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- SUMMARY -

„DIVINIZATION OR THEOSIS
IN ST. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR'S THOUGHT”

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Theosis or man's deification is considered to be the Eastern theology's way of expressing the consummation and complete interpenetration of man and God¹, man's participation at the godly life of the Holy Trinity² or the blessed purpose for everything that was created³. Far from being a mythological fantasma or a useless metaphysical speculation, according to Panayotis Nellas, deification is a constant of man's on the whole condition and history, one of the most keen and active contemporary ideas⁴ which deeply mark the utopias and the anxieties of the modern era⁵.

This idea of man's ascension to the status of God, through divine grace, crosses the entire patristic tradition. Having its origin in the Scripture, it has also parallels in the ancient greek philosophy. Although its vocabulary is completely different from the biblical language which emphasizes the absolute transcendence of God, still, there is a lot of scripturistical evidence which was taken by the Holy Fathers as foundation of their teaching on theosis.

Although, in the eastern tradition, the concept of deification is present from the beginning, the Early Christian Fathers didn't reach a consensus on its exact meaning, mainly due to the fact that its use was related to the trinitarian and hristological controversies.

The classic definition of theosis belongs to St. Athanasius the Great: „God became man so that man might become a god”. For him, as for all the other Holy Fathers, the only foundation of man's deification is Christ's Incarnation.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus attributes St. Basil the Great the following definition: „man is an animal called to become god”⁶. Still, god is only a title granted by God to the virtuous men, meant to emphasize their eschatological accomplishment. For St. Gregory of Nazianzus, deification is the goal of man, goal which he can achieve through the deifying power of the Holy Spirit (recieved by Baptism) and through his ascetical effort to lead a moral life. St. Gregory of Nyssa thinks that man transcends, in the end, his own nature and becomes imune to corruptibility and ultimately to death, but he is reluctant in naming this state deification. For him, deification is above all a hristological concept, which can be also applied, by extension, to the Holy Communion.

¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ascetica și mistica Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2002, p. 425

² Karl Christian Felmy, *Dogmatica experienței ecclaziale*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 1999, p. 202

³ Panayiotis Christou, *Partakers of God*, Editura Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline Mass, 1984, p. 36

⁴ Christoph von Schönborn, *Über die richtige Fassung des dogmatischen Begriffs der Vergöttlichung des Menschen* apud Panayotis Nellas, *Omul, animal îndumnezeit*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2002, p. 15

⁵ Panayotis Nellas, *Omul, animal îndumnezeit*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2002, p. 15

⁶ Ilarion Alfeyev, *Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog și tradiția ortodoxă*, Editura Sophia, București, 2010, p. 314

According to Evagrius, the title of god granted to man is only a metaphor. The ineffable must be worshiped by men in silence and, in order to get close to Him, men must surpass their passions and free their minds from the images of the material world. Dionysius the Areopagite is the first theologian able to set out a definition of deification: attaining of likeness to God and union with Him so far as possible. In his opinion, the purpose of cristian life is the unification of all created things with God, through a process of consecration, illumination and developement.

The concept of theosis owes not only its developement but also its spreading in the entire eastern tradition to St. Maximus the Confessor who, because of its use as foundation and also centre of his theology, was named the theologian of deification.

One of the Eastern Church's mainly characteristics being its faithfulness to the Holy Fathers⁷, St. Maximus, as confessor, theologian and father, had to keep and defend the Fathers' theaching because *any confession given by heart and mouth* meant to practice the Fathers teaching⁸. Due to the fact that in any new doctrinal developement⁹, like in any theological dispute¹⁰, the voice of the Fathers had to be heard as testimony of the Church's faith, it becomes obvious the influence of the Fathers and their role in shaping St. Maximus' thinking.

The Fathers writings added value and finality to the dogmatic teachings. Because of the internal evidence of their universal truth¹¹, their opinions were accepted not only as objections or formal opinions. They were considered to be the promoters and the keepers of the christian faith precisely because they were the ones responsible for protecting the faith from any heresy and also for opening the minds of the christians towards the knowledge of God.

There is no doubt that the writings of the Holy Fathers were extremely important for St. Maximus, that being the reason why we can find many of their theological characteristics in St. Maximus' work: St. Gregory the Theologian and Dionysius the Areopagite's view of God, St. Gregory of Nyssa's anthropology, St. Athanasius the Great's doctrine on redemption and deification, St. Clement of Alexandria's *λογοί* theory, Evagrius' thesis on negative *praxis*¹². St. Maximus' theology

⁷ The concept of *holy Fathers* has dogmatical origin, its apparition being needed for the establishment of testimonies of the authentic catholic tradition. Cf. Hans von Campenhausen, *Părinții greci ai Bisericii*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 9; Holy Fathers were called the ones who guided the christians spiritually and taught them, the ones who occupied an important place in the christian community, because of their spiritual, not biological birth. Cf. Panagiotis K. Crestou, George Dion Dragas, *Greek Orthodox Patrology: An introduction to the study of the Church Fathers*, Editura Orthodox Research Institute, Rollinsford, 2005, p. 11

⁸ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Traditia creștină. Spiritul creștinătății răsăritene*, vol II, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2004, p. 37

⁹ Following the *holy Fathers* was the common formula to insert a doctrinal statement in the Primary Church.

¹⁰ The holy Fathers represented the foundation of the Councils/Synods, *in presentia* or *in absentia*, or even after their death.

¹¹ Georges Florovsky, *Biblie, Biserică, Tradiție*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2006, pp. 100-101

¹² S. L. Epifanovici, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, pp. 196-197

manages to unify all these concepts in a complete and unitary perspective, without involving any servile dependence on the Father's writings which only offered him guiding principles to develop and deepen according to his own convictions.

St. Maximus' writings are very valuable both from theological and philosophical points of view, his work being an „imposing and personal synthesis of the great philosophical currents of antiquity and of the main patristic ideas”¹³. His world outlook, according to Epifanovici, cannot be thought of as „neither theological only, neither philosophical only”¹⁴, but as presenting „in itself a harmonious union of theology and philosophy, of faith and knowledge”¹⁵. Philosophy is however included in faith, fact proven by the prevalence of the mystical elements in St. Maximus' thinking. For even when we take into consideration St. Maximus' theological and philosophical reflections, we notice their substantiation with Scripture passages, especially when the subject is related to contemplation, incarnation or deification. St. Maximus' vocabulary comprises a lot of philosophical terms christened by the Holy Fathers, who changed their common meaning in order to express the truth of faith¹⁶.

Using his liturgical experience and also his theological erudition of uniting in a creative manner the patristical and philosophical tradition, St. Maximus succeeded to express in a coherent and profound manner its liturgical, ascetical and mystical implications on christian cosmology and anthropology - including deification¹⁷. Furthermore, the maximian theology never loses itself at conceptual or speculative level, always finding its way to the most simple and obvious understanding of the practical christian life¹⁸.

Knowing the implications of the Origenist myth on man's deification, St. Maximus fought it vehemently, its main arguments relying on the doctrines of movement and rest, of the man's free will and of the Logos. Origen's triad, rest (μονη) - movement (κινησις) - creation (γενεσις), is reversed in St. Maximus' thinking, becoming creation (γενεσις) - movement (κινησις) - rest (στασις). For Maximus, the movement has an originating/creating role, leading the human persons to the eternal rest, from which they cannot fall again - the deification is everlasting and without limit, so it cannot lead to saturation.

