

**Theses of doctoral dissertation**

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*The Theology of St Maximus the Confessor  
An Interpretive Study in a Historical Context*

1. The most important Greek and Latin sources discussing Maximus' age are the following: the *Liber pontificalis*; the *Chronicon paschale*; St Theophanes the Confessor's *Chronographiá*; St. Nikephor's *Chronographia brevis*; and John Zonaras' *Epitome historiarum*.
2. The most important Syriac and Armenian sources discussing Maximus' age are the following: Michael the Great's *Chronicle*; the *Chronicon anonymi ad annum 1234*; Bar Hebraeus' *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*; and Sebeos' *Historia*.
3. The reasons of the 7th-century crisis of the Byzantine Empire were in part internal: moral irresponsibility of government (Maurice), the limited validity of governing principles (Phocas, Martina) which gave rise to a periodical crisis of monarchy; the schism of the Church; the usurpations of the exarchs; the risings of the *strategoi*, whereby entire provinces become uncontrollable for the central government; in respect of church politics, the opposition of the Roman church to the court, and the opposition of the Antiochene Jacobite church to the court and to the Chalcedonian church organisation; religious tensions between Christians and Israelites in Palestine.
4. The reasons of the 7th-century crisis of the Byzantine Empire were in part external: Avar, Persian and Arabic attacks on the Empire.
5. The senate's influence on political matters grew sensibly in Constans II's times.
6. Maximus' biography can be reconstructed on the basis of, first, Greek and Latin sources; second, on the basis of Syriac sources.
7. The ten most important Greek and Latin sources are the following: a) Maximus' correspondence; b) the *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*; c) the *Relatio motionis*; d) the *Disputatio Bizyae*, with Theodosios, the bishop of Caesarea Bithynia; e) the *Epistula Maximi ad Anastasium Monachum*; f) the *Epistula Anastasii Apocrisiarii ad Theodosium Gangrensem*; g) the *Epistula Anastasii Monachi ad monachos Calaritanos*; h) the *Hypomnesticon* of Theodore Spoudeus; i) the anonymous pamphlet *Contra Constantinopolitanos*; j) the *Vita Maximi*.
8. In the course of Maximus' first process, the senate first tried to condemn him on political charges.

9. Maximus did not want to get confronted with the emperor but wanted to defend the logical articulation of the Christological dogma.
10. The *Disputatio cum Pyrrho* wants to present Maximus as a theologian and to show that his Christological argumentation is a metaphysically grounded, logical train of ideas which is very difficult if not impossible to refute.
11. In all likelihood, Maximus himself was at least co-author of the *Relatio motionis* and of the *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*.
12. The *Vita Maximi* explicitly intends to describe Maximus' personality and to reconstruct his *oeuvre*; to present his life and virtues as a model to be imitated; to draw his moral and intellectual portrait; to show the immaculate quality of his character; to prove that he reached the sanctity of life; to demonstrate, on the basis of all this, how unjust his punishment was; and to offer, in a final analysis, a parainetic writing.
13. The author of the *Vita Maximi* knew very well Maximus' *oeuvre*.
14. Chapters 18-20 of the *Vita Maximi* cite almost word for word the *Expositio orationis dominicae*; the influence of Evagrius' *De oratione* can be felt on the terminology of the *Vita Maximi* here.
15. In the above-named chapters of the *Vita Maximi*, references are clearly identifiable to Maximus' following great works: the *Quaestiones et dubia*, the *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, the *Ambigua*, the *Scholion* to Denys' works, and the *Mystagogia* – so the unknown author of Maximus' biography certainly knew these works or at least, parts of them.
16. The *Vita Maximi* carries on a dispute against opponents the author knows, and takes part in a discussion which is already in progress concerning the evaluation of Maximus' personality and deeds. In this discourse, (s)he wants to present the real Maximus, in order to achieve the Confessor's theological rehabilitation.
17. George of Resh'aina's Syriac *vita* is an explicitly vituperative pamphlet directed against Maximus.
18. The text of George of Resh'aina's Syriac *vita* does not prove that its author knew any of the works written by Maximus Confessor; the only thing it does in this respect is that it correctly attributes dyotheletism and dyoenergism to Maximus.
19. The Syriac *vita* is on the one hand a literary fiction and as such, it is only aimed at propaganda; whereas on the other hand, it does attest (by mentioning ecclesiastic figures, historical events and Palestinian localities like e.g. the Palaia Lavra) that the author really knew the epoch.

