theophanic' ontology, and without becoming Origenism commends, on the other hand, a spirituality of deification.

But if one is to do justice to Maximus' theology in its truest nature, one needs to switch to a different mode. In its core Maximus' theology is something one might call 'heuristic'. It is not a matter of speculating and thinking for its own sake but rather a matter of finding out and finding oneself in an actual process of becoming what one is called to be in accordance with the *logos* of one's own truth that is rooted in the Logos of God himself. A study like this can only reflect this reality; it can only point to a certain direction. In that sense, perhaps, the frontispiece to this volume with its reproduction of Dirk Bouts' extraordinary typological altarpiece,[1] depicting the two biblical saints that in particular signify the human person deified through divine love, could be an invitation to a deeper understanding of Maximus' thought, an invitation to a 'heuristic exploration' in becoming 'another Abraham' or 'another Melchisedec'.

[1] Left upper section ('Abraham meets Melchisedec') of Dirk Bouts' *Last Supper* triptych (1464–67), in St Peter's Church, Leuven, Belgium.

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