Arguing against origenism, St. Maximus places genesis before movement and, because genesis is an act of God's love and freedom, the movement cannot have a negative connotation. The movement becomes from cause of the sin, as

¹³ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Întrebări și răspunsuri*, în *Filoalbia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. II, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 21

¹⁴ S. L. Epifanovici, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și Teologia Bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, p. 71

¹⁵ Idem, p. 71

¹⁶ Torstein T. Tollesen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*, Editura Oxford University Press, New York, 2008, pp. 10-11

¹⁷ Idem, p. 13

¹⁸ Christoph von Schonborn, *Icoana lui Hristos*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2011, p. 107

encountered in origenism, cause of deification, because the maximian movement actually means ascension towards God.

The pelagian disputes were St. Augustine's main reason for proving the random and undeserved nature of the divine grace, which lead, in time, to the doctrine of predestination - the manifestation of the divine omnipotence and of the sovereignty of grace in relation to man's freedom. St. Augustine taught that God predestined some people to eternal bliss and other people to the punishment of everlasting fire¹⁹. Although St. Maximus had knowledge of the augustinian doctrine of predestination, he grants it a whole new different meaning: even if God because of its omnipotence, knows all is about to happen before it does, His predestination refers only to the natural ongoing of things in the sequence of their causes and effects²⁰, keeping intact the hypostatic human freedom before the things and suffering that happens to him. Furthermore, the fulfillment or the denial of this hypostatic synergy has different natural consequences and influences the course of events²¹. St. Maximus argues against the idea of predestination of God's will, which states that man's destiny is determined by God and that, despite of the course of action taken or of the choices the man makes, he cannot depart from his destiny. He believes that God does not intervene at the level of man's will and does not violate the free will of the rational beings created according to His image and likeness²².

Although he admits the existence of a fundamental gap (*χασμα*)²³ between the created and the Uncreated, St. Maximus points out that this can be overcome by God's divine will. Not only the economy of salvation - instituted for the fallen man - but also the initial act of creation must be understood as expression of God's love: in creation, God conceives, as His partner, a world which is completely different from Him and which He wants to bring in communion with Him, without annihilating its distinction. And this communion, this overcoming of the gap without suppressing it, is accomplished only by God, because only the divine nature can remain unaffected by this kind of act.

God expects from men something more than a blind participation, namely, to deliberately assume their own nature, to master it freely as a good nature, to discover, with gratitude, the gifts of divine love in life and in the universe. The participation of the created being in the divine life does not remain a static fact, the man being called to grow in the divine life, process that has the appearance of „assimilation” with the

¹⁹ Fericitudinii Augustin, *Scrisori Alese I*, în *PSB*, vol. 64, Editura EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1985, p. 27

²⁰ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și tovarășii săi întru martiriu: papa Martin, Anastasie Monahul, Anastasie Apocrisiarul, „Vieti” – actele procesului – documentele exilului, trad. și prezentare diac. Ioan I. Ică Jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2004, pp. 138-139

²¹ Alain Riou, *Le monde et l'église selon Maxime le Confesseur*, Edition Beauchesne, Paris, 1973, p. 197

²² Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Scurtă tâlcuire la Tatâl nostru*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. II, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 239

²³ Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 66

Archetype, in communion with Him. This assimilation, though, never takes into consideration the problem of attenuating or eliminating man's freedom, but rather opens to him the possibility of practicing the absolute freedom²⁴.

Rejecting Origen's pre-existentialism, St. Maximus considers the man a dichotomous being consisting of soul (ψυχή) and body (σωμα), both its components coexisting both initially and continuously²⁵. Moreover, St. Maximus states the existence of an indissoluble and mutual relationship between man's soul and body (σχέσις)²⁶ - which form, together, a full species and cannot exist separately²⁷.

Besides the fundamental dichotomy body - soul, St. Maximus uses also the trichotomy mind (νους) - soul (ψυχή) - body (σωμα) in order to illustrate the human architecture²⁸. Of course, this is not an ontological trichotomy *stricto sensu*, St. Maximus is expressing only his preference to use triadic arrangements in order to describe man's structure²⁹.

According to the maximian thinking, the image of God (εικὼν) in man is closely related with the mind (νους) and the rational nature (λογος)³⁰: since his rational nature is made after God's image (εικὼν θεου), the man is destined not only to exist but to exist forever³¹. The one who lives accordingly to his nature, by his own choice, obtains, eventually, with the help of the divine grace, the well being (ευ είναι) or the eternal being (αει είναι)³² - the last state corresponding to man's state of deification, that is achieving absolute likeness with God by uniting with Him.

Being made in the image of God, the man possesses, by nature, an opening towards the Uncreated and infinity which, actualised, leads him to reach the likeness with God. While the image implies man's destination towards deification, the likeness implies not only the final state of deification, but the whole course of growing the image - through *vita practica* and *vita contemplativa*³³. As result of achieving the

²⁴ Father Dumitru Stăniloae speaks of a teonomical freedom (which determines itself towards and with God) which finds its true nature or the pattern of its theological being, meaning the original opening towards its Archetype.

²⁵ John Meyendorff, *Teologia Bizantină. Tendențe istorice și teme doctrinare*, Editura Nemira, București, 2011, p. 208

²⁶ Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, București, 2005, p. 115

²⁷ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2006, p. 145

²⁸ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Mistagogia despre sfânta biserică și sfânta Sinaxă*, în Ioan I. Ică jr., *De la Dionisie Areopagitul la Simeon al Tesalonicului: Integrala comentariilor liturgice bizantine: studii și texte*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2012, p. 211

²⁹ Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, București, 2005, p. 124

³⁰ Polycarp Sherwood, *The ascetic life, the four centuries on charity*, *Ancient Christian Writers vol. XXI*, Editura The Newman Press, New York, 1955, p. 98

³¹ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Cele patru sute de capete despre dragoste*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoițe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. II, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 85

³² S. L. Epifanovici, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, p. 98; Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, București, 2005, p. 409

³³ Paul Evdokimov, *Ortodoxia*, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 1996, pag. 80

likeness, the man comes to participate in the divine life, which culminates in his deification by grace - from this moment on, the fulfillment of his vocation identifying precisely with what was meant by his human nature.

Progressing spiritually towards its ultimate goal, the man adds to the good received by nature, the good done by his free choice, meaning he goes onward, by virtue, from image (εικων) to likeness (ομοιωσις) until he reaches the state of deification (θεωσις): „by crossing this road, he becomes God, receiving from Him the power to be god as one who, by his own choice, added to the natural good of the image, the likeness through virtues, due to the natural ascent towards his Cause and entering in His intimacy”³⁴.

According to St. Maximus, the primordial man did not possess in his nature's constitution neither pleasure nor pain, but only the capability of pleasure which allowed him to enjoy the presence of God: „when God created human nature, He did not create sensible pleasure and 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”³⁵. This pleasure (ηδονη) is related to the mind (νους) and not to the senses, being a kind of spiritual pleasure - derived from the union of man's mind with God³⁶. Using pleasure wrongly, the man turned it into an unnatural lust and so it began to be associated with pain (οδυνη)³⁷.

The heavenly state of man cannot be called deification because the achievement of likeness to God and deification represent a purpose which man has to accomplish by his own free will: „For created man could not be revealed as a son of God through deification of grace, without first being born by the Spirit, in the exercise of free choice because of the power of self-movement and self-determination inherited in human nature”³⁸. So, far from considering the original condition of man as a state in which Adam had already acquired perfection, deification or ever being, St. Maximus believes that Adam, in the original condition, was like a fragile and immature child, called by God to grow and to develop spiritually. Perfection remained for him an ideal to accomplish, but only according to his own will³⁹.