20. In general, the Syriac biographical sources are less dependable insofar as they openly denigrate Maximus and also because apparently, their respective authors did not read Maximus' theological works—so they attack him on a side that is unknown to them.
21. In all likelihood, Maximus was born in Palestine around 580 in a Greek-speaking family which is otherwise completely unknown to us.
22. After entering a monastery, he would remain a simple monk till the end of his life, and would not be ordained or elected abbot.
23. It was probably in Alexandria that he became acquainted with Anastasius the Disciple, who would remain his disciple till the end of his life.
24. It was probably through Anastasius the Disciple that Maximus established contacts with the imperial administration and with the Emperor's family.
25. To judge by his correspondence, he took part in the political affairs of the province and to some extent, even in those of the Empire, as a non official advisor on ecclesiastic affairs.
26. Maximus would establish relatively narrow contacts especially with African political leaders.
27. It is possible that the signature *Maximus monachus*, produced during the second meeting of the Lateran synod of 649, derives from the Confessor himself.
28. Maximus' process is launched as one of high treason but ultimately it ends as a process centered around the issue of „cesaropapism.”
29. In a final analysis, Maximus was found guilty because he defended the logical thinkability and reasonability of Christology as opposed to the court's strategy of church unification, and because he was not ready to enter into communion with the imperial church, which he deemed heretic.
30. To judge by his *Bibliotheka*, Photius presumably did not know several important pieces of Maximus' oeuvre.
31. Maximus' theses, in parts 37-39 of the *Ambigua ad Johannem*, concerning the place of the universe and Aristotle' doctrine of the categories, recurs in Book 1 of Eriugena's *Periphyseon*.
32. The *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* is Maximus' work most replete with his doctrine on the Holy Spirit.
33. In the *Capita quindecim*, Neo-platonic terms like e.g. *hyperouision agathon* determine the Confessor's concept of God, and express the ontological superiority and unknowability of God.
34. In the *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, Maximus' dyothelete position is based on that Christ's wills are natural wills (*physika thelemata*), i.e. on that they derive organically from the respective internal natures of God and man in the person of Christ.

35. According to the *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, there are two fully developed wills in Christ, but the human will spontaneously recedes and yields to the divine will.
36. The moral meditation in *Expositio in psalmum LIX* could be occasioned by the Persian onslaught but Maximus' argumentations show no sign of historical influence; he interprets the psalm's text exclusively in a moral sense.
37. The most characteristic trait of Maximus' Correspondence is the preponderance of dogmatic topics.
38. Maximus' christology is clearly recognisable in his *Vita Virginis* (which survives only in an ancient Georgian translation).
39. The theological specialty of the *Vita Virginis* is BVM's elevation above the ordinary human nature.
40. The post-classical term *hyperousios* in the *Expositio orationis dominicae* probably derives from Neo-Platonic meta-ontology, more precisely, from Denys' *De divinis nominibus*.
41. In the description of *praothes* as a moral excellence, Maximus unifies Aristotelian and Evagrian elements.
42. The *Expositio orationis dominicae* contains a sketchy physiology of morality.
43. In the same text, Maximus could not prove the internal logical incoherence of the Israelite concept of God.
44. The *Expositio orationis dominicae* emphasises the fundamental character of divine unity to a lesser extent than does Denys' *De divinis nominibus*.
45. In Maximus' moral philosophical works, *pathos* must be turned into *pothos*, the mind's spiritual desire for God.
46. Since even in the beatified condition, the human will does not cease to operate, Maximus' doctrine can be labelled a teaching of infinite ethical perspective.
47. Maximus' ethics is invariably proposed in a theological, soteriological and mystical anthropological framework.
48. In Maximus' ethics, three emotions hinder the subject in fulfilling the commandments: ἐπιθυμία, πάθος and θυμός, which are set in motion by the soul's desire for ἡδονή and ὕλη.
49. In Maximus' ethics, the fundamental habit of *apatheia*, and the virtues of prayer, forgiving and agape depend mutually on each other.
50. In his early works, Maximus' moral theological terminology is not yet completely fixed.