According to maximian anthropology, Adam's fall was due to the devil's temptation and to the bad use of man's freedom, who preferred instead a theonomical

³⁴ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2006, pp. 125 -126

³⁵ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 293

³⁶ Jean-Claude Larchet, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, Mediator între Răsărit și Apus*, Editura Doxologia, Iaşi, 2010, p. 89

³⁷ Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, Bucureşti, 2005, pp. 172-173

³⁸ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2006, p. 440

³⁹ Jean-Claude Larchet, *La Divinisation de l'Homme Selon Saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Editura Cerf, Paris, 1996, pp. 183-184

freedom, an autonomous freedom directed against God⁴⁰. The primary mistake was not ontological but personal and consisted of a departure from the command given by God in heaven⁴¹. For Jean-Claude Larchet, Adam was a victim of the devil's deceit, who let himself to be seduced by the illusion of immediate deification⁴² - the fulfillment of his mission without God's help: "As the forefather Adam ... willingly, in the manner of a blind man, felt the rubbish of matter with both his hands in the darkness of ignorance, and inclined and surrendered the whole of himself to the senses alone ... and did not benefit from his senses apart from God, and instead of God, as he wished, nor take care to possess the things of God, in accordance with God, as it ought to be, as something inconceivable"⁴³.

Forgetting about his real food - the spiritual vision ($\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\iota\alpha$) - the mind ($\nuou\varsigma$) joined the senses and plunged into mere ignorance ($\alpha\gamma\omega\iota\alpha$), losing both his abilities to contemplate the divine and to ascend to his Creator⁴⁴. Instead of waiting for the time when he would have been ready to devote himself to the spiritual contemplation of the created beings, Adam abandoned himself in a hurry, to an exclusively sensitive knowledge of the creatures - source of pleasure and suffering, thus giving birth to the passions⁴⁵. In conclusion, Adam not only that he failed in spiritualising his body but actually submitted himself to it through knowledge and feelings⁴⁶, moving away from God - the true source of Existence - and entrusting himself to matter - non-being, nothingness⁴⁷.

Corrupting his natural ability for true knowledge and spiritual pleasure, man shifted towards sensual pleasure - endlessly fed by self-love ($\varphi\imath\lambda\omega\tau\iota\alpha$) - and towards mere ignorance ($\alpha\gamma\omega\iota\alpha$), the not-knowing of his Creator and of his purpose. St. Maximus stresses that the sin does not belong to the human nature but to the will which is moved contrary to reason ($\lambda\omega\gamma\o\varsigma$): „the sin... [relates to] the deviation and the slipping of man's will ($\gamma\omega\mu\eta$), moved contrary to reason and to the natural law”⁴⁸.

The crucial role in man's alienation from God is held by will, through man's

⁴⁰ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 297

⁴¹ Jean-Claude Larchet, *La Divinisation de l'Homme Selon Saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Editura Cerf, Paris, 1996, pp. 187-188

⁴² Idem, p. 188

⁴³ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2006, p. 233

⁴⁴ S. L. Epifanovici, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, p. 106

⁴⁵ Jean-Claude Larchet, *La Divinisation de l'Homme Selon Saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Editura Cerf, Paris, 1996, p. 191

⁴⁶ S. L. Epifanovici, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, p. 109

⁴⁷ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2006, p. 126

⁴⁸ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Scieri și epistole hristologice și duhovnicești*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 1990, p. 279

bad use of its capacity for self-determination⁴⁹. Breaking the communion with God led to the corruption of man's capacity of self-determination which, in the end, led to the formation - in man - of a sinful inclination of the will ($\gamma\omegaμη$)⁵⁰.

In St. Maximus' view, the freedom of choice is considered to be an imperfection, a boundedness of man's real freedom because a fulfilled nature does not need to choose, knowing the good naturally⁵¹. On the other hand, without freedom, man's union with God would have been a mechanical one. Divine philanthropy involves freedom, man's ability to choose or, on the contrary, to refuse the fulfillment in God. Even if man was created only by the divine will, however he can not be deified only through it because, as Vladimir Lossky stated, it is necessary „one will for creation, but two for deification. One will to give life to the image, but two in order to turn the image into likeness of God”⁵².

Failing his mission of mediating the entire creation and of deifying it along with him, man surrendered himself to the biological law of birth, sin and corruption. God's grand plan for humanity seemed to be shattered because the man was not able to rise again and to free himself from the bondage of passions and death⁵³. Only God had this divine power - by introducing a new principle in humanity - that could overcome the weakness of man's nature. It was natural and logical for the new principle to come and save mankind in the same way that the principle of corruption and death entered into our forefather, Adam. For St. Maximus it was inconceivable that the nature of the fallen man, subjected to pleasure and pain, be „brought back to the original hallowed life if God did not become man”⁵⁴.

Christ's Incarnation represents the great hidden mystery, the blessed goal for which everything was ordained, „the divine purpose, conceived before the beginning of created beings ... the mystery which circumscribes all the ages and which reveals the grand plan of God”⁵⁵. The mystery of Christ's Incarnation makes possible, by grace, „the deification beyond nature of those who are redeemed”⁵⁶. We can see that the main contribution of St. Maximus to the doctrine of deification is the way he relates the teaching about incarnation and the one about deification, on account of

⁴⁹ Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, București, 2005, p. 252

⁵⁰ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Scrisori și epistole hristologice și duhovnicești*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 1990, p. 30

⁵¹ Vladimir Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2010, p. 143

⁵² Vladimir Lossky, *Introducere în Teologia Ortodoxă*, Editura Sophia, București, 2006, p. 94

⁵³ S. L. Epifanovci, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, pp. 114-115

⁵⁴ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 303

⁵⁵ Doru Costache, *Elemente de hristologie soteriologică la Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul*, în *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă Patriarhul Justinian*, Universitatea din București, 2001, p. 287

⁵⁶ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 329

the *tantum-quantum*⁵⁷ formula, God's Incarnation being a doubtless pledge of man's hope to achieve deification⁵⁸.

The human nature assumed by Christ crosses two stages, one of salvation, the other one of deification. While the first step consists in the release from the reign of sin and death and also in the return of the nature to its true *λογος*, the second step consists in the complete transfiguration of the nature by deification: „[Christ] remade the human nature pure again as it was in the beginning. He even made it to surpass, through deification, its first creation. And as, at first, He created it from nothing, He then made it unchangeable so it wouldn't fall again. He fulfilled God's grand plan, deifying it through His Incarnation”⁵⁹.

Having nailed on the Cross the deed of sin, Christ abolished the grudge and destroyed the middle wall of enmity, making peace and reconciling us, through Him, with the Father⁶⁰. Thus He overcame all temptations caused by pleasure and suffering. Redemption appears as a negative aspect of the divine plan because it involves the healing of an abnormal, tragic and anti-natural reality⁶¹. For St. Maximus, Christ's economy is a restoration in the sense of man's return to his natural primordial condition of compliance with his ultimate goal intended for him by his Creator⁶².

His Incarnation, His death on the Cross, His Resurrection, Ascension and His staying at the right hand of the Father sum up the entire saving and deifying work that Jesus Christ assumed for us⁶³. Along with His Incarnation, the Logos has not assumed also the free will marked by sin and contrary to God, that characterizes the man. Through Incarnation, He assumed a free will unperverted by sin: „Not knowing the Lord my sin, that is the bending of my free will, He did not assume my sin also”⁶⁴ and because of the unchangeable constancy of His will, he made wright „the suffering characteristic of nature through the incorruptibility of his free will”⁶⁵. The immutability of Christ's human will and its eternal compliance with the divine will hold a decisive role in the maximian concept of salvation⁶⁶.

Without denying the humanity of Christ, St. Maximus says that His

⁵⁷ Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, București, 2005, p. 472

⁵⁸ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 84

⁵⁹ Idem, p. 221

⁶⁰ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Cele două sute de capete despre cunoștința de Dumnezeu și de iconomia întrupării Fiului lui Dumnezeu*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. II, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 232

⁶¹ Vladimir Lossky, *Introducere în Teologia Ortodoxă*, Editura Sophia, București, 2006, p. 149

⁶² N. Macsim, *Răscumpărarea în teologia Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul*, în *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei* 57, 1981, p. 458

⁶³ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2006, p. 426

⁶⁴ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 143

⁶⁵ Idem, p. 143

⁶⁶ Jean-Claude Larchet, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, Mediator între Răsărit și Apus*, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2010, p. 118

humanity did not move between good and evil by free choice - as in our case - because, being also true God, He knew good naturally and thus He did not need to choose⁶⁷. The impossibility for Christ to sin was due, on one hand, to His supernatural birth - He did not have a human will inclined to sin - and on the other hand, to the fact that through the deification of His human nature, the human will was deified also⁶⁸.

Subduing His human will to the divine will, Christ accomplished the salvation and, because of its imprinting and permanent movement, He deified it: „His human will was deified completely through its compliance with the divine will, being always moved and imprinted by it”⁶⁹.

Although shaped by the Word of God, the human will was far from being passive but, on the contrary, it wanted to be shaped by the divine will⁷⁰. The deification process of His human will takes place with its consent and does not result in an absorption of the human will by the divine will, the human nature remaining intact⁷¹. So, the deification of the human will means not the transformation of the human nature into something else but the complete union between human and divine.

Accomplishing our salvation, Christ realised also the man's great goal to unite all the separated parts of creation and led the rational human beings to deification⁷². This union, like man's salvation also, was not accomplished by the Logos through His divine power, by which He included and united them all before His Incarnation, but by His human will, united with the divine will, in synergy, He united that which the human will had failed to unite⁷³.

According to St. Maximus, Christ united the man by „removing intimately, in the spirit, the difference between man and woman, as He freed both of their nature's reason from the characteristics risen by passions”⁷⁴. Christ has purified the reason of the human nature from the characteristics risen from passions, showing it identical in man and woman - adding their characteristics in their common reason ($\lambda\circ\circ\circ\circ\circ\circ$) and avoiding the misuse of their passionate faculties. The second synthesis, between paradise and the inhabited world is accomplished also

⁶⁷ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Scieri și epistole hristologice și duhovnicești*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 1990, pp. 191-192

⁶⁸ Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Temptations of Jesus Christ according to St Maximus the Confessor*, în *Studia Patristica* vol. XLII, Leuven-Paris-Dudley: Peeters, 2006, pp. 48-49

⁶⁹ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Scieri și epistole hristologice și duhovnicești*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 1990, p. 222

⁷⁰ Idem, p. 202

⁷¹ Idem, p. 223

⁷² S. L. Epifanovci, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, p. 124

⁷³ Idem, p. 124

⁷⁴ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, pp. 161-162

through a compliance with the common *λόγος* of the human nature, compliance realised by shunning the passions and by practicing the virtues. Thus, through Christ, the earth became again a potential heaven, ready to be actualised by man, through his personal effort⁷⁵.

The third mediation, between heaven and earth, was accomplished through Christ's ascension to Heaven in His earthly body - body of the same nature as man - proving thus the unity of the sensitive world⁷⁶. The fourth synthesis, sensible - intelligible, was accomplished by Christ through His eternal ascent along with His human nature, through the intelligible categories of the heavenly powers⁷⁷. Precisely this ascent to the spiritual world, in body - the relation with the sensible world - and soul - the relation with the intelligible creation -, meaning in His complete nature, is a manifestation of the unity of the entire creation⁷⁸.

The last and also the highest form of mediation accomplished by Christ is the one between created and Uncreated. He unified „in a mode (*τρόπος*) and according to a reason (*λόγος*) beyond nature, all the created nature with the Word”⁷⁹. This synthesis has a paradoxical character, its realization taking place through a supernatural and supra-logical principle that God posses in order to unite Himself with man.

Being defined as the communion of beings endowed with reason and intelligence, the Church is, *par excellence*, the space of Divinity's complete manifestation. Its final destination is the unification, by itself, of all its members and to bring them together in front of God. As image of God, the Church leads the christians to deification - by which the divine grace is bestowed over them and God Himself unites with them and with the entire creation⁸⁰.

The Church is where God reveals Himself, this being not a mere information but a real participation to God Himself, through His energies. This reflects upon both the Church understood as community of believers as well as in its liturgical activity - the liturgical dimension being the space where the Church manifests itself in the most clearly and deeply manner⁸¹.

Based upon the image relationship that exists between God, world and Church, Maximus says that the divine unity updates the unity of the Universe, the Church being the fundamental impulse in the fulfillment of this union. Through it,

⁷⁵ Idem, p. 162

⁷⁶ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2006, pp. 395 - 396

⁷⁷ Idem, p. 396

⁷⁸ Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 439

⁷⁹ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 162

⁸⁰ S. L. Epifanovci, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, Bucureşti, 2009, p. 137

⁸¹ Andrew Louth, *The Ecclesiology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*, în *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, Vol. 4, Nr. 2, 2004, p. 112

the universe, despite the diversity of all created things and despite the differences between rational beings, can find communion and unity - which would be inconceivable if the Church would not be the image of God and, at the same time, the cause of the created universe⁸². Thus, we can state that the Church is the unifying power amidst the creation factions - being the essential manifestation of the divine Providence, without which creation would lose its cohesion and would inevitably end in nothingness.

After His ascent to Heaven and His staying to the right hand of the Father, Christ sent the Holy Spirit „as earnest of life and to the enlightenment and sanctification of our souls, as well as to help those who make efforts for their salvation”⁸³. The Pneumatic presence did not restrain itself to the redeeming work but it manifested itself throughout the history of salvation, both in those living by the law - supporting the law, announcing the prophets on the future mysteries, awakening consciences - and in the Christians - supporting and moving their natural reason, discovering to them the breakings of the commandments and announcing the future improvement⁸⁴. Moreover, in those worthy to be called Christians, who kept the commandments, He built „the adoption by grace, given through faith ... [and] by the simple and immaterial knowledge ... [He engrafted/imprinted] in their minds the immaculate and unspeakable meanings, which will raise them to deification”⁸⁵. So, not all men reach wisdom and the simple and beyond understanding knowledge but only those who, by ascetical effort, overcome the first two steps of the mystical ascent towards God - making thus themselves worthy of God's deifying indwelling.

Theosis and the kingdom of heaven will be achieved only by sharing the grace of the Holy Spirit: „[Christ] will make us partakers of the divine nature by sharing the Holy Spirit by grace, and will make us become sons of God”⁸⁶. The divine filiation will be granted to man as a „gift and grace of the Holy Spirit”, a wonderful gift through which „all men will become and will be sons of God”⁸⁷.

For St. Maximus the Confessor the Liturgy is nothing else but an ascension of the Church towards God and of perfecting its unity in Him. Therefore the Church can not be understood without the Liturgy as actualization of the movement of the Church, and neither the Liturgy can be understood without the Church as spiritual and visible space where it can be officiated. The entire dynamic of the Liturgy is a

⁸² Nikos A. Matsoukas, *La vie en Dieu selon Maxime le Confesseur*, Editura Axios, Nethen, 1994, p. 236

⁸³ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Cuvânt ascetic*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. II, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 24

⁸⁴ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 63

⁸⁵ Idem, pp. 63-64

⁸⁶ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Scurtă talcuire la Tatăl nostru*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. II, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 252

⁸⁷ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Mistagogia despre sfânta biserică și sfânta Sinaxă*, în Ioan I. Ică jr., *De la Dionisie Areopagitul la Simeon al Tesalonicului: Integrala comentariilor liturgice bizantine: studii și texte*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2012, p. 226

movement towards deification. Therefore, the communion - the purpose and the ending of the liturgical action - represents the completion and the fulfillment of this deifying movement - the total communion with God⁸⁸. As image of God and also of cosmos, The Church, through the Liturgy, participates at the eschatological state of creation, in which the entire cosmos is entirely with God. Thus, the Liturgy leads the entire community to a perfect union with God, Who is above the world, discovering the eschatological meaning of the history and maintaining the history's tension to its end in God as well as the conscience of this tension in the faithfuls.