51. In these works, the concepts of *pathos*, *thymos*, *epithymia* are not defined so it is often difficult to differentiate between them.
52. The meaning of the term *pathos* is best rendered in Hungarian by the term ‘indulat.’
53. In certain contexts, the meaning of the term *thymos* verges on this; in other cases it is best interpreted as ‘wrath;’ while still in other cases, it is difficult to differentiate it from that of *epithymia*.
54. *Epithymia* is best translated into Hungarian as ‘megkívánás,’ not as ‘vágy.’
55. The autonomy of human action is unequivocally designated as something negative in Maximus’ thought.
56. Maximus finds the heteronomy of the will desirable, that is, the habit in which human will spontaneously joins, and is subordinated to, divine will.
57. For Maximus, the fundamental moral law of human nature (φύσεως νόμος) is that the irrational motions of the soul must be steered by the understanding towards higher and higher ontological and moral conditions.
58. Maximus’ theology of temptation is organically connected to his theory of the passions, to his aretology and to his theory of the will. However, he fails to identify exactly who or what the source of temptation is.
59. In the early moral works, Maximus considers the following to be virtues: agape (ἀγάπη), 2. self-control (ἐγκράτεια), 3. prayer (προσευχή). The *Expositio orationis dominicae* regards καταλλαγή and συγχώρησις as virtues as well, whereas ἀπάθεια is seen in several works of Maximus’ as a fundamental habit which grounds the other virtues.
60. The definition of love found in the *Capita de caritate* approaches the *definiendum* from an intellectual point of view, and, interestingly, does not define love in terms of the virtues directed toward the fellow human.
61. In Maximus’ view, the love for God and the love for the fellow human mutually depend on each other: each is realised through the other.
62. The love for God is a kind of spiritualised, sublime love and displays an extatic character; in this condition, the mind may leave the body, asserts Maximus.
63. To believe the *Liber asceticus*, the mind may come into contact with God in the course of the prayer, and puts on the likeness of God.
64. In Maximus’ terminology, “joining the will with nature” means that we honestly admit that we are humans.

65. In Maximus' early monastic moral theology, the proper relation one should bear to the world is leaving the world of senses; and the human essence is realised by being elevated into God.
66. To judge by the early ethical works, Maximus is a moral realist, as far as the nature of temptation is concerned; but a moral idealist, insofar as the resistance to temptation is concerned.
67. In the focus of the theological opuscules, one finds three concept pairs: those of *ousia–hypostasis*, *tautotés–heterotés* and *henósis–diaphora*. The right or mistaken application of these concept pairs marks the boundaries of orthodoxy.
68. The coherent terminological and logical system centered around these concept pairs is to bundle up theology and anthropology in one homogeneous and overarching argumentative network.
69. In this system, however, *ousia* does not denote exactly the same thing in theology as it does in anthropology.
70. The christological opuscules argue that the divine and the human essence mutually exclude each other in the sense that they may not fusion, may not produce a new, third kind of essence.
71. To Maximus' mind, the unity of the Godhead is unconditional, whilst the union of God and man in Christ is conditioned and not *ab ovo* necessary insofar as it depends on a specific divine decision to save man.
72. In Christ, the two natures are, essentially, in a distributive unity. Maximus, however, will proceed to deny even the distributivity of the union as he argues that God's redemption is definitive so the hypostatic union is *adiairetos*, inseparable.
73. In trinitology, Maximus attributes a lower ontological rank to the concept of person, and attributes more value to the concept of essence or nature; or, perhaps inspired by Denys, he considers the latter more fundamental.
74. The central insight of Maximus' fundamental theology is that as God freely decides to save man, the radically different divine nature displays a radical tendency to support humanity.
75. In the theory of Christ's person, Maximus asserts that on the one hand, God is radically different from man, and that on the other, an indissoluble link connects God with man.