Everything happening during the Liturgy symbolizes the process of man's deification: the kiss of peace - the eschatological harmony; the Creed - the thanks to the Lord for our salvation; the Trisagion Hymn - man's equality with angels in knowledge; the Lord's prayer - our adoption by God; the One is Holy chant - union with God; the Eucharist - the final union⁸⁹.

While the Church is the environment in which man can have a glimpse of salvation, the effective means by which he seeks its acquisition are the Holy Sacraments. Their essential function is to realize the final reunion of the symbol with his archetypal model⁹⁰: by participation in the sacraments, their recipients become like God, so that they can be called gods by grace due to God who bathe them - entirely, in body and spirit - in His divine presence⁹¹.

Through Baptism, the christian receives in fact the consequences of the saving economy that the Incarnated Logos offered to the assumed human nature⁹². The effects of Baptism reside in the regeneration (*παλιγγενεσια*) of the human nature - by annulling the fallen man's earthly birth- and in its rebirth (*αναγεννησις*) in the Spirit. These two aspects have their foundation in the death and resurrection of Christ, symbolized in baptism by the immersion and rising from water: „the baptism bears the image of the burial and of the resurrection. This is shown by the immersion and rising from the water”⁹³.

Through the Eucharist - namely by the incorruptible and deified body of Christ - the man shares this incorruptibility and joins himself with God: „by holy communion of the spotless and life-giving mysteries we are given fellowship and identity with him by participation in likeness, by which man is deemed worthy from

⁸⁸ V. M. Zhivov, *The Mystagogia of Maximus the Confessor and the development of the Byzantine Theory of the Image*, în St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, vol. 31, nr. 4, 1987, p. 359

⁸⁹ Andrew Louth, *The Ecclesiology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*, în International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church, Vol. 4, Nr. 2, 2004, p. 113

⁹⁰ Nikos A. Matsoukas, *La vie en Dieu selon Maxime le Confesseur*, Editura Axios, Nethen, 1994, p. 245

⁹¹ Polycarp Sherwood, *The ascetic life, the four centuries on charity*, în *Ancient Christian Writers* vol. XXI, Editura The Newman Press, New York, 1955, p. 80

⁹² Jean-Claude Larchet, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, Mediator între Răsărit și Apus*, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2010, p. 124

⁹³ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Întrebări și nedumeriri*, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2012, p. 172

man to become God”⁹⁴. The grace offered to man, by this mystery, removes everything tainted by sin in his nature, leading him to the likeness with his Archetype and making him a participant in the divine life and also god by grace: “[the Eucharist] transforms ... those who worthily share in it ... so that they also can be and be called gods by adoption through grace (θεσει κατα την χαριν θεους)”⁹⁵.

Practical philosophy (πραξις) is the first stage of the threefold spiritual ascent toward God, its purpose being the struggle with passions and the acquiring of virtues⁹⁶. In this stage, the most important goal of the ascetic endeavors of man is the releaving of the passionate faculties of the soul and their submission to the mind - their reorientation to the divine⁹⁷. The effect of passions and sins on human is disastrous, because they destroy the order and the good use of man's faculties and turn the initial unit of man's structurally complex to division and chaos, both at individual and at macrohuman level⁹⁸.

The place of self-love (φιλαυτια) in relationship with the passions is the same of that of love (αγαπη) in relationship with virtues⁹⁹. While love implies a connection of man with God and the attainment of man's goal, self-love implies a perversion of this connection and also represents a source of human disorder. It involves man's passionate attachment to his body, his irrational love for it and is undoubtedly related to the concupiscent faculty of the soul¹⁰⁰. Being born from ignorance¹⁰¹, it imprints this passion to all of the sins which, in turn, it gives birth. Both filautia and its associated sins have as main characteristic man's attempt to fulfill his thirst for absolute and to acquire the happiness associated with this state, in God's absence, in the sensible things belonging to the created world¹⁰².

Continuing the tradition of its predecessors, St. Maximus uses in his theological system the trichotomy rational - irritable - concupiscent, these three elements being in fact the faculties of the human soul¹⁰³. The irritable (θυμος) and the concupiscent (επιθυμις) part compose the possible part of the soul while the rational

⁹⁴ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Mistagogia despre sfânta biserică și sfânta Sinaxă*, în Ioan I. Ică jr., *De la Dionisie Areopagitul la Simeon al Tesalonicului: Integrala comentariilor liturgice bizantine: studii și texte*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2012, p. 231

⁹⁵ Idem, p. 227

⁹⁶ S. L. Epifanovici, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, pp. 153-154

⁹⁷ Idem, p. 157

⁹⁸ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ascetica și mistica Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2002, pp. 80-81

⁹⁹ Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, București, 2005, p. 258

¹⁰⁰ Polycarp Sherwood, *The ascetic life, the four centuries on charity*, Ancient Christian Writers vol. XXI, Editura The Newman Press, New York, 1955, p. 62

¹⁰¹ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Scrieri și epistole hristologice și duhovnicești*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 1990, p. 30

¹⁰² Ireneau Hausherr, *Philautie. De la tendresse pour soi à la charité selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Editura Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, Roma, 1952, pp. 59-60

¹⁰³ Polycarp Sherwood, *The ascetic life, the four centuries on charity*, Ancient Christian Writers vol. XXI, Editura The Newman Press, New York, 1955, p. 84

(λογος) is the reasonable part, the leading one. This differentiation of the human soul, implied by the trichotomy λογικη - επιθυμητικη - θυμικη, can be seen both from a negative perspective - disintegration by passions - and a positive one - reintegration by virtues¹⁰⁴.

St. Maximus highlights the existence of a connection between the trichotomic conception of the soul and the differentiation of passions and virtues¹⁰⁵, intending to underline the fact that, on one hand, the passions are born from the relations between the body and the sensible world and, on the other hand, that these take over the whole man, not a single human component being excluded¹⁰⁶. The misuse of the soul's faculties is what generates passions, every passion, taken individually, involving a misuse of one or another faculty: the passions of the rational part of the soul are ignorance and recklessness - pair related to pride and vainglory; the irrational faculty shares with the concupiscent one the passions of intemperance and hatred - the first one being related to greed and immorality and the second one to anger. Moreover, the trichotomical understanding of the passions leads to the highlight of self-love and its disastrous effects on the human complex.

Love (αγαπη) is the most important of the virtues, their crowning and their summary. Virtues lead to love and end up in it: „All virtues help the mind to gain the divine love”¹⁰⁷. While theophilia stands against the passions and the sins of the concupiscent faculty, by man's restraining himself from pleasures, the love for one's neighbors stands against the irascible faculty¹⁰⁸. Instead, the rational faculty is subject to both forms of love. At the same time, love is a good disposition of the soul by which nothing is more honoured than the knowledge of God¹⁰⁹. Although the mind (νους) represents man as intelligible being, yet love (αγαπη) is the one that has the power to unite man with God, unification which is above all knowledge (γνωσις)¹¹⁰. The mind, wanting to know God, seeks something that is not allowed to find but just this loving desire is what actually allows man to unite himself with God¹¹¹.

The man who, in the ascetic life, manages to overcome his passions, while acquiring the virtues, receives as a reward for his efforts the gift of detachment¹¹².

¹⁰⁴ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 171

¹⁰⁵ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Cele patru sute de capete despre dragoste*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. II, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 58

¹⁰⁶ Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, București, 2005, p. 290

¹⁰⁷ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Cele patru sute de capete despre dragoste*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. II, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 52

¹⁰⁸ Idem, p. 109

¹⁰⁹ Idem, p. 51

¹¹⁰ Idem, p. 63

¹¹¹ Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, București, 2005, p. 354

¹¹² S. L. Epifanovici, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, p. 165

Thus, the state of detachment (*απαθεία*) is the culmination of the practical life, a middle state between the acquiring of virtues and of the supreme virtue - love¹¹³. The one who reached detachment does not look and think the things through passions anymore, he does not make from things and people self - reported objects or simple means of selfishness¹¹⁴. For him, things do not continue to revolve around him anymore but around God. Detachment does not mean a negative or neutral condition for reaching contemplation but the most active opening of the soul to God and to his neighbors through selfless love¹¹⁵.

Detachment is „a peaceful state of the soul in which it becomes resistent to vice”¹¹⁶ and also a psychological disposition to praise the Lord. We can not say that the passions have become an ontological impossibility for the soul, like in God, but a moral impossibility¹¹⁷. Detachment is the state of the soul in which the man can overcome any temptation. However, this state is not an inalienable feature of nature, like in angels, the man being able to react to temptation and thus fall from it.

St. Maximus identifies, in creation, the existence of five polarities (*διατρεσεις*) which must be overcome by man in order to unite and deify all creation: God and creation, intelligible and sensible, heaven and earth, paradise and inhabited world, man and woman. These polarities match with the synthesis or mediations which man is called to realize through his freedom - grace synergy¹¹⁸.

In order to fulfill his mission, theosis, man has to „shake” the quality of man and woman through „the most dispassionate relationship to divine virtue”¹¹⁹. Although the sexual relationship will be abolished, St. Maximus shows that the possible faculties he emphasizes will remain and will support the human being in his relationship with God. Precisely this transformation is the purpose of this mediation. So, this mediation is not achieved by removing any element of man/woman's nature or of the possible faculties but by arranging them according to the principle of the created nature, through *vita practica*.

The second mediation, between paradise and the inhabited world, is realised too, through the first step of the spiritual ascent, *vita practica* - residing in detachment, practicing virtues and love for one's neighbors. Earth can become again the sensible paradise when man, through a pure life, will restore the understanding

¹¹³ Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, București, 2005, p. 329

¹¹⁴ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ascetica și mistica Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2002, p. 212

¹¹⁵ Idem, p. 206

¹¹⁶ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Cele patru sute de capete despre dragoste*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoițe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. II, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 54

¹¹⁷ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ascetica și mistica Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2002, p. 207

¹¹⁸ Vladimir Lossky, *Introducere în Teologia Ortodoxă*, Editura Sophia, București, 2006, p. 94

¹¹⁹ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2006, p. 390

between him and his neighbors¹²⁰. So, it is not a geographical boundary that separates the original paradise from the inhabited world, but sin. Bearing the heaven always in himself, in a constant communion with God, man will turn the entire earth into paradise¹²¹ and, going further, from one mediation to the next, he will manage to reunite in himself the whole universe and to deify it together with himself.

Natural contemplation ($\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\iota\alpha$)¹²² is the second stage of the spiritual ascent, which, in the maximian thinking, is not in a relation of inferiority/superiority with the practical philosophy but rather in a synergistic and theandrical relation¹²³, both steps being required in order for man to achieve deification.

Although $\pi\rho\alpha\xi\iota\varsigma$ and $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\iota\alpha$ are different stages, each having its own role in man's spiritual ascent, neither one can be taken separately, in isolation from the other - both stages of the spiritual ascent are closely interrelated and can not be reduced to mere preliminary stages through which man passes in his mission to unite himself with God¹²⁴.

Every man possesses both endeavors, the practical and the contemplative, but only growing them together and keeping them both active in himself, can man achieve his supreme goal, deification: „when [man] will be able to bind and weave these together: reason with mind ... action with contemplation, virtue with knowledge ... , without any of these things being inferior or superior to the other in such a way that all excess or defect be eliminated from each of them ... will be united to God ... having become similar to Him as much as it can [be]”¹²⁵.

The contemplation of God in creation is the prior stage to His direct contemplation, the reasons of all created things helping us to discover „the fecundity of the divine Reason”¹²⁶ and, at the same time, to know the divine Logos as the Creator of everything. The reasons ($\lambda\o\gamma\iota\varsigma$) are nothing but an exemplification of the Supreme Reason ($\Lambda\o\gamma\o\varsigma$) just like the rays of the sun are „an exemplification and a manifestation of His light”¹²⁷.

In its inferior form, the contemplation ($\phi\psi\sigma\iota\kappa\eta\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\iota\alpha$) consists in examining

¹²⁰ S. L. Epifanovici, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, p. 102

¹²¹ Vladimir Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2010, p. 127

¹²² Its name is due to the fact that it's oriented towards nature and not to the fact that its fulfillment might be realised through the natural power of man's mind because, on the contrary, it represents a gift of grace which leads the mind to the true knowledge ($\gamma\wedge\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$). Cf. S. L. Epifanovici, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, p. 152

¹²³ Cf. Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2006, pp. 156-157

¹²⁴ Paul M Blowers & Robert L. Wilken, *On the cosmic mystery of Jesus Christ. Selected writings from St. Maximus the Confessor*, Editura St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, pp. 133-137

¹²⁵ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Mistagogia despre sfânta biserică și sfânta Sinaxă*, în Ioan I. Ică jr., *De la Dionisie Areopagitul la Simeon al Tesalonicului: Integrala comentariilor liturgice bizantine: studii și texte*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2012, p. 20

¹²⁶ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ascetica și mistica Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2002, p. 226

¹²⁷ Idem, p. 226

the reasons (*λογοί*) of the sensible things and of their Cause, while in its superior form, the mind (*vouç*) goes to contemplate the spiritual world, seeking the reasons and the Cause of their existence and also the reasons of Providence and Justice¹²⁸.

The mission of the *natural contemplation* lies not only in seeing and understanding the reasons of the created things and their relation with their Cause, the Logos, but also in seeing in reasons a „hierarchical relation of prophetic nature”¹²⁹ which leads us to the Creator. The natural contemplation, on the one hand, leads the man to knowledge and, on the other hand, heals him of ignorance (*αγνοια*)¹³⁰.

Contemplation is not philosophical practice - the exterior exercises of this stage being: the reading of the Scriptures, the spiritual visions and prayer¹³¹ - but a gift of graceful enlightenment, without it being „impossible to approach God by knowledge”¹³².

In Ambigua 10, St. Maximus mentions the five modes of the *natural contemplation* (*τροπον της φυσικης θεωριας*): „differentiating creation, the saints gathered with devotion its mystical reasons, separating it in: substance (*ουσια*), movement (*κινεσις*), difference (*διαφορα*), union (*κρασις*) and stability (*θεσις*)”¹³³. The five natural modes of contemplation are grouped into two categories: the first three - the substance (*ουσια*), the movement (*κινεσις*) and difference (*διαφορα*) - are *par excellence* the modes of knowing God; the last two - the union (*κρασις*) and the stability (*θεσις*) - are the modes that regard man directly.