76. Hence, God and man are essentially different, and yet the resemblance between them goes to the greatest possible lengths. God is in any case of a nature that He is able and willing to receive or admit man into a close union with Himself.
77. The hypostatic union invariably implies the inseparable correlation of infinite and finite attributes in one subject; and in this manner, it necessitates the overriding of rationality by faith.
78. Therefore, the person of Christ is, in Maximus' theology, a concept just on the verge of logical thinkability.
79. The dialectical efforts Maximus displays in order to link up and at the same time distance the divine and the human nature in Christ rest upon the implicit general presupposition that God's essence is at least in a first approach intelligible so it may be intuited with rational insight.
80. This insight is previous natural knowledge of the divine essence: God's essence is logically and rationally articulatable by man as a rational being already in the present world. Hence, Maximus' mystagogy and christology are, as it were, a logical introduction into God, which yields real insight.
81. However, Maximus also argues that the rational character of the divine nature crosses over into supra-rationality at a certain point, namely, in Christ. This supra-rationality is no longer intuitable for the human being. Hence, the divine essence is, for Maximus, pure and perfect rationality as well as a transcending of this perfect rationality – in short, an endless enigma.
82. A detailed comparison of the respectively monothelete and dyothelete positions yields the upshot that the difference between the two is less marked on a phenomenological level than on an ontological one.
83. In the debate concerning monotheletism, the question is not which position is irrational but, rather, which position is more rational. In fact, two different kinds of rationalities, two different philosophical approaches are confronted with each other in this debate.
84. The dogmatic simplification inherent in the monothelete position may be explained by the schism of the imperial church. The church's condition is also the rationale of the court's adherence to the heterodox position, which could offer more promising perspectives for the re-unification of the church.

85. The *Nine Chapters* drawn up by Cyrus, patriarch of Alexandria are not directed against dyoenergism or dyotheletism but against extreme dyophysitism (Nestorianism).
86. It is on the authoritiy of Denys' *Letter 4* that the *Nine Chapters* argue for the unity of operation from the unity of Christ's person. This argumentation relies on the concept of the subject: the unity of the subject unifies the operations.
87. For Sergius, patriarch of Constantinople, the problematic point of the dyothelete position is that it hurts the principle of contradiction insofar as it apparently attributes two opposing qualities (wills) to the same subject, which is then conceived as an absurdity.
88. Sergius is not saying that the human nature in Christ did not have a will; in reality, he argues that it is not possible for one subject to have two contradictory acts of willing, so Christ's human will was moved by His divine will. This formulation is not *radically* different from what Maximus is saying in *Opuscule 1*. To put it very exactly, Sergius leaves undecided the alternation whether Christ had a human will at all or, rather, His human will was subordinated to the divine.
89. Maximus too defended the doctrine of two wills without having to posit that they are contradictory. So Sergius' arguments do not invalidate the premises of dyotheletism.
90. For Pope Honorius, the unity of the will in Christ follows from the unification of His two natures; this one and only will in Christ is essentially the saving divine will, which originally established the union. This unitary will, however, works in several different ways (*polytropós*).
91. To Honorius' mind, the divine will is able to present itself in the guise of a human will in order to propose a pattern to be imitated by man. This, however, argues Honorius, is but a pseudo-human will, a simple instrument of divine pedagogy; in other words, only a fake will.
92. Maximus' theology and theological anthropology proceed up to the bounds of rationality, where they stop to point at faith. This is the dialectic whereby Maximus designates man's place in universal existence and teaches us to understand ourselves properly. His teaching is that man is not to be understood from themselves but from their origin and efficient cause.