The first three modes of the *natural contemplation* reveal three aspects - creator, provident, judge - of the same divine energy by which the man manages to know the divine energies, the creation being unfold like a book before him, teaching him the divine reasons and the reasons of the created beings¹³⁴. The last two modes sanction the idea that the knowledge by natural law can not be achieved just through mere native intelligence but through personal participation. In order for man to attain deification, he has to „suffer” the divine transformations through these modes - union

¹²⁸ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Cele patru sute de capete despre dragoste*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. II, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 63

¹²⁹ Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, București, 2005, p. 386

¹³⁰ S. L. Epifanovici, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, p. 168; Cf. Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Cele patru sute de capete despre dragoste*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. II, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 64

¹³¹ Idem, p. 104; S. L. Epifanovici, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, p. 169

¹³² Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2006, p. 344

¹³³ Idem, p. 197

¹³⁴ Vasilios Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur, essence et énergies de Dieu*, Edition Beauchesne, Paris, 1993, p. 345

and stability - which ensures him the likeness of God¹³⁵. We notice that the last two modes of the natural contemplation are different from the first three by character and content and also by purpose, being „advisers towards virtue and God [...] By these, shaping himself, man becomes god”¹³⁶.

Contemplating the meanings of the Scripture is considered to be part of the natural contemplation by the entire patristic tradition, a tradition to which St. Maximus adheres too¹³⁷. He thinks that the Scripture, when interpreted spiritually, has several meanings, meanings that do not contribute to the confusion of the human mind but, on the contrary, to its spiritual benefit¹³⁸. The spiritual reading foresees, in a biblical text, both the historical significance, and at the same time, its revealed meaning and its contemplative level¹³⁹.

The literal worshipping of the Scriptures is contrary to the christian spirit and the one who keeps the letter of Scripture chooses in fact the opposite side of Christ, forgetting the abolition of law and not reaching to the understanding of the mystery of Christ's Incarnation¹⁴⁰. Like nature, the Scripture is a symbol of God's spiritual reality, an environment which *betrays* the infinite depth of the spiritual meanings communicated by Him. Therefore, the literal meaning limitation of the scriptural text leads to the breaking the connection between God and Scripture.

Following his spiritual journey towards theosis, man is called to fulfill also the mediations heaven - earth and intelligible - sensible, mediations achieved through *natural contemplation*. The third mediation, between heaven and earth, is in fact a lower form of *natural contemplation*, the one of the creatures, the man's mission being that of abolishing the spatial conditions for both mind and body, bringing together heaven and earth, meaning the entire visible world¹⁴¹. The contemplative, observing and watching the *λογοί* of the sensitive world onto their common source, that is Christ the Logos, realizes that there is only one nature of the entire sensitive world which manifests differently in the nature of every species. Or, in other words, each *λογος*/reason of a sensible thing tends towards a general *λογος* which unites all the other reasons in a common goal - the deification of the whole universe.

The forth mediation between the sensible and the spiritual world is,

¹³⁵ Dragoș Bahrim, *Despre cosmos și împlinirea sa în om după teologia Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul*, în *Teologie și viață*, nr. 5-8, mai-august 2012, p. 94

¹³⁶ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2006, p. 200

¹³⁷ Cf. Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos și Mediator*, Editura Sophia, București, 2005, p. 385; D. Stăniloae, *Ascetică și Mistica*, p. 252

¹³⁸ Cf. Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 154

¹³⁹ Enzo Bianchi, *Asculțând Cuvântul: pentru lectura duhovnicească a Scripturii în Biserică*, trad. de Maria-Cornelia Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2011, p. 100

¹⁴⁰ S. L. Epifanovici, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul și teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, București, 2009, p. 181

¹⁴¹ Vladimir Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2010, p. 127

actually, a unification of the entire created world, because „the whole nature that receives being from creation is divided by God into that which is perceived by the mind and that perceived by the senses”¹⁴². The „one, simple, undifferentiated and indifferent”¹⁴³ reason, hidden in God's grand plan is the common principle of the entire creation. This common principle contains the fundamental reason for which God created the world and also the purpose ($\tau\epsilon\lambda\omega\varsigma$) to which it has to strive. Understanding the reasons ($\lambda\omega\gamma\iota\varsigma$) of creation, by God's grace, and communicating with them through his own reason ($\lambda\omega\gamma\iota\varsigma$), the man can relate with the universal $\lambda\omega\gamma\iota\varsigma$ of creation.

Although, through contemplation, the man acquires some knowledge of the reasons ($\lambda\omega\gamma\iota\varsigma$) belonging to creation and Scripture, by progressing in this knowledge, he realizes that God is above all that can be expressed through words or concepts¹⁴⁴ and therefore He can not be known but only experienced. As he rises to the divine mystery and acquires more and more knowledge, the man realizes that God is beyond and above all knowledge. Any attempt to comprehend or to understand God is doomed to failure because the human mind can only know that there is a Cause of all creation and not what that Cause is. In St. Maximus' thinking, God is beyond anything we can reason about Him, man's only true knowledge of God being not-knowing¹⁴⁵.

St. Maximus distinguishes between a comprehensive but relative and reason founded knowledge and an incomprehensible one, consisting in the experience and participation to the Uncreated: „[the apophatic knowledge] provides a total perception of the known object through a participation [in Him] by grace. By this latter knowledge, we attain [the] future state, the supernatural deification ($\theta\epsilon\omega\sigma\varsigma\varsigma$) that remains unceasingly in effect”¹⁴⁶.

God, as supreme being, is above His infinite energies, energies which, however, the created beings can share. For St. Maximus, $\theta\epsilon\omega\lambda\gamma\iota\varsigma$ is not only the supreme form of knowledge but also a relationship above all knowledge with God the Unknowable. The highest knowledge is actually a super-knowledge ($\upsilon\pi\epsilon\gamma\gamma\omega\kappa\omega\varsigma$) - the supreme ignorance by which the Unknowable God makes himself known¹⁴⁷.

The third and also the last stage of the spiritual life is the *mystical*

¹⁴² Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2006, p. 388

¹⁴³ Idem, p. 398

¹⁴⁴ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ascetica şi mistica Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Editura EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2002, pp. 259-260

¹⁴⁵ S. L. Epifanovici, *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul şi teologia bizantină*, Editura Evangelismos, Bucureşti, 2009, p. 75

¹⁴⁶ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 289

¹⁴⁷ Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia Teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul – Microcosmos şi Mediator*, Editura Sophia, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 394

*theology*¹⁴⁸ (μυστικη θεολογια) or union with God, a stage in which man becomes a participant in the divine life¹⁴⁹. This stage involves man's overcoming of any other concern besides the one for God, his mind being filled with the divine grace, becoming thus like Him, not by nature but by grace¹⁵⁰.

Theology is not a simple speech about God but the vision and participation directly to God through His energies¹⁵¹. The one who has the ability to feel the divine presence is the mind which, rising to the infinite God, leaves any connection with the created world, experiencing only the feeling of God's infinite presence¹⁵².

The mind, „being in love with the mystical theology ... prays”¹⁵³, reaching the mystical visions in an unknown manner. The mystical union with God, in God, can not be achieved without prayer because prayer is the man's personal connection with God¹⁵⁴. Thus, the mystical experience, inseparable from the path to unity, can not be acquired otherwise but through prayer. Moreover, the pure prayer, that „ecstasy of the inner silence”¹⁵⁵ brings man to God, alone. Once arrived on this peak of prayer, the mind contemplates what is simple and without form, meaning God, becoming itself, this way, simple and like Him - deiform.

The mystic's going out of all created things and creatures and also out of their perception and their representations signifies, for St. Maximus, the state of ecstasy¹⁵⁶ (εκστασις). The Maximian ecstasy is „the sober drunkenness”, „the going out of oneself”, the state that „drags the mind out of the created things”¹⁵⁷, facts that differentiate him from Evagrius who considered the ecstasy as being only the going out of the created things¹⁵⁸. As Polycarp Sherwood noticed, the maximian doctrine on ecstasis is founded on the conciliation of the immanentiste mystical theology of Evagrius Ponticus and of the the transcedentaliste theology of Dionysius the

¹⁴⁸ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Întrebări și nedumeriri*, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2012, p. 44

¹⁴⁹ Ioan Gh. Savin, *Mistică și Ascetica Ortodoxă*, Tiparul Tipografiei Eparhiale Sibiu, 1996, p. 132

¹⁵⁰ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2006, p. 321

¹⁵¹ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Întrebări și nedumeriri*, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2012, p. 44

¹⁵² Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2006, p. 175

¹⁵³ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 93

¹⁵⁴ Vladimir Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2010, p. 218

¹⁵⁵ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ascetica și mistică Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Editura EIBMBOR, București, 2002, p. 290

¹⁵⁶ Jean-Claude Larchet, *La Divinisation de l'Homme Selon Saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Editura Cerf, Paris, 1996, p. 534

¹⁵⁷ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 239

¹⁵⁸ Jean-Claude Larchet, *La Divinisation de l'Homme Selon Saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Editura Cerf, Paris, 1996, note de subsol, p. 535

Areopagite, despite their completely opposite characteristics¹⁵⁹.

Being regarded from any of its three meanings - the abandonment of the natural activities, the ascension to union with God or the movement, by the divine energies, towards God - the state of ecstasy causes the mystic's transition from the natural to the supernatural realm of divine realities, where he becomes full participant to deification.

The ecstasy accompanies man's mystical union with God and assumes man's suffering of phenomenons or experiences that exceed his natural faculties. The most important effect of this state is the impregnation of man's volitional faculty with the divine will, and not the alteration of man's external senses, effect which St. Maximus considers to be secondary. That is because he takes into account the future and not the actual state of the human being, achieved by saints through ecstasy¹⁶⁰.

The distinction logos - tropos ($\lambda\omega\gamma\omega\varsigma - \tau\rho\omega\pi\varsigma$) holds an essential place in maximian thought, allowing him to identify solutions for complex problems in areas such as Trinitarian theology, Christology, anthropology or mystical theology. Moreover, this distinction is the one that makes possible the developement of a doctrine of deification¹⁶¹.

While the logos is not changed by any mode of activity, the tropos can be changed not only with other natural modes but also it can be replaced by a mode that exceeds its natural ability to actualize itself, without this changing its reason. The process suffered by the human nature or the process that man can do through a way of living beyond his natural possibilities, is still a process in accordance to his nature; by this way of life, the human nature is called to fulfill a superior task, thus proving to possess the ability to perfect himself indefinitely - through the divine power.

In Christology, the maximian distinction logos - tropos solves the antinomy consisting, on the one hand, of the fact that Christ's human nature was deified and, on the other hand, of the fact that His human nature kept unchanged its essential characteristics. We can also apply this distinction in man's case, stating that human nature is transformed by deification, but its essential characteristics remain unaltered: man becomes God not by the reason ($\lambda\omega\gamma\omega\varsigma$) of his nature but according to his mode of existence ($\tau\rho\omega\pi\varsigma$)¹⁶².

The last and also the most important mediation in St. Maximus' *theory of*

¹⁵⁹ While, for Evagrius, the summit of contemplative life was a vision of the mind - purified as in the original state, as image of the Trinity - through which the man achieves the knowledge of the Trinity, for Dionysius, it represents a state of exstasis - of existence or of being not only outside the created things but also outside his own being (idea which separates him completely from Evagrius). cf. Polycarp Sherwood, *The earlier Ambigua of Saint Maximus the Confessor and his refutation of Origenism*, *Studia Anselmiana* 36, Roma, Editura Herder, 1955, note de subsol, pp. 124-125

¹⁶⁰ Idem, p. 153

¹⁶¹ Idem, p. 165

¹⁶² Jean-Claude Larchet, *La Divinisation de l'Homme Selon Saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Editura Cerf, Paris, 1996, p. 606

everything belongs to the third stage of the spiritual ascent, theology (θεολογία) or the mystical union of man and God. Admitting the existence of an ontological gap (χασμα) between God and the created world, St. Maximus also believes that we can not conceive any parallel between divine nature and created nature¹⁶³. While the rest of the differences are existential, representing various degrees of organization of the same created nature, the last division is ontological, as there are no similarities between created and uncreated reality¹⁶⁴.

Although the union between created and uncreated is real, the mode (τρόπος) and the principle (λόγος) of this union is beyond nature: „[Christ] united in a mode and by a reason beyond nature all the created nature with its Creator”¹⁶⁵. Therefore there is a supernatural and supra-logical principle by which God unites Himself with the created being. Overcoming the polarity created - Uncreated means actually the deification of man - who, by attaining the possession of habitual grace, is completely united with God and God dwells completely in him.

Far from separating the man from cosmos, St. Maximus believes, on the contrary, that the universe tends, naturally, to unification, road impossible to cross without the man's help. Noticing that the universe is part of the human being and that man is part of creation by nature¹⁶⁶ St. Maximus highlights the internal relation and the mutual conditioning of man and cosmos¹⁶⁷. Only the mystics or the saints, whose psychology is always cosmical¹⁶⁸, are able to understand that everything that happens in man has an universal meaning and resonance, ordering or disorganizing the cosmos. The human being represents the concise image of the universe (*microcosm*), while the cosmos is the enlarged image of man (*macranthropo*)¹⁶⁹.

Man ascends through the entire cosmos, through contemplation, using as steps the reasons of the created beings, and the entire cosmos ascends also with him. The cosmos is unified in man, is restored in him and by him, through *epektasis*,

¹⁶³ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy. The Universe according to Maximus the Confessor*, Editura Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2003, p. 89

¹⁶⁴ Doru Costache, *The Unifying Ladder of St Maximus the Confessor: Going Upwards with Everything You Are*, în *Science and Orthodoxy: A Necessary Dialogue*, Editura Curtea Veche, Bucureşti, 2006, p. 138

¹⁶⁵ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia sfintelor nevoițe ale desăvârșirii*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. III, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 162

¹⁶⁶ There is an inextricable relation between man and cosmos: through man, the universe can relate to and can share life in God and so it can fulfill its purpose. The failure of this mission is not only personal but cosmic, its effect being the alteration of the entire universe, its change from order and beauty to obscurity, darkness and distress. cf. Andrew Louth, *The Cosmic Vision of Saint Maximos the Confessor*, în *In Whom we live and move and have our being*, William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Cambridge, 2004, p. 187

¹⁶⁷ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2006, p. 167

¹⁶⁸ Nicolae Berdiaev, *Sensul creației*, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 1992, p. 72.

¹⁶⁹ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Despre mistagogia bisericiească*, trad. de diac. Ioan Ică jr. în *De la Dionisie Areopagitul la Simeon al Tesalonicului: integrala comentariilor liturgice bizantine*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2012, pp. 211-212

through the ascent he makes towards God throughout creation¹⁷⁰.

In conclusion, the central idea of St. Maximus the Confessor's theology is that of man's deification. All the theological themes approached by him, like anthropology, Christology, Ecclesiology, Pneumatology, asceticism and mystical theology, were approached from the perspective of man's union with God. So, Maximus does not approach only a perspective or another of deification at a time, but always joins all the perspectives in a living organism able to express multi-dimensionally the idea of man's deification. St. Maximus' major contribution to the doctrine of deification consists both in the originality of his approach and its multi-lateral development, the saint managing, due to his creative and synthesizer style, to create a vast and complex network of ideas that can hardly be understood apart from each other.

¹⁷⁰ Doru Costache, *Omul și lumea în viziunea Părintilor răsăriteni sau despre ieșirea din criză*, în *Glasul Bisericii* nr. 6-12, 1995, p. 97

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